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## WOMEN AND DISABILITY: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD\*

### Abstract

It has been said that life has treated me harshly; and sometimes I have complained in my heart because many pleasures of human experience have been withheld from me". (Hellen Keller)

Since times immemorial people with disabilities have been a subjugated group. They are viewed through a prism of judgmental prejudice and are subjected to preposterous treatments by the so-called 'abled society'. As Lennard J Davis says the problem is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the "problem" of the disabled person. The problems further enhance when the disabled individual is a woman. Disabled women are doubly marginalized by this overtly opinionated society. The physical and attitudinal obstacles faced by a disabled woman are greater in degree than that faced by a disabled man. Keeping in mind the impediments faced by the disabled the Government of our country has appended certain laws for providing them with equal opportunities. Institutes of Higher Education are trying to implement and execute these rules to help the specially abled. However, how far is this of actual help to the disabled women? This paper aims to survey the extent to which the rules laid down by the government for the 'differently abled' have transcended the realm of the paper to help the disabled women transcend the social impediments. With special emphasis on the education sector this paper would delve deep into the minor problems that often go overlooked by the system and as a result, majorly affects the lives of disabled women. The paper would also consist of personal interviews of disabled women professors working in imminent institutes of Higher Education in order to highlight their daily struggles in a society that is plagued by stringent opinions and a repulsive attitude towards the disabled.

**Keywords:** Differently Abled; Power; Normalcy, Disability

### Introduction

"It has been said that life has treated me harshly; and sometimes I have complained in my heart because many pleasures of human experience have been withheld from me". (Keller, 1957, p. 42)

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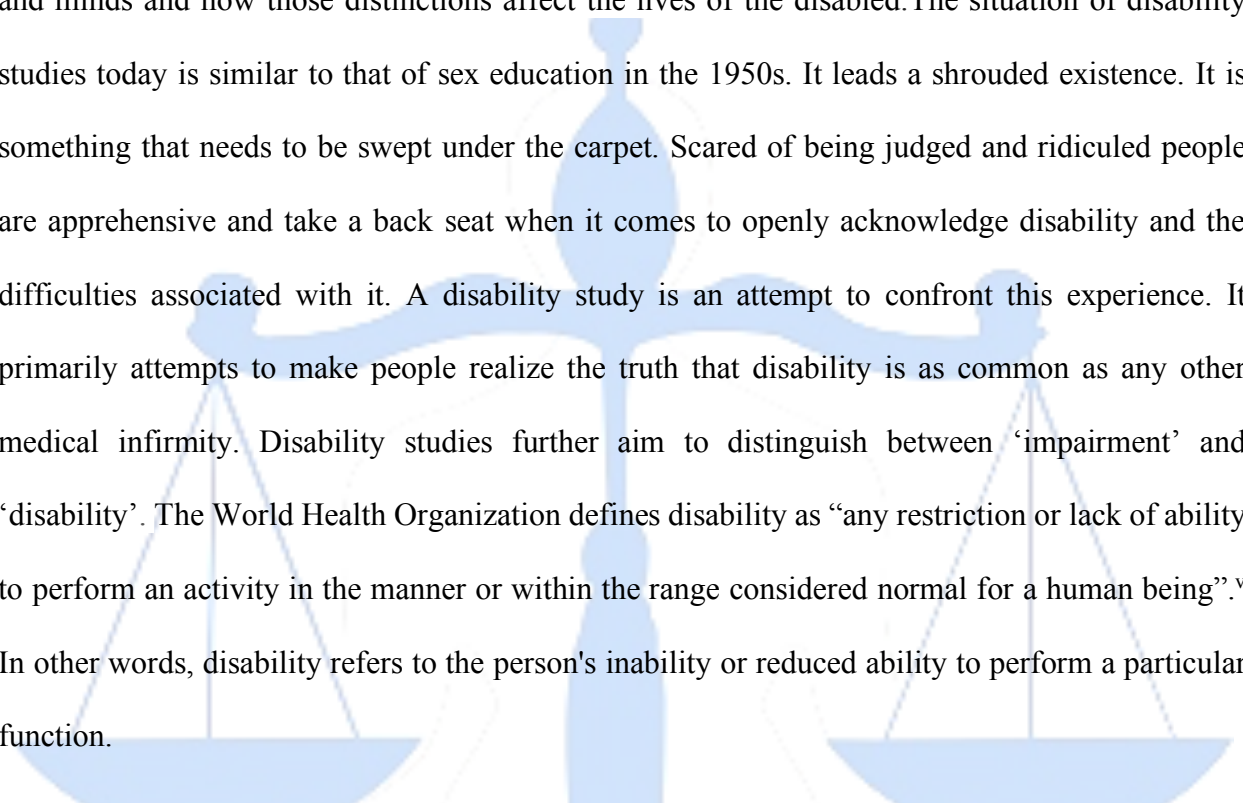
Since times immemorial people with disabilities have been oppressed and subjugated. “People with disabilities have been isolated, incarcerated, observed, written about, operated on, instructed, implanted, regulated, treated, institutionalized, and controlled to a degree probably unequal to that experienced by any other minority group”(Davis, 2006, p. xv) In 1859 Charles Darwin published his revolutionary book *The Origin of Species* which enucleated the theory of the ‘Survival of the fittest’. With this, social Darwinists expressed apprehension about providing care and assistance to the ‘weak’. They were skeptical that offering assistance to the disabled would cripple the natural struggle for existence and lead to the degeneration of the human race

