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Title : Disability Studies in India : Emerging Issues and Trends

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<u>Abstract:</u>   During recent decades the issue of disability has metamorphosed from a purely individual medical / clinical problem to a human rights and socio - political issue. Consequently, the study of Disability Studies is constantly gaining recognition as a separate academic discipline in the universities and academic institutions of Western countries - such as, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia; and degrees / diplomas ranging from degree to post doctorate are offered in this area. But in India, which has the highest population of the disabled in the world (estimated to be approximately 100 million), the situation is quite reverse. Notwithstanding, plethora of studies and research carried out on multitudinous aspects of disability and rehabilitation issues in developed societies; the field of Disability Studies remains, still, a grey and unexplored area. in our country -not having been properly unravelled by intellectuals and constantly ignored in the curricula of universities and academic institutions. Due attention has not been accorded to examine disability and rehabilitation issues from inter-disciplinary paradigms. This tendency has culminated in the issue of disability being studied and analyzed as merely the part of the syllabi of certain specific disciplines and that, too, in a rather piecemeal fashion. What is most perturbing is that there seems to be far too rigid a compartmentalization of disciplines in the curricula of Indian universities and academic institutions; which has led to a reduction of cross-flow between various fields of research and is, thus, obstructing progress in the specific area of Disability Studies. In this research paper, an attempt is made to provide a brief recapitulation of the growth of Disability Studies as an academic discipline in the Western universities and academic institutions and thereby exploring the prospects for incorporating the teaching of this emerging area in the Indian universities and academic institutions.

Disability Studies in India : Emerging Issues and Trends

G. N. Karna ,PhD*

Introduction;

The phenomena of disability has agitated the mindsets of the people since the dawn of civilization . During the last three decades or so , especially in the aftermath of the disability rights movement , disability politics has assumed the form of global 'civil rights movement' ; thus placing disability issues on the mainstream of international human rights agenda . The increasing pace of globalisation and liberalisation has also tremendously influenced the academic arena and contributed to generation of a new wave of consciousness among the disabled individuals . The normal tendency is to discard the damaging stereotypes of passivity and dependency –which have, till recently, characterized diverse aspects of social security and welfare policies . Like other minority groups (such as – women , poor , scheduled castes / scheduled tribes and other backward and underprivileged strata of society(, there is growing realization among them that the failure to guarantee and promote their rights has obviously led to their marginalisation 'second class citizenship' . As a reaction , the disabled throughout the world are clamouring for empowering themselves so as to seek greater participation and equalization of opportunities . This has thrown up new challenges to the policy makers , intellectuals , professionals and all those who are involved in rendering social services to the disabled .

The tone and tenor of disability rights movement has, thus, radically changed the disability discourse . The phenomena of disability can no longer be perceived as a ' personal state of affairs ' but as a human rights and socio- political issue . One must also take into account the structural character of disability and the social, economic and cultural mechanisms as also the multi- dimensional character of the processes by which disadvantaged persons are excluded from the social interactions , policies and rights – which are supposed to be intrinsic part of social and economic participation . The issue of disability has metamorphosed from a purely individual medical / clinical problem to a human rights and socio-political issue (Karna, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, pp. 20 - 40). Thus, disability is, basically, determined by public policy. Disability is whatever policy wants and makes it to be.   This observation gives credence to the view that disability implies a problem or a disadvantageous situation, necessitating compensatory or ameliorative action.

The issue of disability has been, traditionally, examined from medical/ clinical approach that focusses on functional impairments; or from psychological approach with its orientation on psychological disturbances; or from economic-vocational standpoint that stresses vocational limitations emanating from physical, mental or sensory impairments; or from systems analysis approach which perceives the phenomenon of disability in systemic terms ; or from minority group perspective which seeks to justify analogies between the disabled and other minorities; or from human rights paradigm, which views legal measures as constituting the fundamental framework by which mechanisms for equality of opportunity can be ensured. This approach strongly advocates for, among other things, the formulation and implementation of legislation in order to provide leverage to such disadvantaged individuals and thereby mainstream them. In other words, what is implicit in any application of the human rights strategy is structural transformation, involving re-distribution of economic resources and political power.

While the socio-political approach regards disability as a product of interactions between individual and environment. According to this approach, disability stems primarily from the failure of a structured social environment to adapt to the needs and aspirations of the disabled individuals rather than from the inability of disabled persons to adjust to the norms and expectations of the society. The evolution of Disability Studies as a separate field of academic discipline in the aftermath of the disability rights movement reflects the change in conceptual framework of disability. Recent decades have seen the issue of disability becoming a hotly contested issue in the political arena, with the development of the disabled people's movement, and in academic debates. A galaxy of scholars, most of whom are disabled people themselves, have reconceptualised disability as a complex and sophisticated form of social oppression (Oliver, 1990) or institutional discrimination. The theoretical analysis, thus, has shifted from individuals and their impairments to disabling environments and hostile social perception (Hahn, 1982, 1983, 1985; Oliver, 1990, 1996).

Consequently, the study of 'Disability Studies' is constantly and rapidly gaining momentum and broader visibility as a separate academic discipline in the colleges, universities and academic institutions of Western advanced countries - such as, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia. Researchers from diverse professions are evincing keen interest in the analyses of laws, regulations and programmes affecting persons with disabilities; thus examining the phenomena of disability from inter-disciplinary perspectives. The underlying assumption is that disability must be approached from holistic paradigm. Without an appreciation of policy issues shaping the alternatives available to such disadvantaged people, individuals opting career in health sciences, the helping professions and other occupations are debarred from valuable insights and crucial contexts for their efforts to serve the interests and needs of this under-privileged segment of the population (Hahn, 1985; Pfeiffer and Yoshida, 1995; Oliver, 1990).

Ironically, despite plethora of studies and research carried out in developed societies; this area, still, remains quite grey and unexplored; and continues to be ignored in the curricula of schools, colleges and universities in India[1] (1) and due attention has not been given to examine disability and rehabilitation policies from inter-disciplinary paradigms (Bhatt, 1963; Iyer, 1982; Rama Mani, 1988; Institute of Social Sciences, 1988; Sen, 1988,1992; Desai, 1990). This tendency has resulted in the field of disability issue being studied and analysed as merely the part of the syllabi of certain specific disciplines - such as, Medical Science, Bio-technology, Psychology, Engineering, Social Work, Special Education, Community Health, Rehabilitation Medicine, Labour Economics and Sociology and that, too, in a rather piecemeal and parochial fashion. While significant contribution could also be expected from other disciplines-such as, Anthropology, Political Science, History, Area Studies, Gandhian and Buddhist Studies as also different branches of humanities (including Literature, Philosophy, Religion and Arts).   What is more, there seems to be far too   rigid a compartmentalisation of disciplines in the curricula of Indian Universities and academic institutions, which has contributed to a reduction of cross-flow between various fields of research and is, hence, obstructing progress in the specific field of disability.

