

FUNCTIONAL PROFILE OF JAMMU & KASHMIR STATE IN THE AREA OF MENTAL RETARDATION

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Human diversity plays a crucial role in the contemporary themes of social justice. A positive recognition of disability has become a part of the inescapable human diversity that enriches our experience. Every civilized society therefore, must provide for adequate physical and financial resources for the education and rehabilitation of the disabled so that they can enjoy a life of freedom, self respect and take active part in social life. The present study is an attempt to understand the current scenario of the available services for the disabled in the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

KEYWORDS : diversity; democratic participation; social policies; human empowerment; freedom.

The concept of human diversity plays a crucial role in contemporary theories of social justice. A positive recognition of disability has become a part of the inescapable human diversity that enriches our life experience. (Corker et.al. 1999). Thus, the concept of disability is articulated in terms of differences to be positively recognized than stigmatized and discriminated against. Therefore, a civilized society is to provide adequate resources for the education and rehabilitation of the disabled; this can help the disabled enjoy a life of freedom and self-respect. The government has to set a threshold level below which a life cannot be deemed truly human and provide for a decent social minimum (Nussbaum, 2000). Thus, infrastructural facilities, choice of curricula, pedagogical practices as well as 'educational environment' supporting these, become essential. (Barnes et.al., 1999).

INTRODUCTION

Disability is usually referred to as an individual disadvantage. Helping a disabled person is perceived as an act of distribution of benefits and sharing of burdens. We can think of impairment and disability as aspects of human diversity and more specifically understanding of personal heterogeneities. Secondly, a positive approach to the issue envisages

democratic participation and empowerment of the disabled in the process of identifying relevant capacities and designing of social policies.

In India serious efforts to ameliorate the status and condition of the disabled got underway with the establishment of the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the year 1986. The RCI has taken up the onerous responsibility of improving the quality of life of the disabled through various programmes covering all aspects of disability and extending the coverage of these programmes to all states in a phased manner. The monumental publications of the RCI entitled "Status of Disability in India-2000" and "Disability Status India- 2003" provide convincing evidence of the ambit of its activities and services, achievements and coverage, as well as concern and anguish to meet the future challenges in its onward quest to bring a smile in the lives of the individuals suffering from different kinds of disabilities. The task is daunting, full of challenges but also holds a lot of promise.

The present scenario reveals that the services for the disabled have mostly concentrated in urban areas and have excluded regions with low literacy and access. The state of Jammu and Kashmir can also be included in the latter category.

J & K STATE: SALIENT FEATURES

The state of Jammu & Kashmir is situated in the northern extremity of India. The territory of the state lies between 32^o and 37^o North and 73^o and 80^o East. The state is bound in the north-east by China, in the north- west by Afghanistan and in the west by Pakistan. The southern boundary of the state is contiguous with the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. On the basis of its location, the state occupies a position of unique and strategic importance in the subcontinent.

The area of the state is 2, 22,236 sq.kms. As per Census figures of 2001, the population of the state is 1.007 crore. The literacy rate is 55.52% which is below national average of 65%. The state is divided into three distinct regions, viz, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh comprising 14 districts. More recently 4 districts each in Jammu and Kashmir regions have been added, thereby raising the number to 22. Even though the state of Jammu and Kashmir has ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity, yet it is a perfect example of unity in diversity. For the last 16 years the J&K State has undergone turmoil and disturbances because of terrorism and militancy that have taken a heavy toll of life and property, besides throwing normal life out of gear.

Topography of the state comes in the way of developing adequate infrastructure. Though rich in natural resources like forests, hydro-electric potential, mineral wealth, etc., the state lacks in development because of

financial constraints and inaccessibility.

The state of Jammu & Kashmir lags behind in the social sector, i.e. education, public health, social welfare and other basic amenities. According to Economic Survey-2006-07, the following facts emerge vis-à-vis development of the state.