Such views defiled America and Britain and the existence of disabled people was increasingly seen as a threat to social progress. People with disabilities were considered ineffectual in the expedited scurry of life. Galton’s theory of ‘Eugenics’ promulgated in 1883 was a major setback to the ‘weaker’ section of the society. His theory further reeked of ethical ignominy when he questioned, “Could not the undesirables be got rid of and the desirables multiplied? Galton argued that early marriage between healthy, mentally strong families should be encouraged by financial incentives, and reproduction by the feeble-minded should be curtailed. In his mind, superior mental and physical capabilities were advantageous not only to an individual but essential for the well-being of society as a whole”<sup>i</sup>. In 1910, Winston Churchill cautioned, "The multiplication of the feeble-minded is a very terrible danger to the race”<sup>ii</sup> People propagating faith in the morally repulsive theory of Eugenics’ continued further when during a House of Commons debate on abortion in 1985, someone asserted that to abort a handicapped foetus could save the country £1 million over the course of a lifetime. Being disabled is considered to be an anomaly and thus people with disabilities are viewed through a prism of judgmental prejudice and are being ousted by society. They suffer from a sense of self- revulsion which holds their lives in hateful abeyance. It often

pushes them to the extreme brink of depression and scathes their self-esteem for life. Disabled women are doubly marginalized by this overtly opinionated society. Being a woman with a disability is like a double-edged sword. The physical and attitudinal obstacles faced by a disabled woman are greater in degree than that faced by a disabled man

The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘disability’ as ‘a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities’. The U.N. Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities developed the following definition: “Disability: the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical, social, attitudinal and cultural barriers encountered by persons having physical, sensory, psychological, developmental, learning, neurological or other impairments (including the presence in the body of an organism or agent causing malfunction or disease), which may be permanent, temporary, episodic or transitory in nature.”<sup>iii</sup> Disability is an umbrella term that includes any kind of impairment that restricts an individual’s ability to participate in daily chores and hampers his/her quality of living. Disability may involve physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive or intellectual impairment, mental disorder (also known as psychiatric or psychosocial disability), or various types of chronic disease. A disability may occur during a person's lifetime or may be present from birth.