That is why, the emerging area of Disability Studies has so far failed to engage the attention of policy makers and academicians, thus having been denied the status of a separate academic discipline or field of inquiry. In this chapter, an attempt is made to briefly recapitulate the growth of Disability Studies as an academic discipline in Western universities and academic institutions, and thereby strongly advocating for introducing the teaching and research of this area in the universities and academic institutions of India.

Evolution of Disability Studies as a Discipline ;

During recent decades, increased attention has been paid to the analysis of public policies for the disabled persons. This could be judged from the fact that disability and rehabilitation issues are constantly moving to the top of the health and welfare agenda and professionals from a vast array of disciplines are showing deep interest in locating and examining problems and difficulties faced by such persons. The growth of Disability Studies as a distinct academic discipline in Western advanced societies could be viewed as a 'reflection of the changed intellectual orientation'. There are a host of reasons for the heightened focus on 'Disability Studies'.   To begin with, there is the growing awareness among the public towards the ever-burgeoning disability population at the global level and larger social cost arising out of their reduced productivity (Erlanger and Roth, 1985).

The second reason relates to the 'perceived cost of programmes' (ibid). Disabilities are, by definition, chronic disorders; requiring prolonged care and remedies. Rehabilitative measures are extremely expensive in the present age of spiralling prices and serious concern is being raised in certain quarters whether resources are being properly and judiciously allocated or not. Thus, it draws our attention towards the 'concept of distributive justice' of Harold D. Lasswell (1936), who has pioneered the behavioural revolution in Political Science.

The third reason emanates from the problems of inadequate socialisation and stereotyping of the disabled, which may be held responsible for increased assessment and intervention efforts for the disabled individuals. They have been, conventionally, perceived as 'flawed' and in need of rehabilitative services so as to bring them

up to normal standards. Furthermore, the normal tendency is to treat them as 'helpless, incompetent, unproductive and dependent '.

The fourth reason is the increased militancy on the part of the persons with disabilities, especially in the aftermath of the disability rights movement. Breaking a departure from the passive stereotypes and the past traditions, the shut-ins of yesterday are asserting that they have not been shut in by their disabilities, but rather shut out of the mainstream of society (Erlanger and Roth, 1985).

The fifth reason is the greater social and legal activism on behalf of the advocacy groups of the rights of disabled persons, which has led to the mushrooming of direct services and academic enterprises directed at mainstreaming them. This is, to some extent, an extension of the broader wave of activism and legislative progress for the disabled as reflected in the emergence of disability rights movement since 1970s. This transitional phase is characterized by the growing recognition of the disabled population as a minority group: who have been, traditionally, victimized and debarred from their basic human rights.

Apart from all these, there are certain other factors (Linton, 1998) which could be cited to justify the relevance of the teaching of Disability Studies in contemporary society. Among such factors are: the proliferation of parent-child advocacy groups, misconceptions and myths about the phenomena of disability (especially in the Third World societies like India) and growing concern towards high risk for crime, hooliganism, child abuse and abandonment by the family and relatives. Since there is a staggering figure of around 100 million population in our country affected by the ravages of disabling conditions and because of the billions of rupees invested so far on the physical and vocational rehabilitation of such disadvantaged persons, it could be a significant and fascinating area for teaching and research professions. The state exchequer cannot be converted into charity funds to meet the requirements of disabled people on such a mass scale in view of resource crunch. In order to provide a brief recapitulation of the teaching of Disability Studies, it seems necessary to examine the historical evolution of this nascent field of knowledge.

Beginning the Eighteenth century, public policy has moved from providing institutional arrangement for elementary care to facilities for education, including technical and vocational, for the children with disabilities and rehabilitation programme for disabled adults. During the course of the last more than two decades or so, the disability rights movement has traversed a long and arduous journey by achieving major policy goals. What is more, it propped up the emergence of Disability Studies during the 1970s and 1980s by organising advocacy groups and academics. A major impetus in this regard was the convening in 1977 of the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals (Pfeiffer, 1996) in the USA. Interestingly, some 3000 persons converged in Washington in May 1977 to engage in debate and set up a nation - wide network of advocates. A crucial role in this direction was played by scholars who were greatly concerned about disability and rehabilitation issues.

It was, indeed, a rare coincidence that one of the beginning articles penned down self-consciously from the perspective of Disability Studies appeared immediately after the White House Conference (Pfeiffer and Giampietro, 1977). The same year also witnessed the launching of first Disability Studies course in the USA. It was in the area of Medical Sociology, primarily concentrated on the experience of living with disability, a critical life experience generally avoided by many persons. It is also significant to note that the instructor was a disabled individual who helped the students in gaining a better appreciation of policy issues concerning disability and rehabilitation policies, thereby heralding a new era in the evolution of Disability Studies as a separate academic discipline. In fact, the growth of this discipline is regarded to have formally originated from this vantage point.

Survey of Literature;

Disability Studies is an innovative area, with a sound professional and academic foundation. There is a vast and growing literature on the subject which seems to have been largely unperused by government decision makers as also researchers. This has impeded the progress of this emerging discipline (Hahn, 1982 & 1985; Asch and Fine, 1988; Barton, 1992; Albrecht, 1976; Bowe, 1978 & 1980; Burgdorf, 1980; French, 1994; Gliedman and Roth, 1980; Howards et al 1980; Pfeiffer and Yoshida, 1995). One may find a plethora of scholarly periodicals and journals in this field. The Disability Studies Quarterly (published from the USA since 1981 under the editorship of Irving Kenneth Zola-a disabled social scientist of Brandeis University) is perhaps the oldest and the most significant journal. Five years later, it was followed by the publication of Disability,

Handicap and Society (hereafter titled Disability and Society) in 1986 from the UK. This is a highly scholastic journal edited by Len Barton of the University of Sheffield. There is also the Journal of Disability Policy Studies, published from the USA since 1989, which carries out scholarly articles and reviews on a vast array of disability issues. The other journal worth-mentioning in this regard is Disability and Rehabilitation, also published from the UK; in recent years, this journal appears to be greatly inclined towards entertaining qualitative articles on disability issues. The Disability Rag and Mainstream are two other major periodicals published from the USA in this area, which have maintained high professional and academic standards. In addition, there are innumerable reputed academic journals published from the Western countries. Some of these journals/periodicals are as follows :