- Against the annual growth of 7 per cent at all India level during first four years of 10th Five Year Plan, the state has achieved 6.11 per cent annual average growth rate during the first two years of the plan and was expected to achieve 5.75 per cent annual average growth rate during the previous three years of the 10th Five Year Plan.
- Per capita income in Jammu & Kashmir comes out at Rs 17,174/- per annum as against the national average of Rs 25,907/-.
- Road length per 100 sq km area in J&K is 35.71 km as against 104.64 km in the country.
- There was one Post Office in J&K for 60 sq km area as against national average of 20 sq km. The number of telephones per 100 populations in the State was 7.76, well short of all India level of 13.57.
- On an average there was only one medical institution to serve 3127 persons. There were only 111 hospital beds and 48 doctors / vaid / hakims available per lakh of population, the survey revealed.
- J&K figures among the last four most illiterate and educationally backward states.

THE PRESENT SCENARIO IN J&K WITH REGARD TO THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Very little reference is available in the history of Jammu & Kashmir with regard to education and rehabilitation of mentally retarded persons. These are in the form of isolated cases which came to the notice of the then Maharajas of J&K State in pre-partition days. At present in the state of J&K, programmes of education and rehabilitation of the mentally retarded individuals are limited to the planning level. There is little awareness and sensitization amongst masses at large and especially among the disadvantaged. Vulnerable groups of society living in areas where proper facilities are not available undergo suffering at many levels. Ordinary people generally hide cases of mental retardation for fear of ridicule and social rejection.

In 1974, the Government of India launched the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). This scheme was adopted by the Jammu & Kashmir State as well. However, in this scheme, there was no place for the disabled, especially mentally retarded children. In 1975, Project Integrated Education for the disabled was started. However, no action was taken by the government of J&K State. The Mental Health Act (1987) of the

Government of India clearly excluded persons with mental retardation from the definition of those with mental illness. National Policy on Education (1986) and Plan of Action (1992) advocated the policy of integrating the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners. It was recommended that the disabled should have access to quality education comparable to normal children. However, no follow up action was initiated in the state to either provide integrated education or to focus attention, and the mentally retarded continued to be classified under the category of handicapped children. The International Classification of Diseases And Related Health Problems (ICD-10: 1994) specified four degrees of severity reflecting the level of mental retardation viz., mild, moderate, severe and profound, according to IQ level; and defined mental retardation as a "Condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person which is specially characterized by sub-normality of intelligence." Whereas these (classification & definition) were accepted at the national level in 1995, the state government of J & K adopted the same in the year 1998 with the enforcement of Disability Act.

The World Conference on 'Education for All'-1990 focused on a much broader range of children who are excluded from or marginalized within education system because of their apparent difficulties. It also highlighted

- Those who are already enrolled in education but for a variety of reasons do not achieve it adequately.
- Those who are not enrolled in schools but who could participate if schools were more flexible in their responses and welcoming in their approach.
- The relatively small group of children with more severe impairments who may have a need for some form of additional support.

J&K State Disability Act (1998) makes it mandatory on the part of Government to provide needed educational facilities for the disabled and to ensure equal opportunity for improving their capabilities.

According to this programme, the Government and local authorities shall

- Ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years;
- Endeavour to promote the integration of students with disabilities in the normal schools;
- Promote setting-up of special schools in Government and private sector for those in need of special education, in such a manner that children with disabilities living in any part of the country have

- access to such schools; and
- Endeavour to equip the special schools for children with disabilities with vocational training facilities.

The scenario of education of the disabled in Jammu & Kashmir is far from satisfactory. The total population of differently-abled children in J & K state as per census, 2001, is 3.067 lakhs. Out of total disabled, 2.8 lakh individuals are visually impaired, 0.38 lakhs are physically handicapped, 0.17 lakhs are with speech disability and 0.13 lakhs have hearing disability. There are only 15 institutions in J&K state to cater to the needs of differently-abled individuals as against these large numbers of disabled. Only 0.05% has access to education. The average intake capacity of each school is not more than 40; it means that only a very small proportion out of the total population of the disabled is making use of educational/ rehabilitation facilities while the rest is outside the ambit.

As per Census-2001, 24,879 individuals have been categorized as mentally retarded which constitutes 8.2% of the disabled in J&K. There are only 5 schools in J&K that too in Jammu city, catering to the learning needs of the mentally retarded and approximately 150 students are on the rolls in these schools. Further, the inmates in these schools are studying at the primary grades.