Disability Studies is an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary field of study which emerged in the 1980s primarily in the US, the UK, and Canada. It aims to view disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon. In an attempt to de-stigmatize chronic disease and illness and the basic perception among people about disability being a defect it strives to weave back disabled people into mainstream society.<sup>iv</sup> “In contrast to clinical, medical, or therapeutic perspectives on disability, Disability Studies focuses on how disability is defined and represented in society”. It



rejects the perception of disability as a functional impairment that limits a person's activities. Disability Studies explores how the society discriminates between normal and abnormal bodies and minds and how those distinctions affect the lives of the disabled. The situation of disability studies today is similar to that of sex education in the 1950s. It leads a shrouded existence. It is something that needs to be swept under the carpet. Scared of being judged and ridiculed people are apprehensive and take a back seat when it comes to openly acknowledge disability and the difficulties associated with it. A disability study is an attempt to confront this experience. It primarily attempts to make people realize the truth that disability is as common as any other medical infirmity. Disability studies further aim to distinguish between 'impairment' and 'disability'. The World Health Organization defines disability as "any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being".<sup>v</sup> In other words, disability refers to the person's inability or reduced ability to perform a particular function.

The field of disability studies has over the years attempted to classify certain models of disabilities, each one characterized by a specific approach. Amidst the various models that exist, the most influential and popular are the medical model & the social model which have majorly shaped the history of disability rights & laws. The medical model primarily focuses on identifying the illness and its severity that cripples a person's abilities. "This has the effect of locating the problem of disability within the person. The medical model encapsulates a broader and deeper social attitude – a tendency to problematize the person and view him/her as an object for clinical intervention. This is where the medical model originated because it was founded on the principle of normality. It aims to restore the disabled person to normality, whatever that may mean. Where that is not possible, the basic aim is not abandoned; the goal is to restore the disabled person to a state that is

as near normality as possible.<sup>vi</sup>” Shankar Das and Ashima Das in their pioneering work ‘Differential Childhood’ opines

Having a disability does not necessarily require a medical intervention which would be targeted towards targeting normalcy. The quandary here is the normal standards that have been set for everything and the disabled individuals are seen as deviants who require treatment for their inability. (Das, 2010, p. 19)

The social construction of disability promulgates the idea that society has the power to fabricate or construct the idea of disability around social expectations and social postulation of health. Disability was believed to be divine retribution, which a person received as wrath of the Almighty, owing to his ethical shortcomings or as a result of any misdeed which was morally repulsive, thus bringing in a Manichean view of disability. It classified people into two groups: the good or the abled and the bad or the disabled. Being physically or biologically different was not enough to be considered disabled. Rather being physically different or being differently abled is still in today’s ‘progressed’ world considered to be defective or imperfect. So who defines what is perfect? People with disabilities are vehemently stigmatized and marginalized. They are relegated to an insignificant and powerless position within a society or group. They become the victim of social inequality or social stratification. The theory of ‘Social Stratification’ was first proposed by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore in 1945 in the essay entitled, ‘Some Principles of Stratification’. Regarding the theory of social stratification, Marxist view opines that the society is divided into two major social groups, ‘the ruling class and the ‘subject class. The ruling group exploits and dominates the subject class. This reminds us of the theory of Colonialism, where third world countries were being colonized and dominated by the West, who basked in the glory of their sovereignty. In this case, disabled people are treated as the socially inferior and powerless subject

class and hence are being ostracized by the so-called perfectly 'abled' class. This surmounts to 'Psychological colonialism' of the disabled by the abled.

There has been a significantly long and disturbing history of oppression against the disabled people which continues even till the present day. The essay by the disabled human right activist Paul Hunt, "A Critical Condition" written in 1996 for example, argues that

People with impairments are viewed as unfortunate, different, oppressed, sick and useless because they are not being able to contribute to the economic good of the community. Such people are often treated like other minority and oppressed groups such as black people or homosexuals because, like them, people with disabilities are also perceived as abnormal and different