* American Annals of the Deaf (CEASDCAID:USA)

- American Archives of Rehabilitation Therapy (North Little Rock: USA)

- American Corrective Therapy Journal (San Diego, Calif: USA)

- American Journal of Art Therapy (Washington D.D. USA)

- American Journal of Occupational Theraphy (Roockville, Md.; USA)

- American Journal of Physical Medicine (Baltimore: USA)

- American Rehabilitation (Washington D.C.: USA)

- Amicus (Notre Dame: USA)

- Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (Chicago: USA)

- Australian Disability Review

- Bulletin of Prosthetic Research (Washington DC: USA)

- The Canadian Journal of Occupation Therapy (Toronto: Canada)

- The deaf American (NAD: USA)

- Hearing Rehabilitation Quarterly (North Holland)

- International Journal of Rehabilitation Research (Heidelberg; Germany)

- International Rehabilitation Medicine (Basel: Switzerland)

- International Rehabilitation Review (New York: USA)

- Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling (Fallschurch: USA)

- Journal of Learning Disabilities (Glassboro, N.J.: USA)

- Journal of Rehabilitation (Alexandria, Va: USA)

- Journal of Speech and Hearing Research (Reckville Md.: USA)

- Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (New York: USA)

- Physical Therapy (Washington, DC: USA)

- Physiotherapy (London :UK)

- Physiotherapy (London: UK)

- Physiotherapy Canada (Toronto: Canada)

- Prosthetics and Orthotics International (Copenhagen: Holland)

- Rehabilitation Digest (Toronto, Ontario: Canada)

- Rehabilitation in Australia (Deakin)

- Rehabilitation Literature

-· Rehabilitation Psychology (Washington DC: USA)

- Rehabilitation World (New York: USA)

- Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine (Stockholm: Sweden)

- Sexuality and Disability (New York: USA).

Ironically, notwithstanding a vast range of journals/periodicals being brought out from the developed societies; the field of Disability Studies is, still, an area which has not been adequately addressed in the Indian perspective. There are just a handful of journals/periodicals - such as, Indian Journal of Disability and Rehabilitation (a half yearly journal earlier published by the Ministry of Welfare - hereafter Social Justice and Empowerment), Government of India (New Delhi); but having discontinued for quite some time). Disabilities and Impairments (another half yearly journal published from New Delhi), Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal (Mumbai) and Actionaid Disability News/Newsletter (a monthly disability magazine published from Bangalore), most of them launched during the last couple of years. There is also an International Journal of Disability Studies, a quarterly (now changed to half yearly) inter-disciplinary journal published from New Delhi under the auspices of the Society for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies under the editorship of the author of this book. Besides, a galaxy of journals/periodicals of other prominent academic disciplines, especially the Indian Journal of Social Work as also Social Welfare frequently covere disability and rehabilitation issues. Most of the journals/periodicals are focussed on certain specific aspects and, so to say, cosmetic and parochial in nature; as they hardly bother to provide an inter-disciplinary orientation for studying and analysing this unexplored area.

This enumeration of journals /periodicals is not exhaustive and intended to merely provide a glimpse of the evolving field of Disability Studies as an academic discipline. Apart from these, several other scholarly journals in other allied disciplines - such as, Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, Social Work, Special Education, Law, Anthropology, Economics and History also occasionally entertain articles on disability and rehabilitation related topics. A special issue on 'disability and rehabilitation policy' was published in 1985 by the American Behavioral Scientist. Likewise, the Journal of Social Issues also brought out a special issue on the theme of 'moving disability beyond stigma' in 1988, exclusively devoted to the disability and rehabilitation aspects. In recent years, the Policy Studies Journal released a two volume symposium on disability policy. The field of Disability Studies can be paralleled with Women's Studies and Black Studies in several respects (Kamienieki, 1985; Brooks, 1980; Deegan and Brooks, 1985; Begum, 1992; Stace, 1986; Morris, 1992; Simpkins, 1974). Noticeably, these fields are focussed on individual as well as the societal contexts. Several scholars, therefore, are tempted to make analogy with Women's Studies partly by the fact that of the all the striking features dividing people into distinct classes, only gender and disability may be singled out as cross cultural and universal in their impact. There are several important analogies between the black and disabled people. Most members of these minorities possess physical characteristics that set them apart from the rest of the population. Their inability to blend into society without being noticed makes it easier for others to label and mistreat them.

A galaxy of researchers in the area of Disability Studies have sought to apply the concepts and methodologies of Psychology and Sociology (Kleinfield, 1979; Albrecht, 1976; Roessler and Bolton, 1978; Bowe, 1990; Wright, 1983; Zola, 1982). While there are scholars who prefer to borrow ideas as also tools and techniques from Anthropology (Scheer and Groce, 1988; Edgerton, 1970; Weiss, 1985), Economics (Berkowitz et al, 1976; Berkowitz, 1979), Linguistics (Stokoe, 1980), Political Science (Hahn, 1982 & 1985; Scotch, 1984; Oliver, 1990, 1996), History (Berkowitz, 1979), and Media Studies (Bogdan et al, 1982; Bogdan and Biklen, 1977). Because of divergences in methodologies adopted and multitude of problems studied, the claims of Disability Studies as a separate academic discipline are questioned in certain quarters and it is contended that it can never be assigned the status of an independent academic discipline. The root cause of this misunderstanding lies in its inter-relatedness with several other allied disciplines- such as, Rehabilitation Engineering, Medical Sociology, Abnormal Psychology, Special Education and other streams of Health Sciences.

Despite the fact that there appears to be some overlap of the subject matter, the basic theoretical underpinning guiding Disability Studies is distinct from other allied disciplines (Hahn, 1983) in the sense that generally scholars of these fields adopt medical/ clinical approach to study the phenomena of disability, while the proponents and advocacy groups of the Disability Studies are greatly inclined to study and analyse it from

human rights and socio-political perspectives. Significantly, the medical / clinical approach to disability views the disabled individual as a patient for whom decision is made. The problem is, thus, defined solely in terms of impairment, thereby suggesting lack of vocational skill, poor adjustment and / or lack of motivation on the part of the disabled persons. The remedial measure could be the intervention by the professionals who determine what is the desired outcome for such persons (De Jong and Lifchez, 1983).