In fact, in the state of J&K no statistics or data are available regarding

- the number of mentally retarded individuals of different age groups;
- the number of institutions catering to the needs of mentally retarded in different Districts of Kashmir and Ladakh regions; and
- scholarship or other financial assistance made available to the mentally retarded.

Similarly no figures are available for the number of mentally retarded enrolled in the field of inclusive education in the State of Jammu & Kashmir. In fact, there is no state policy or departmental regulation with regard to inclusive education. The main reason behind this is non-availability of trained teachers to handle the mentally retarded children in normal school situations.

The educational level of mentally retarded individuals as compared to general population tends to depict a gloomy situation. Even among disabled literates, a significant proportion was not even educated up to primary level in case of mentally retarded children both in rural and urban areas.

A majority of the teachers lack specific training to teach the mentally retarded children in an effective way. A majority of parents are also unaware of various educational facilities available for the mentally retarded children.

Till the year 2005 there were no facilities in the State of J&K for

training special teachers for the mental retarded. Nevertheless, in the year 2005-06, one College of Education in Jammu with the approval of RCI, New Delhi has come up to prepare and train teachers for mentally retarded children with intake capacity of 20 trainees.

All the five schools for mentally retarded children are totally dependent on government support (Grant-in-aid) for the purchase of aids and appliances and other fitments. Funds thus allocated by J&K state are largely spent on the physically handicapped.

Schools expressed their inability to provide quality skills, as equipments were neither sufficient nor qualitatively adequate to impart quality skills. Further there was little provision for health care services for mentally retarded in these schools.

In fact, no information is available with regards to such important aspects as infrastructure, teacher profile, teaching materials, equipments and technical support, learning environment, support from the head and staff and adequacy of financial resources in the schools for the mentally retarded children in J&K State.

The J&K State Disability Act 1998 has not been implemented in letter and spirit and, till date, mentally retarded individuals have not been recognized as a separate category among the disabled. The hospital records are deficient as these do not differentiate mentally retarded from the mentally ill – a sad story indeed.

ROADMAP FOR IMPROVING THE STATUS OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED

- A survey needs to be conducted at the district level to identify the population of mentally retarded individuals in J&K State. Identification of such target groups should be conducted at micro levels through field surveys.
- The present ad-hoc way of education and rehabilitation of the mentally retarded children needs to be replaced by systematic planning and regular monitoring.
- A well-organized programme for the orientation of teachers for inclusive education requires to be initiated to handle the educational and allied needs of the mentally retarded children through DIET/SIE and other institutions both in the Government and voluntary sectors. At the same time, wide publicity should be given to make the public aware of the availability of inclusive educational facilities in government and private schools.
- Orientation programmes, bridge courses, workshops and seminars need to be organized for teachers, administrators, policy makers and officials of different departments for enhancing the quality of teaching in the educational institutions (both special and general

schools), imparting education to mentally retarded children.

- Counselors who are trained to handle and guide the mentally retarded should be appointed in schools.
- Curricula of study and the spectrum of curricular activities are required to be suitably adopted to meet the learning needs of mentally retarded of different age groups.
- Provision for holding remedial coaching after school hours by specialized and trained professionals for the mentally retarded children should be provided.
- There is an urgent need to prepare and train teachers in Special Education (MR). In fact such programmes can be introduced at elementary, secondary, higher and anganwari training levels and even integrated with other professional training programmes for key change agents to generate manpower with better understanding, awareness and capabilities about mental retardation management both in normal as well as in special schools.
- Both in-service and prospective special educators need to be encouraged to undergo B.Ed. and other diploma level programmes, through regular and distance-education mode from RCI approved centers of learning and open universities.
- Steps should be taken to improve coordination between State Government, Department of Education, and Social Welfare, Health and Municipal agencies, Institutions and other Non-Government organizations. Valuable feedback from these agencies would help in generating greater awareness and cooperation which is largely lacking in J&K state at present with regards to the mentally retarded children.
- Programmes should be designed to create awareness among the parents of children suffering from mental retardation to evoke parental cooperation and acceptance on the one hand and making home environment more congenial for these children on the other. Parents, and the public at large need to be encouraged to report cases of mild and severe mental retardation at some prominent and easily accessible centers so that professional help can be rendered to such individuals and their records maintained. Programmes like the RCI, IGNOU sensitization modules for the family members of the mentally retarded through nodal centers can prove to be helpful in this regard.
- Community-based rehabilitation programmes should be encouraged for the mentally retarded persons. Some special homes should be set up to give shelter to the mentally retarded individuals who are homeless or have been abandoned.