Hunt further states that the mass of disabled people "represent everything that the 'normal world most fears -tragedy, loss, dark, and the unknown" (Hunt, 1966, p. 155). The existence of people with special needs cannot percolate unblemished through the labyrinth of society's biased definitions of normalcy and perfection. They are mostly considered inferior to the 'abled' and their disability becomes the primary cause for them being discriminated in all areas of life. They are perceived as the 'other'. Postulated by Edward Said in his groundbreaking critical work 'Orientalism' (1978), the 'other' is the irrational, psychologically weak non-European, which is negatively contrasted with the rational, psychologically strong, and masculine European. As in Said's work, the 'orient' is viewed as the weaker one; similarly, the society at large perceives the 'disabled' as the 'other,' who deviates from the standard norms of the society. They are mostly treated with sympathy rather than empathy and are regarded as the weak one, someone who is beyond the realm of 'normal'. Disabled people are always pushed from the centre to the periphery by an ignorant mass who consider disabled people as 'less useful' or 'useless'. All their attempts to be a part of the mainstream society and their wish to be accepted by the society falls flat and

hence we are forced to question the fact, “Can the disabled speak?”. “Center” and “periphery” are key terms of dependency theories developed in the 1960s and 1970s in order to explain the structural difference between development and underdevelopment, specifically between developed countries and underdeveloped countries. Lennard J Davis says the problem is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the “problem” of the disabled person. Standard definitions of normalcy are based on what society thinks is largely and commonly accepted. For example, a person having six fingers on his palm or feet is considered beyond normal or as commonly defined ‘abnormal’. Are standards of normality culturally relevant? Who decides what is normal? The fear of Victor Frankenstein for the ‘abhorred creature’ that he created exemplifies a normal person’s apprehension for the ‘abnormal’. The concept of a norm, unlike that of an ideal, implies that the majority of the population must or should somehow be part of the norm. Anything or anyone who doesn’t fall within the defined boundary of the standard norm set by society is considered abnormal. Professor Charles Scott: Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University, in an attempt to trace the origin of the word ‘normal’ finds out that the ancient Greek roots of normal mean ‘well-known’. How did normal attain its contemporary usage?

Scott questions the value of normalcy, particularly in religion, mental health, and morality—why is normal better than abnormal? Scott argues the positive value of normalcy is that norms provide social coherence and organization. The negative side of normalcy is the marginalization of those that don’t fit within the norm.<sup>vii</sup>. However, what most of us or the society at large fails to realize is that people with disabilities should be treated equally or at par with normal people. Nevertheless, they should be provided with some extra amenities to make their lives or daily chores easier as they are not privileged enough to be endowed with the same amount of physical, mental and

medical fitness as a person who doesn't suffer from any disability. As Einstein had opined 'Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison of delusion by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.'<sup>viii</sup>

"All human beings irrespective of their disabilities have certain rights which are inalienable" (Das, 2006, p. 19). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 states, "All human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity"<sup>ix</sup>. In order to empower persons with disabilities and help them grow beyond perceived and anticipated constraints imposed by the society at large, on December 13, 2006, the United Nations announced the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This aimed to safeguard the rights of disabled people and attempted in assisting them to overcome their difficulties in leading a normal life like the rest of society.

Apart from the United Nations Convention on people with disability, the Disability Act of 1995 and 2016 also made elaborate attempts towards eradicating differential treatments towards the disabled mass. Governments across the world are legislating various policy measures, primarily in the areas of health, education, employment, accessible environments and social security to ameliorate the status of the disabled population. Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has announced various yojanas in this regard. The Deen Dayal Rehabilitation scheme launched by the Central Government is centrally aided and promotes assistance to the disabled. Along with the Central Government, the State Government of almost all the states are striving their best to implement various programmes. As this paper aims to take into its purview the state of West Bengal, focusing mainly on the benefits extended by Higher Educational Institutes of Kolkata to its disabled employees and students, we aim to focus on the opportunities provided by the West Bengal State Government.



Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal has launched the State Disability Pension for families of disabled persons, whose monthly family income is less than Thousand Rupees. The State Government also provides Educational Scholarship for students with disabilities .Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities has stipulated that all the countries should ensure hassle free primary and secondary education for children with special needs. In pursuance to this, Central and State Governments have constitutionalized laws which fortify opportunities of quality education to every student irrespective of any deformity. UGC has announced 3% reservation policy for disabled students in all Universities. All Universities have to submit a yearly report to UGC regarding the admission procedures, stating the numbers of disabled students who have been admitted each year.Seats have also been reserved for recruitment of disabled employees and the Ministry of Higher Education has appended laws, which needs to be abided by all institutes of Higher Education. The Disability Act 2016 has formulated a policy which states that people with benchmark disabilities shall be given an upper age relaxation of five years for admission in Universities. This rule has been framed solely for the purpose of providing equal working and educational opportunities for disabled people.Article 41, in Part IV(Directive Principles of State Policy), of the Indian Constitution makes equal work opportunities for the disabled a mandatory mandate.

