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## **FOSTERING THE CULTURE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

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The Webster's third new international dictionary defines discrimination as treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which other people are treated. This unjust, unfair and prejudicial treatment is generally given on the grounds of race, caste, age, sex or disability. The present essay will focus on discrimination on grounds of disability.

Persons with Disabilities have to face discrimination on daily basis and are denied equal rights and opportunities that are easily available to non-disabled people. They have to face discrimination due to prevalent prejudices and stereotypes about disability and disabled people. Discrimination is the behavioral manifestation of prejudice. Gordon Allport in his book *The Nature of Prejudice* puts forward that the behavioral component of prejudice has five incremental stages: antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack and extermination. The first stage leads to second and second to third and so on. Thus, it is a never ending vicious circle. Antilocution and avoidance of disabled people by non-disabled leads to acts of discrimination against disabled people.

The types of discrimination against Persons with disabilities are overlapping and are difficult to categorize. It may be direct or indirect. It may take the form of less favoured treatment or it may be downright rejection of persons with disabilities. Most of their problems stem from, or are an extension of, discrimination against them. Disabled people are primarily defined in terms of their disability and are considered to be inferior to the non-disabled. This is the most common form of discrimination practiced in all societies. All other types of discrimination are manifestation of this attitude of non-disabled towards disabled people.

Discrimination against disabled people starts in the family and community. This discrimination may take very subtle forms like exclusion from family and community rituals, denial of share in family property and other resources. They have to face discrimination in employment and at workplace on account of their disability. The rate of unemployment among disabled persons is much higher than non-disabled. Even those who are employed have to face discrimination at workplace on account of their disability. They confront prejudices about their productivity, and are generally denied special facilities to enhance their performance.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is not restricted to family and workplace. Inaccessible buildings and public transport are also a kind of discrimination because they are designed for able bodied and disabled people are not taken into consideration. They have to face overwhelming physical and social barriers in accessing public spaces. Problems of infrastructure like roads, drinking water sources and school buildings restrict people with disabilities. Even Temples are built on hilltops making them inaccessible for many persons with disabilities. Due to inaccessibility, they are largely excluded from social gatherings, recreational facilities and public utilities. Inaccessibility keeps them isolated and Their Professional and personal life is severely affected.

### **Sources of discrimination**

The major source or cause of discrimination against disabled people is the fear of difference and disability in the mind of non-disabled. This fear is the result of many stereotypes regarding disability and disabled people. Describing the process of formation of negative and positive stereotypes Gilman writes:

The other is invested with all of the qualities of the 'bad' or the 'good.' The 'bad' self, with its repressed sadistic impulses, becomes the 'bad' other; the 'good' self/object, with its infallible correctness, becomes the antithesis to the flawed image of the self, the self out of control. The 'bad' other becomes the negative stereotype; the 'good' other becomes the positive stereotype. The former is that which we fear to become; the latter, that which we fear we cannot achieve (Gilman, 20).

Physical disability is seen to be a sign of mental and moral deficiency. This attitude of Non-disabled motivates them to perceive persons with disabilities as inferior or defective and they generally tend to avoid or ignore people with disabilities. Lack of knowledge about disabilities is also a major source of discrimination. Most of the non-disabled do not know the nature, causes and effects of disability. They focus only on disability and ignore the capabilities of disabled persons. Unawareness about disability and disabled persons is at the root of many prejudices about them. These prejudices give rise to discrimination against them.

### **Fostering the culture of nondiscrimination**

The most effective way of fostering culture of nondiscrimination is to eradicate the prejudices and stereotypes about disability and disabled persons. This can be achieved by promoting Social awareness about various disabilities. Integration of persons with disabilities in society can bring about more and more interaction among disabled and non-disabled persons. This will help to reduce ignorance about disabilities.

Empowerment of persons with disabilities through education and employment can establish them as productive members of family and community. This can change the attitude of non-disabled towards disabled persons. Moreover, educated and employed persons with disabilities will also be in a position to fight against discrimination.

Antidiscrimination laws are essential to foster culture of nondiscrimination. These laws make it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with education, employment and provision of goods and services. These laws also aim at giving equal opportunities and ensure full participation of persons with disabilities in all walks of life. Many countries have enacted legislations to empower persons with disabilities and end discrimination. *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990), *The Disability Discrimination Act* enacted by British Government in 1995 and *rights of persons with disabilities act 2016* in India are good examples of Antidiscrimination laws.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, according to social model of disability, the source of a person's impairment is in her or his medical condition, but the source of disability is in society. Social discrimination is the most serious problem faced by persons with disabilities. A healthy culture of nondiscrimination is essential for overall development of persons with disabilities. It can be achieved by reasonable adjustments and positive discrimination in their favour. A shift from moral or medical model of disability to a rights-based approach and removal of structural inequalities can promote social inclusion of persons with disabilities and foster a culture of nondiscrimination.

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