On the other hand, the paradigm of Disability Studies seeks to focus its attention on the individuals and their life experiences as the major area of research and academic enterprises. The problem is perceived as over dependence on professionals and others, inadequate support services as also attitudinal, sensory, architectural and economic barriers. The perceived solution could be self - advocacy, system advocacy, removal of disabling barriers and participation by disabled persons in decision making processes affecting their lives. One of the leading proponents of the Disability studies candidly observes:

> Decisions about the willingness of a society to accommodate to the requirements or desires of persons with various sorts of physical disabilities can only be made by officially designated policy makers. Moreover, the similarity between the purpose of rehabilitation at the center of the policy arena. Hence, the failure to achieve this objective and the difficulties plaguing the disabled minority - might be viewed as a reflection of the relative influence of contending forces in the policy making process (Hahn, 1982; pp. 387-88).

Following the medical/ clinical approach, it may, thus, be objectively asserted that disability is merely a health problem : While Disability Studies, being the by-product of human rights and socio-political approaches to disability, treats the phenomena of disability as a policy and civil rights issue. The writings of disabled sociologists have gone further in evolving a radical political and social theory of disability. Providing a valuable insights into understanding the underlying significance of this orientation, Barton and Oliver (1992) maintain :

> They are critical of 'personal tragedy' models of disability. For them the difficulties of participating in society are not due to personal limitations, but arise from the prejudices, discriminatory policies and practices and social restrictions of an unadaptive society. Disability is a fundamentally political, social issue, which is a form of oppression.

Thus, Disability Studies may be defined as a discipline which reformulates the study of disability by perceiving the problem of disability as a social phenomenon, social construct, metaphor and culture, thereby suggesting minority group approach to its study. It seeks to examine ideas concerning disability in all forms of cultural representations throughout history and analyse the policies and practices of all societies so as to understand the social rather than the physical or psychological determinants of the experience of disability. The focus of studies, therefore, has shifted from prevention/ treatment/ remediation paradigm to a social/ cultural / political paradigm (Pfeiffer and Yoshida, 1995; p. 480).

Now the question arises what should be the scope of Disability Studies as an academic discipline? What is its borderline and how does it differ from that of Not Disability Studies? Of course, the demarcation line between them is blurred and fixed at different points by different scholars. Though there can not be any absolute boundary of Disability Studies in the strictest sense of the term . However, it would be worthwhile to outline its area (Linton, 1998).

In considering how to delineate the ambit of Disability Studies , one can not but recapitulate briefly the limitations or problems underlying the presentation of disability in the traditional curriculum. These identified problems are (ibid): To begin with, the current presentation of disability, especially in rehabilitation and special education, seeks, to individualize the issue of disability. The curriculum has been structured in such a way that one may get the impression that disability is an insoluble phenomenon and ideas about it are confined only to the persons with specific disabling situations. The second problem is the lack of subjectivity and agency of disabled individuals. The third problem concerns the objectification of the disadvantaged in scholarship. The fourth problem arises out of the assumption that disability per se is a problem. The construction of disability as problem, in fact, interferes with viewing disability as an issue, an idea , a metaphor , a phenomenon, a culture and a construction. The fifth main problem with the traditional cannon is the medicalization of disability. The sixth problem relates to over-emphasis on intervention at the individual level. The seventh problem is that throughout the curriculum, minority group status of the disabled individuals as also its cultural, political and intellectual implications has not been properly addressed. Apart from these problems, one may enumerate

several other factors - such as, preponderance of information on disability in the applied field, marginalization in the humanities and throughout the liberal arts as also abundance of essentialist and deterministic exposition of disability (ibid).

In view of the problems enumerated above, how could the study of Disability Studies be logically organized in the academic curriculum? In order to provide answer to this question, one could justify the rationale for a well-developed, interdisciplinary area of inquiry, rooted in the liberal- arts, called Disability Studies, intended to study and analyse disability as a social, political and cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, the applied fields should evolve more valid and meaningful approaches to disablement and thereby addressing the issue of disability in a holistic manner.

Having pinpointed the problems with the traditional curriculum we will now examine the rationale for distinguishing between the areas of Disability Studies and Not Disability Studies. Special education, rehabilitation and other disability related fields arose more as a reaction to social needs than being guided by a set of principles and ideas. So, it is imperative to focus our attention on Disability Studies model (Linton, 1998), which identifies its following characteristics :

(1) Bear in mind that problem relates to the individualisation of disability;

(2) Disability as a problem;

(3) Objectification of the disabled individuals:

(4) Lack of subjectivity in scholarship;

(5) Insufficient response to the educational and medical interventions;

(6) Undermining the minority group status of the persons with disabilities as also its social, cultural and political implications on the curricula;

(7) Invisibility of disability in the liberal arts, especially the humanities;

(8) Like race and gender, Disability Studies, still, serves a remedial function in order to rectify omissions, inaccuracies and faulty logic.

Moreover, other problems enumerated are the medication of disability, over-emphasis on intervention and the disproportionate amount of information on disability in the applied fields. However, before turning to the final problem on the list and explaining how to differentiate between 'Disability Studies' and 'Not Disability Studies', there are certain related issues to be addressed (Linton, 1998). Firstly, it must be borne in mind how the distinction between the terms disability and impairment has helped the development of scholarship on disability issues and benefited the disabled individuals. The second rationale for delineating the boundary of Disability Studies is uncovered by tracing the history of Women's Studies and other allied areas as also comparing it to the trajectory of Disability Studies. The third point is that disabled individuals and allies have sought to portray the real plight of the persons with disabilities as a minority group.

The fourth issue before returning to the list of response to problems in the traditional curriculum. An off - repeated question is : who should teach and write in this emerging field? Whether disabled or able - bodied created scholarship has particular consequences for the scholarship produced and disabled people's lives. Both disabled and able - bodied individuals can perpetuate or work to ameliorate the objectification of disabled persons, the lack of subjectivity, the absence of voice, and the absence of self-definition and self determination -

Theorizing Disability ;

Theory-building, in fact, is the fundamental concern of any intellectual enterprise in social sciences, especially in the area of Disability Studies. So, a brief discussion of the nature of theory generated through the new research paradigms would not be out of place. Etymologically, theory has two meanings - firstly, a view or a conception of relationship between facts, and secondly, a view or a conception of a system of the laws or principles governing an art of science (Easton, 1959 ; Bernstein, 1976; Runciman, 1963: Charlesworth, 1967: Van Dyke, 1960; Hoffman, 1964). The term 'theory' is derived from the Greek word 'thea' implying a 'spectacle'. Since the concept of theory has derivative relationship with 'thea', theory constitutes a sort of spectacles (lens) through which one could visualize reality. In this sense, theory is a medium of selectivity or

principle of cognition. In the other sense, theory implies a map or model of reality drawn up conceptually. It is a frame of reference in the process of learning, comparison, recalling and all such mental activity (Pulparampil, 1976, pp. 29-54).