- Researches in the area of mental retardation should be given priority by medical practitioners, social workers, educational researchers and specialists so that personality, behavioural achievement and rehabilitation-related problems of mentally retarded individuals can be studied under a multidisciplinary perspective, and more effective strategies can be evolved to educate and rehabilitate the mentally retarded.
- Special funds are required to be earmarked for the education and rehabilitation of mentally retarded individuals. Clubbing of funds for children suffering from other kinds of disability should be avoided. The funds allocated for mentally retarded children should not be diverted to other activities.
- Majority of mentally retarded children are living with parents. Hence social security measures from government or community need to be strengthened to support them.
- The J&K State Disability Act 1998 is to be translated into regional languages, so that its various provisions, benefits, etc. are made widely known to the people and its salient features propagated through adopting multimedia presentation.
- Equal opportunities require to be provided to the mentally retarded people in employment and their rights and privileges protected so as to enable them to live with dignity and respect.
- Child Guidance Centers are required to be established to provide guidance and support services to the mentally retarded children enrolled in schools and colleges.
- OPD facilities, medicines, diagnostic and therapeutic services need to be provided free of charge at all major Government and Private Hospitals for mentally retarded individuals.
- Disabled-friendly hostels require to be provided in schools and colleges for students suffering from mild mental retardation so as to ensure their retention, supervision and progress.
- Interest-free loans for the mentally retarded should be provided for encouraging self-employment entrepreneurship. Their self-employment schemes must be monitored and success stories need to be highlighted to serve as encouragement to other disabled sections of society.
- All major public places, educational institutions, parks, railway stations, bus stands, airports, hospitals, hotels should adhere to the building norms to provide easy accessibility for the mentally retarded persons. And the public transport system should also be disabled-friendly.
- The people in the state of J&K are gradually becoming aware about

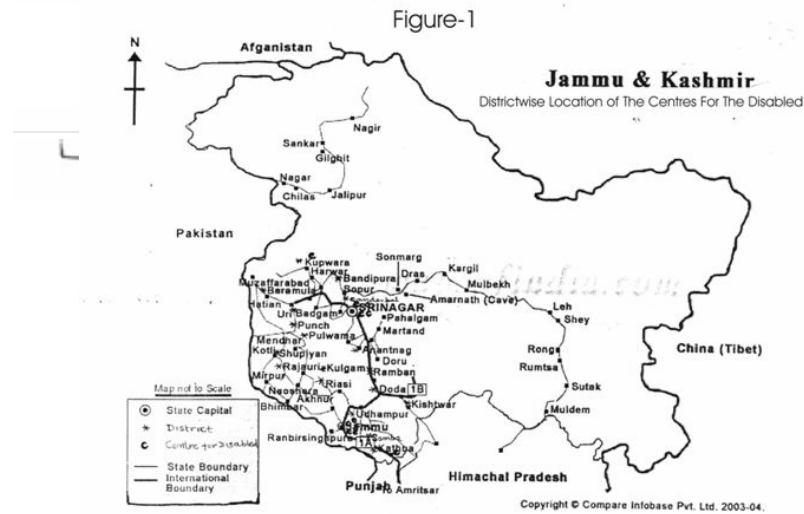
the issues related to the disabled including the mentally retarded. However, a lot requires to be done in the direction of their identification, coverage, programmes, education and rehabilitation. The state government and the RCI need to give high priority to these areas so that achievements in the field match the demands of the mentally retarded.

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ANNEXURE-I

List of Institutions For The Disabled in J&K -2007 Institutions For The Mentally Retarded

1. Rotary Inner Wheel Home for Mentally Handicapped Children, 63/2, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu (J&K) Ph. No. 47917
2. Bal Village Project for mentally Retarded Children, Mandal Kalibari, Kathua(J&K)
3. Asha Tiger School for Mentally Retarded Children, Jammu Cantt.
4. Sahara, Day Boarding School for Mentally Retarded Children, Near Garden Estate, Trikuta Nagar. Jammu (J&K).
5. Sankalp Vocational Centre for Handicapped, Guru Nanak Nagar, Jammu.