Among the Universities in Kolkata my scope of study includes Presidency University, Jadavpur University and the University of Calcutta. All these institutes endeavor to provide congenial atmosphere to all its disabled employees and students and distinctly considers their prospects and desires to reach the zenith of glory in all spheres of life. Every institute of Higher and Primary Education endeavors to give them the exposure to express their individual skills and

creative acumen. These steps primarily try to wage a rebellion against the illogical standards of ‘normalcy’ set by society, which the disabled population fall prey to. Elaborate efforts are being made to put an end to all forms of injustice against disabled people in the educational sector. Access to quality education is a basic right which should be catered to every student.

We raise the flag for education as a universal human right -- no one must be denied access because of disability. This is a UNESCO priority, and we are acting across the world to break down barriers for people with disabilities, to empower them as agents of change. This means transforming schools and learning centers. It means adapting teaching practices to cater for all. This is why I urge all Governments and development partners, all teachers, parents and private sector providers, to remove the barriers to and in learning, to realize the full and equal participation of all persons with disabilities in society<sup>x</sup>

said Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the Global Action Week 2014. People with disabilities come across a boulevard of challenges in the pursuit of their right to education. Governments are constantly legislating laws which would ensure equal accessibility to education for all students.

The Universities of Kolkata, under the jurisdiction of The Department of Higher Education indulge in a continuous strife to provide all kinds of facilities to its disabled students and employees. The bicentenary celebrations of Presidency University in 2017, aims the preservation and rejuvenation of the esteemed institute, “through a new concerted civic initiative enabling it to play a role in the global transformation of university education in the twenty-first century”<sup>xi</sup>. Among its major prerogatives, extending full-fledged help to its disabled members has been listed as a significant one. A committee has been set up under the supervision of the Dean of Students to register the

needs and complaints of people with special needs. The libraries are equipped with facilities to help the physically and the visually challenged. It has reference books in Braille and are trying to collaborate with publishing houses so that soon text books can be available in Braille too. A separate 100 point register called a 'roster' is maintained by the Personnel Section, which consists of the reservation rules to be adhered to while employing disabled people in service. Different rosters are being maintained for the recruitment of the teaching and the non-teaching faculty. Presidency University aims to engage sign language interpreters for deaf students. New buildings have bathrooms which accommodate wheel chairs for the physically disabled. The Central and the Arts library have separate reading rooms located at the ground floor for the physically challenged. There are recorded C.Ds for visually impaired students. Susanta Mandal, a visually handicapped second year student pursuing Masters in Bengal has expressed his desire and need for a 'Talking Library' in order to facilitate him with his masters syllabus. In a recent Board Meeting, Registrar Dr. Debjyoti Konar has placed a proposal for implementation of the same within the end of this year. Due to scarcity of space within the College Street campus of Presidency University initially the vehicles of only employees and faculties were allowed inside the campus, recently a rule has been formulated to allow the vehicles of disabled students inside the campus against an application supported by a proper disability certificate, which has to be submitted to the Dean of Students. The second and the third campus coming up at Rajarhat and Kurseong respectively incorporate infrastructural facilities which would allow bigger space for the inclusion of wheel chairs within classrooms and toilets. The architectural plan of the second campus vouches to include specially designed classes for the mentally disabled too. Steps are being taken to extend and develop its I.T Services by including braille computes for blind students and teachers. JAWS Programme for Windows, which has speech synthesizers would be soon included to help the visually impaired.