The basic concern of contemporary social scientists is to generate theories. All scientific knowledge is theoretical. Whereas it ought to be grounded in facts, it must be noted that facts do not enable us to explain or understand an event. Facts must be ordered in such a way that their connections may be established.

Broadly speaking, there is nothing like pure fact: what we observe in the concrete social world is a series of events in which human beings are involved. Every event has an infinite level of details about it. Which aspect is selected for description depends upon the prior interest of the observer. This implies that selection is made in terms of a frame of reference that determines the order and relevance of the facts. Such a frame of reference when raised to the level of consciousness is refined into what may be termed as 'theory' (Easton, 1959, p. 53). The theory could, thus, be briefly defined as a frame of reference, which implies a principle of selectivity and serves as a sieve to sort out, select and reject observed facts. One may also liken it to a company indicative of the direction in which research is moving. In addition, it is also a sort of gauge which reports the state of development of a science at a particular time (Easton, 1959, p. 57).

Theory is a generic concept involving three levels - such as, low level or narrow-gauge theory, partial or middle-gauge theory and general or broad gauge theory. At the lowest level, one may find singular generalizations, which include statements of observed uniformities between two isolated and easily identifiable variables. For instance, a proposition that the disabled individuals are stigmatized and marginalized in all societies, falls under this category. The partial or middle gauge theory seeks to explain some more general sets of facts. It links a wider collection of laws or generalisations than those coming under the low level or narrow gauge theory. This partial or middle gauge theory is obviously of a limited kind. It is applicable only to a particular item or aspect of a field of knowledge. Goffman's theory of stigma (1963) could be placed under this category.

Insofar as the general or broad gauge theory is concerned, the philosophical systems advanced by great thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Manu, Kautilya, Marx are the glaring examples of the most general or broader gauge theory. In the contemporary age, the writings of the leading advocates of human rights as also socio-political approaches to disability -- Hahn, Oliver and Barnes could be put under this category. General theories are also referred to as over-arching or meta-theories; as they encompass more or less all aspects of knowledge.

There could be various ways of theory - building. The purposes which theories seek to achieve may normally differ and occasionally even clash with each other. Normally, theories are of the following three varieties:

Normative theory : In common parlance, this is also known as the value theory and incorporates ethical norms and values. It seeks to project utopias, lay down norms of correct behaviour, condemn bad practices and proposed social transformation. The philosophical systems put forth by the great thinkers fall under this category.

Causative theory : It implies empirical/causal theory. Its aim is to investigate the actual behaviour of individuals and their institutions with major focus on the variables and their interactions.

Manipulative theory : It is defined as a set of recipes for action and a systematic advice on state craft. It encompasses policy oriented theory in social sciences.

The roots of theory building in the field of Disability Studies could be traced to political action and struggles by the persons with disabilities during the late 1960s and 1970s as also special campaigns for greater autonomy for the disadvantaged (Barnes : 1999, 76) . While considering theory building in the field of Disability Studies (Kennedy and Minkler, 1998, pp.757-776), two key debates catch our imagination. In the first place, there is the long juxtaposition of individual and social models. Secondly, there is the less clearly articulated divergence between materialist and idealist levels of explanation. If one examines individual paradigms of disability theory, one could find that some are basically medical/ clinical, whereas others are concerned mainly with identity or the negotiation of social roles (Karna, 1999, pp. 52-65). Individual paradigm could be either materialist or ideologist in emphasis; or concerned with either the physical or the psychological concomitants of

disability.   Likewise, if one analyses the socio-political paradigm, one could find that some are related to structural and material conditions, whereas others are related to culture and representation. Social paradigm could also be either materialist or idealist in their emphases.

Really speaking, one could perceive social theory from two different dimensions. To begin with, there is constantly an assumed relationship between the individual and society.   Secondly, there is the relative importance given to materialist or idealist levels of explanation. In fact, these two dimensions interact with one another to produce four basic theoretical positions (as illustrated in Table - I).   These four positions are of immense help in explaining contemporary theorising about disability (Priestley, 1998, pp. 75-94; Reindall, 1995, pp. 58-69).

Table I

Paradigms of Social Phenomena

	Materialist	**Idealist**
Nominalist	**Position 1** (a)Subjective materialism b)Social phenomena have no real existence beyond material individuals (c) Social phenomenon is shaped by biology (d) Variate empiricism and	**Position 2** (a) Subjective idealism (b) Social phenomena have no real existence beyond the experience of voluntaristic individuals (c) Social phenomenon is shaped by attitudes and beliefs (d) Symbolic interactionism, pheomenology and interpretative paradigms, feminist psychologist biological determinism

Realist	**Position 3**
	    (a) Objective materialism
	    (b) Material society exists
	
	    (c) Social phenomena is shaped by political economy, structural patriarchy etc.
	    (d)Historical materialism, structural feminism, social creationism and marxist analyses
		Position 4
		(a)Objective idealism
		(b) Idealist society exists beyond the individual
		
		(c) Social phenomena is shaped by social and cultural values
		d) Positivist sociology, social constructionism and cultural relativism

Source : Priestley (1998, p.77).

Positions 1 and 2 are related to the attributes of individuals. They are nominalist positions; as they imply that social phenomena do not have any existence beyond our perceptions and interpretations. Contrary to this, positions 3 and 4 are more concerned with the attributes of collections than those of individuals. Being the realist positions, they imply that social phenomena do have some real existence beyond our observations and interpretations.

Furthermore, Position 1 encompasses all those approaches which value knowledge gained from the observation and classification of material individuals. The goal here is to extract general statements of knowledge from 'objective' facts and to reduce influence of 'subjective' values in the process. Position 1 would also cover those approaches based on biological (particularly genetic) determination.   Position 2 is also related to the study of individuals. Nevertheless, it is not focussed on biology but on voluntaristic action. According to Position 3, one could know about social phenomena in a real and material way-that society has some objective existence beyond the individual. In contrast with position 2, this approach is more concerned with 'structure' than with 'agency'. Position 4 incorporates approaches which perceive social phenomena as having some objective reality beyond the individual. They, however, are related to idealist society rather than material society. They suggest that social reality exists more in ideas than in material relations of power.