INSTITUTIONS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Residential School for Blind, Ved Mandir, Amphalla, Jammu.
2. School for Unsighted Children, Barbar Shah, Srinagar.
3. Jammu Red Cross Home for the Handicapped, Udhywala, Akalpur, Jammu.
4. Akhil Bhartiya Neterheen Sangh, Ved Mandir, Jammu.
5. Hellen Keller Trust School, Barbar Shah, Srinagar.

INSTITUTIONS FOR THE HEARING-IMPAIRED

1. Deaf and Dumb School, Abhedananda Home, Ram Bagh, Srinagar.
2. School for Hearing Impaired J&K, Samaj Kalyan Kendra, Geeta Bhavan Mohalla Paharian, Jammu.
3. School for Hearing Handicapped, Behind Radha Swami Satsang, Residency Road.

INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED

1. Basera-e- tabbasum, Distt. Kupwara, Srinagar.
2. Jammu Red Cross, Home for Handicapped, Udhyawala, Akalpur, Jammu.

ANNEXURE-II**BASIC FIGURES RELATED TO J&K STATE**

1. Number of districts				14
ii) Area in sq. kms.	:			2,22,236.0*
iii) Total population	:	Persons	:	10,069,917
		Males	:	5,300,574
		Females	:	4,769,343
iv) Decadal population growth 1991-2001	:	Persons	:	2,266,017
Interpolated Absolute	:	Percentage	:	29.04
v) Population density	:			99
vi) Sex ratio	:			900
vii) 0-6 population Absolute		Persons	:	1,431,182
		Males	:	738,839
		Females	:	692,343
viii) Percentage of total population	:	Persons	:	4.21
		Males	:	13.94
		Females	:	14.52
ix) Literacy Absolute	:	Persons	:	4,704,252
		Males	:	2,999,353
		Females	:	1,704,899
x) Rate (Excluding 0-6 population)		Persons	:	54.46
		Males	:	65.75
		Female	:	41.82

NOTE:

a) Includes 78,111 sq. km under illegal occupation of Pakistan and 5,180 sq. km illegally handed over by Pakistan to China and 37,555 sq. km under illegal

occupation of China in Leh (Ladakh) district.

b) The population figures exclude population of areas under unlawful occupation of Pakistan and China where Census could not be taken.

c) 1991 Population is interpolated as no Census was conducted in the state in 1991.

Source: - Census-2001

ANNEXURE-III

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS OF DISABILITY IN J&K AND INDIA.

	India	J&K
A. TOTAL POPULATION	1,02,86,10,328	1,01,43,700
B. TOTAL DISABLED POPULATION	2,19,06,769	3,02,670
C. TYPE OF DISABILITY		
i) In seeing	1,06,34,881(44.5%)	2,08,713(69%)
ii) In speech	16,40,868(7.5%)	14,157(4.7%)
iii) In hearing	12,61,722(5.8%)	16,956(5.6%)
iv) In movement	61,05,477(27.9%)	37,965(12.5%)
v) Mental	22,63,821(10.3%)	24,879(8.2%)

Source: Census – 2001

ANNEXURE-IV

DISTRICT WISE LITERACY RATES IN J&K STATE (2001)

S.No	State/District	Literacy rate		
		Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5
	Jammu and Kashmir	54.46	65.75	41.82
1.	Kupwara	40.80	53.55	26.83
2.	Baramula	44.57	56.39	31.42
3.	Srinagar	59.31	68.99	48.11

4.	Badgam	39.54	51.23	26.60
5.	Pulwama	47.35	58.87	34.93
6.	Anantnag	44.10	55.56	31.51
7.	Leh(Ladakh)	62.24	71.98	50.03
8.	Kargil	58.21	73.58	40.96
9.	Doda	46.92	63.56	28.35
10.	Udhampur	54.16	66.43	39.89
11.	Poonch	51.07	65.41	35.30
12.	Rajouri	57.65	69.64	44.14
13.	Jammu	77.30	84.92	68.75
14.	Kathua	65.29	75.73	53.92

Note: Literacy rate is the percentage of literates to population aged 7 years and above.