Students with special needs are provided with the amenity of extra forty five minutes time during examinations and blind students get the aid of writers. Apart from a resident doctor, recently a psychological counselor has been appointed to take care of students who owing to their physical or mental ailments succumb to depression and agony. **The counseling facility can also be availed by other students because often in the race of achieving success in the cut throat competition of academia, people forget the need for mental well-being. However, it is worth remembering that mental well-being is the primary need towards achieving success in any genre of life.**The University is further planning to negotiate with the Blind People's Association for organizing occasional inter college tournaments for its specially abled students. The University resolves to ensure that students who become disabled during the course of studies would be ushered with equal resourceful provisions to complete their degree. There is a complaint cell which has officers designated to register and hear to the complaints and needs of such students and employees. **There are staff quarters within the premises which are being renovated to accommodate physically challenged members, who want to avail accommodation facilities.**Presidency University plans to seek permission from the Higher Education Department for recruiting trainers, well conversed with the needs of students with special abilities.

Jadavpur University has negotiated with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for awarding disabled-friendly status to both of its two campuses at Jadavpur and Salt Lake. The University runs a new centre named Special Education & HEPSN (Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs) Cell that caters to the need of paraplegic students. Professor Manojit Mondal, coordinator of the Cell said the University coordinates monthly meetings to have an updated review of the proceedings of the Cell. The HEPSN has been divided into two categories, namely the Social Service Wing and the Disability Studies Wing.

From December 2017, the Cell introduced an “android-based app that is a GPRS based voice command navigator that will give voice command in an android-based mobile phone facilitating a blind student to move in the right direction without stick or anyone else's help," Mondal said. “Talking Book Library” has been set up instead of Braille books for the visually impaired. The Talking Book Library is well equipped with over 850 cassettes and 120 C.Ds for nearly all undergraduate and post graduate subjects. The Library also has a recording and editing Certificate courses in computer and Communicative Languages along with Job oriented training programmes are being provided to the disabled students. Most of the Universities of West Bengal are equipped to provide assistance to physically challenged students and employees, however it has been observe that Institutes of Higher Education are not well equipped to provide care to the mentally challenged. Prof. Suranjan Das, Vice-Chancellor of Jadavpur University, has expressed his desire to recruit trained counsellors to help such students. The HEPSN Cell is categorized into Research work and extending Special Support to disabled students. Jadavpur University acknowledges the signifance of technological amenities in encouraging differently abled students to pursue Higher Academics. With the help of HEPSN, it is striving to incorporate technological advancements in the Engineering and Science Departments. To encourage higher education among the students with At present, two Book-readers (both are associated with All India Radio, Kolkata) and one Voice Editor have been appointed for the preparation of talking books. The University has begun a computer training program (Foundation Course on Computer Application, passed by Executive Council of Jadavpur University) for the socially and economically backward students coming from socially or economically backward students and also for students with special needs. The course includes the fundamentals in computer that is, MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Internet. One Computer Trainer has been engaged for the course into two batches per semester. The Faculty of

the computer course for the visually impaired candidates is himself a person with visual impairment. Jadavpur University and the University of Calcutta maintain a critical database to keep an updated record of disabled students and employees. Calcutta University has recently placed a proposal to the Department of West Bengal for providing job coachings to the differently abled students. The University also provides a monthly scholarship of Rs.1500 to the visually impaired. Dr. Santoshi Halder, from the Department of Education of Calcutta University has collaborated with the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences and ICSSR, for executing two major projects namely: “Participation of Children with Intellectual Disabilities in India and South Africa” and “Exploring the Probable Environmental risk factors of Autism Spectrum Disorder”.