There are, thus, four paradigms of disability theory (Priestley, 1998), which could be illustrated in Table II:

Table II
Paradigms of Disability Theory

	Materialist	Idealist
Individual	**Position 1** (a) Individual materialist models (b) Disability is the physical product of biology acting upon the functioning of material individuals (bodies) (c) The units of analysis are impaired bodies.	**Position 2** (a) Individual ideologist models Disability is the prod uct of voluntaristic individuals (disabled and non disabled) engaged in the creation of identities and the negotiation of roles (c) The units of analysis are beliefs and identities.
Social	**Position 3** (a) Social creationist models (b) Disability is the material product of socio-economic relations developing within (c) The units of analysis are disabling barriers and material relations of power	**Position 4** (a) Social constructionist models (b) Disability is the idealist product of societal development within a specific cultural context . c) The units of analysis are cultural values and representations.

Source : Priestley (1998, p. 78).

Position 1 :
Like the medical/clinical model, the individual - materialist position is probably more familiar in disability theory. From such a vantage point, disability is viewed as the product of biological determinism or personal tragedy manifested in the material condition of the individual. The unit of analysis is the impaired body and the predominant method of analysis is variant empiricism. It must, however, be observed that this paradigm cannot accommodate what we mean by the term disability, it deals only in impairment, where it has produced oppressive, medicalising outcomes, the same have resulted from the inappropriate application of bio-medical paradigms to the investigation of social problems.

Position 2
The individual-idealist position holds a significant place in disability theory. Like position 1, it is also an individual model but rather than concentrating on biology and the impaired body, it concentrates on cognitive interaction and affective experience. From this perspective, disability may be regarded as the product of

personal experience and the negotiation of social roles between individuals. The units of analysis are identity and experience.

Position 3

It represents what is normally referred to as the social model. From the socio-materialist position, disability can be perceived as the material relations of power emanating from the development of political economy and / or patriarchy within a specific historical context. The units of analysis are disabling barriers (mostly physical, structural or institutional). This is the philosophical basis for that strand of disability theory, which has been focal point in the mobilization of the disability rights movement. It is then a social creationist standpoint and in that respect contrasts with the social constructionism of position 4 (above). Nonetheless, the social creation of disability should not be confused with the social creation of impairment.

Position 4

From the perspective of position 4, disability is visualised as a social construct—the idealist product of a society developing within a specific cultural context. The units of analysis are cultural representations. The characterization of disability as a social construction is premised (implicitly or explicitly) upon the notion of cultural relativism. To put it briefly, this position assumes the construction of disability to be a product of specific cultural conditions. This kind of approach suggests that social labelling and role expectations are the determining factors in the construction of disability.

Thus, there is much divergence both within and between these two traditions. It is also helpful to draw a demarcation line between materialist and idealist levels of explanation. This dichotomy may be utilised to produce a four-fold typology of disability theory (Priestley, 1998), thereby according recognition to both the individual-social dimension and the material-idealist dimension. Since, the social creationist approaches focus attention on the real and material relationship of power in disability sector, they are useful and meaningful. Of course, values have a crucial role to play in sustaining these disabling social relations.

Curriculum Development in Western Universities ;

The courses on Disability Studies have been incorporated in the curricula of several universities and academic institutions of the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia and other Western countries. Most of such courses are selective in nature - basically initiated because of the deep interest and professional competence of their proponents/ instructors. The University of Southern California (in the USA) has already introduced an under-graduate programme in Disability Studies for quite some time. Suffolk University has concentration on Disability Studies in its curriculum of Master of Public Administration Programme. The University of Greenwich, London and Leeds in the UK also have various programmes on Disability Studies. Moreover, there are several other universities and academic institutions in the Western countries where course on Disability Studies are offered.

According to a survey conducted in 1993 in the USA and Canada (which has been cited by Pfeiffer and Yoshida, 1995) such courses are offered in various schools, colleges and faculties of these countries. Though any systematic data regarding the teaching of Disability Studies in the universities of the UK and other European countries is not available, one could find several universities and academic institutions in the UK and Australia - such as, University of London, University of Greenwich, University of Leeds, University of Leicester and University of Sussex (all in the UK) as also Deakin University and Flinders University (in Australia and South Australia respectively) imparting degrees/diplomas in Disability Studies. As per the above survey, the following are the colleges and universities (as shown in Table X), where courses on Disability Studies are offered-

Table X

Courses on Disability Studies in the Western Universities

Brandeis University

California School of Professional Psychology

California State University at Fresno

California state University at Long Beach

Carleton University

Columbia University

Dowling College

Emory University

Gallaudet University

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Hunter College

Juniata College

Metropolitan State College

Northern Illinois University

Portland State University

San Francisco State University

Simon Fraser University

Sonoma State University

State University of New York at Plattsburgh

Suffolk University

Syracuse University

Tufts University

University of Arkansas

University of British Columbia

University of Illinois

University of Illinois at Chicago

University of Iowa

University of Maryland

University of Minnesota

University of North Carolina

University of Oklahoma

University of Oregon

University of Pittsburgh

University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown

University of South Carolina

University of Southern Maine

University of Texas at Dallas

University of Toronto

University of London

University of Greenwich

University of Leeds

University of Sussex

University of Leicester

Deakin University

Flinders University

University of Wisconsin

Utah State University

York University

(Source: Pfeiffer and Yoshida, 1995, pp. 481).

Moreover, there are scores of other academic institutions and professional institutes where courses are offered on disability and rehabilitation issues. It is difficult, if not impossible, and also beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an exhaustive list of such institutions and universities. However, the impression one could get from the above survey is that the teaching of Disability Studies courses has gained wider currency and is geographically spread across the length and breath of Western countries.

Disability Research in India : Is There Need for Interdisciplinary Paradigm ;

The research on disability and rehabilitation issues has been, traditionally, dominated by what Oliver calls the 'positivist research paradigm' both in terms of the research carried out (Harris, 1971; Martin et al, 1988) and also the assumptions underlying it (Wood, 1980). There are two major pitfalls of this dominance: first, that the experience of disability has been considerably undermined and distorted; and secondly, the interlinkage between research and social change is viewed as relatively simplistic and rational, thereby adopting a social-engineering approach to the policy-making process.

Disability research, hence, has so far reinforced the individual model of disability (Oliver; 1983), perceiving the problems faced by disabled persons as outcome of their individual impairments. This model cannot match with the self-perception of disabled individuals, as their problems emanate from discriminatory social practices. The second problem posed by positivist research is that it assumes that the relationship between research finding and policy change is non-problematic; given the fact that the Government acts and changes occur for the better. This has been referred to as the 'social-engineering approach' and subjected to rigorous criticism both for its epistemological assumptions and its failure to produce social change in the prescribed way (Bulmer, 1981; Finch, 1986). Again this is certainly true due to the lack of the effect that this approach has had in the area of disability policy.

Moreover, some attempts have been made during the recent couple of years to undertake disability research from the interpretive paradigm (Blaxter, 1976; Borsay, 1986; Oliver and Zarb, 1988), which takes the meaning of disability seriously, though it is also not immune from criticisms. These criticisms centre, basically, around the failure of this kind of work to have any serious impact on services for disabled people and their quality of life. One may identify two main reasons for this lapse--firstly, such research does neither fundamentally transform the social relations of research production and nor for anything has this kind of research been referred in another context the 'rape model of research' (Reinharz, 1979) in that researchers have benefited by taking the experience of disability, rendering a faithful account of it and then moving on to better things while the disabled subjects remain in exactly the same social situation they did before the commencement of the research.

The second criticism of the interpretive paradigm emanates from the model of the policy making process that the interpretive paradigm presupposes; what is normally referred to as the 'enlightenment model'. According to the view point of the critics, there is no direct and explicit linkage between research and policy making process but what research does instead is that it informs the policy making process. Thus, it provides a backdrop against which policymakers make decisions; it helps them decide what questions to be asked rather than to provide specific answers. A major shortcoming of both the positivist and interpretive research paradigm lies in the fact that the persons with disabilities are rarely given any opportunity to participate in the research process even as 'subjects' because researchers are neither willing nor able to make their research accessible

(Oliver, 1992; French, 1994; Baker-Shenk and Kyle; 1990) provide a detailed account of the conflicts arising out of the attempts made by hearing researchers to study deaf people and their languages. Ways and means must be found out to encourage and enable disabled persons to undertake research into their own situation, and for research practice to be shaped in such a manner as to ensure their full participation. Jones and Pullen, hearing and deaf researchers, have highlighted the utility of applying interviewing techniques suited to deaf persons. They point out the significance of understanding the various implications of time, touch, visual information and language within deaf and hearing cultures. The disabled represent the most impoverished strata of society and normally it is held that money is wasted on research when they themselves could have provided the information directly (Zarb, 1992). According to Zarb, it is necessary for researchers to take into account the professional, academic and financial benefits accruing to disabled persons from such academic enterprises. As Oliver opines:

> The major issue on the research agenda for the 1990s should be: do researchers wish to join with disabled people to use their expertise and skills in their struggle against oppression or do they wish to continue to use these skills and expertise in ways in which disabled people find oppressive (Oliver, 1992)?

The disenchantment with both the positivist and interpretive research paradigm has necessitated the development of participatory and emancipatory research paradigms (French, 1994). Participatory research paradigm seeks to involve the disabled at every stage of the research process-including selection of topics, methods to be adopted, evaluation and dissemination of information towards which research is directed. These may include persons with disabilities, patients and slum-dwellers. During recent years, this paradigm has gained wider popularity everywhere. There is, however, no scope for acceptance as subjects or passive cooperation: on the contrary, everybody involved is treated as an active participant. The expertise and talents of everyone are galvanised to the optimum level, with training being imparted, if necessary. However, it does not negate the expert knowledge or assistance form outside, rather it is designed to make traditional research more effective and meaningful.

Though any research method can be applied in participatory research, the focus should be on scientific, inventive and flexible methods; thereby paving the scope for new ideas to emerge and allowing for changes in plan and direction. In other words, methods are adapted in such a manner to suit the particular situation and the individuals are involved, rather than forcing ideas into a stereotyped way. Thus, the underlying assumption behind this approach is to provide educational opportunities to those who are frequently at the receiving end of research directed by 'experts'. This approach may have the prospects of enhancing their skills, self-reliance and self-confidence. It may, thus, be viewed as a democratic means of accelerating social transformation and eradicating discrimination and exploitation (Oliver, 1992).

In other words, the basic objective of participatory research is not only to explore significant issues but to facilitate fundamental social transformation. Under this research, people at the lower rug of any hierarchy hardly have sufficient power to generate knowledge. Brechin rightly observes: "Research tends to be owned and controlled by researchers, or by those who, in turn, own and control the researchers (Brechin, cited in ibid)."

As a result, the issues investigated lose it relevance for those who are researched, thereby 'erecting social barriers and impeding meaningful social change'. However, a shift of emphasis form traditional research to participatory research would necessitate enormous attitudinal and behavioural changes on the part of researchers. It is, of course, necessary that researchers familiars themselves with the meaning of participatory research and avoid involving persons with disabilities in a superficial or tokenistic way.

Zarb (1992) has sought to draw a demarcation line between participatory research and emancipatory research under the impression that research cannot be emancipatory, unless it is empowering; but that empowerment cannot be given but rather must be 'taken'. Regarding disability research, he categorically states:

> Participatory research which involves disabled people in a meaningful way is perhaps a pre-requisite to emancipatory research in the sense that researchers can learn from disabled people and vice versa, and that it paves the way for researchers to make themselves 'available' to disabled but it is no more than that. Simply increasing participation and involvement will never by itself constitute emancipatory

research unless and until it is disabled people themselves who are controlling the research and deciding who should be involved and how.

Likewise, Morris opines that emancipatory research must be part of disabled people's struggle to take over ownership of the definition of oppression (Morris, 1991). The significance of the emancipatory research paradigm lies not in its endeavours to study the other end of existing power relations but in its promptness to challenge them. Such challenges are unlikely to be funded by institutions located within existing power structures and one suggested solution could be to take money for studying one thing but then to shift the focus once the research has begun "from victim to victimiser, from the powerless to powerful (Oliver,1992).

However, researchers would not easily accept such a proposition that taking money for one thing and then doing something else is not only unethical but dangerous in the consequences it may have for the researcher, the discipline, the institution and the research community.   The development of an emancipatory paradigm is not simply about confrontation with or accommodation to the power structures which fund and resource the research produced. It is also about the demystification of the ideological structures within which these power relations are located. There are, thus, three key factors on which a paradigm must be based.   These factors are: reciprocity, gain and empowerment (ibid).