Rabindra Bharati University often organizes seminars and workshops on disability issues to create and spread awareness among students and staffs about the problems encountered by the differently abled. A seminar on Disability in Women and the Challenges faced by them was organized on 9th March, 2017 by Department of Socio Economic Rehabilitation, NILD in association with Dept. of Sociology & Dept. of Human Rights & Human Development, to celebrate International Women’s Day. Smt. Nupur Banerjee, Chief Government Architect & Ex. Officio Chief Engineer, PwD, Govt. of West Bengal inaugurated the program. Among others who graced the program with their presence were, Smt. Uma Sen, OSD, Office of State Commissioner of Disability, Govt. of West Bengal, and Sujata Sen, former Professor of Sociology of Rabindra Bharati University. Speakers from National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities (Divyangjan), Kolkata expressed their views on the need of technological advancements to ease the life of the physically challenged. Dr. Sampa Sen, Associate Professor spoke about the acid victim and their horrendous conditions in rehabs and their families. Dr. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury; Vice Chancellor of the University raised a major concern when he expressed his opinion about the theory of ‘Inclusion’ and ‘Inclusive

Education” for the differently abled. He believes in the fact that including disabled students in the regular curriculum with other students would facilitate in building and nurturing their morale and would minimize prejudice against people with different needs. It has been observed that the Universities of Kolkata and other parts of West Bengal are trying their best to help its differently abled students and employees in living a hassle free life, however further steps needs to be implemented in order to ensure the fact that the rules formulated and appended by the Government do not remain fettered within the boundaries of files and papers.

In a personal interview with Dr. Priyanka de: Assistant Professor in the department of Philosophy of Presidency University, Kolkata, it has been observed that women employees with disability need a more elaborate infrastructure as far as washrooms and staff rooms are concerned. It will be highly beneficial for all women, especially disabled women employees and students if they are provided with period leaves. Dr. De further spoke of the biased attitude that that she had been facing since the inception of her career and her tenure of work in various institutes. Disabled women employees are often treated with pity and offered lesser number of classes or students under them for assignments. She has further expressed the need for separate staff rooms for disabled women with bigger area where they can change if needed. “A common staff area with male colleagues becomes difficult at times when I need to change” says Dr. De.

An elaborate scrutiny should be carried out by the Government and by all institutes to find out if the facilities provided to the disabled are completely usable to them. Every institute needs to incorporate a special Cell or A Wing to register the needs of its disabled people. It has often been observed that few institutes still do not have adequate amenities for the differently abled. A conversation with Shalmoli Banerjee, an undergraduate student of Guru Das College, affiliated to

the University of Calcutta revealed her struggles in attending her regular classes as her college does not have ramp facilities. Priyanka De, Assistant Professor in the department of Philosophy in Presidency University was born with cerebral palsy which has rendered her incapable to move without a wheel chair, spoke of her trouble that she faced during the National Eligibility Test that is being conducted by UGC every year. As she had been assigned a room during the exam with other visually challenged students she faced disturbances every time the visually impaired candidate spoke to his writer. Thus, it can be opined that often in the garb of providing facility to the disabled their minute problems are not being adequately kept in mind, rendering it 'unusable'. Special care needs to be taken in such arenas, where the facility rendered to them can be suitably used by them.

### **Conclusion:**

Save us from the tyranny of the norm. Blessed are the unfit, the twisted, the shamed, blessed are the naked and the nude. Blessed are they who will not get better. Blessed are those who shock the pool. Save us from the saviours, from your saints, from those who know what's best. Save us from progress — Someday we may Get Better. Till we do, Let me learn to live as if living might matter, As if we won't be punished for our hope, trust, love, Save us from ourselves, be fast and true, while we Save ourselves from what's above, while we Save ourselves, at last, from you, said Jim Ferris, in his poem "On the Betterment of Humanity". Disability is not an individual anomaly, but an attitudinal one. After a thorough research, in this genre, it has been observed that disabled people are more scathed by cultural and societal barriers than by their physical or cognitive limitation. They were considered socially dead. The problem further aggravates in the case of disabled women who are doubly stigmatized. It is not physical sensory or cognitive or sensory



impairments, that cause disability, but rather the way the society fail to accommodate the natural aspects of difference between people (Das, 2006).“Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn’t mean he lacks vision.”<sup>xii</sup>said Stevie Wonder. It’s worth remembering that abled does not mean enabled, disabled does not mean less abled. A little clemency and benevolence can help people with special needs walk a long way in the path of life. What we need to inculcate is the concept of an inclusive society where people irrespective of their gender and their physical or mental wellbeing will be wholeheartedly accepted by others.



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