The issue for emancipatory research, then, is not how to empower people but what research should be done in order to facilitate this process. This is not to suggest that the social relations of research production should be radically transformed. The task of emancipatory research, is not what is sometimes made out to be, to help the researchers to understand themselves better but to evolve its own understanding of the life experiences of those very subjects. This is, evidently, a dialectical process in which research can contribute significantly.

 Summing Up ;

From the above elucidation of the growth as also the nature and scope of Disability Studies, one may observe that it is an emerging academic discipline, which has two major characteristics. To begin with, the Disability Studies is quite inter-disciplinary in its nature. That is why, the scholars and professionals from diverse academic disciplines are involved in this intellectual enterprise. Secondly, the teaching of this discipline is imparted in the schools and colleges of several Western universities, especially in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia. The teaching is basically offered by full time faculties at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels. It may be noted that these concepts are applicable in different circumstances, disability is an experience which could be traced throughout human societies and cultures. It is not a frail weed growing haphazardly, but also a strong plant which has come to occupy a prominent position in the field of academia.

The emerging area of Disability Studies has so far been accorded recognition as a distinct academic discipline in several Western universities and academic institutions. The researchers from different professions have begun to evince keen interest in the analyses of laws, regulations and programmes affecting disabled citizens. The mounting realisation that disability must be approached from a holistic perspective has yielded a corresponding awareness that knowledge of public policies concerning disabled persons is an essential ingredient for the pursuit of such vocations.

The growth of Disability Studies as a significant field of study as been promoted both by the prior neglect of this subject in many professions and by its relevance to plethora of disciplines. Some of the specialities, which pertain to the concerns of disabled persons, have been directly or indirectly supported by governmental policies. However, the disability policy has not yet evolved as a sub-field in several areas-such as, Rehabilitation Counselling, Special Education, Occupational/ Physical Therapy, Biomedical Engineering, Medicine or Nursing Science. Other disciplines, in which linkages between disability and major theoretical paradigms could be made, have utterly failed to incorporate this area within their paradigms. Social Work, Public Health and Gerontology are worth-noting in this direction.

There are other areas - such as, Architecture, Law, Business or Public Administration, and Urban or Regional Planning-requiring modification in their disciplinary orientations in response to specific policy directives. In the sphere of social sciences, probably the area of disability has been extensively researched in Psychology, Sociology, Economics and Communications. Valuable contribution could also be expected from Anthropology, Political Science, History, besides several areas of the humanities like Literature, Philosophy,

Religion, and, the Arts. In addition, meaningful contribution could also be made by different streams of natural and physical sciences.

This enumeration of disciplines is quite illustrative rather than exhaustive or definitive and it should not obscure the fundamental point. An unusually wide range of academic fields could either make valuable contributions to the study of disability policy or draw heavily from such investigations. None of the existing disciplines, however, has developed research on disability policy as a major focus. These patterns have produced a wide vacuum in our country, which must be plugged especially to assist professionals (entering careers that involves extensive work with disabled persons). Though the field of Disability Studies is in embryonic stage in India ; however, its importance and relationship to many disciplines may provide a significant explanation for seeking and anticipating the rapid expansion of this area of study.

Thus, the area of Disability Studies has become an innovative field with extensive professional and academic foundation. Of course, there is a vast and growing literature on the subject which seems to have been largely unperused by decision makers as also researchers. Since, there is a massive population of the persons with disabilities in our country and huge amount of money has been invested so far on the rehabilitation and welfare of such disadvantaged persons under successive Five Year Plans , it could be an important area for teaching and research.

The issue of disability and the experiences of disabled people have so far been given scant consideration in academic discourses, particularly in a developing society like ours. Both the issue and the experiences have been marginalised and only in certain specific disciplines, and that, too, in a rather piece-meal fashion, the area of Disability Studies has been accorded prominent place. Unfortunately, this has proved to be counter-productive with the issue of disability being visualised as essentially a medical problem and the experience of disability as being contingent upon a variety of psychological adjustment processes. In order to counter the medical and psychological dominance in this area, ultimately nothing less than a 'social theory of disability' is the need of the hour. The keystone of the disability movement is a collective reappraisal of a devalued identity, a process where problems are depersonalised and translated into political issues.

What is urgently required is to introduce and accord recognition to the field of Disability Studies as an autonomous academic discipline by Indian universities and academic institutions. This could go a long way in transforming the public perception about disability related issues. As noted earlier, the disabled constitute ten per cent of the total population in our country. So it is all the more imperative that like Women's Studies, Muslim Studies, Media Studies, Nehru Studies, Gandhian Studies, Area Studies and a vast spectrum of academic disciplines which are the thrust areas of higher education and research, this emerging field of knowledge must attract the attention of policy makers at the Ministry of Human Resource Development and funding agencies like UGC, ICSSR, ICHR, ICPR, ICMR, CSIR as also central universities/and academic institutions. There is, thus, an urgent need for various disciplines to focus attention on this neglected field of inquiry from inter-disciplinary orientations. Only then can the phenomena of disability be scientifically addressed in the Indian instance. Scholars, intellectuals and social activists may have onerous role to play in this regard.

Notes

1. In keeping with the GOI's policy of providing a comprehensive package of rehabilitative services to the disabled/disadvantaged and also to effectively address the multi-faceted problems of the disabled individuals, the following six national institutes/apex level institutions have been set up for the major typologies of disability [GOI, 2000, pp. 48-49]. These national institutes are :

(i)   National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun;

(ii)   National Institute for the Orthopaedically Handicapped, Calcutta;

(iii)   Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, Mumbai;

(iv)   National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Secunderabad;

(v)   National Institute for Rehabilitation, Training and Research, Cuttack;

(vi)   Institute for the Physically Handicapped, New Delhi.

Various specialised professional courses are offered by these institutes with a view to developing manpower for delivery of services to the disabled as also to impart training to professionals in different areas of disability. Among such courses are : Degree Courses in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Prosthetic and Orthotic Engineering, Bachelor Degree Courses in Mental Retardation, Diploma in Special Education [Mental Retardation], Diploma in Vocational Training and Employment [Mental Retardation], Bachelor and Master Degree in Education [Hearing Impaired], Bachelor and Master Degree in Hearing, Language and Speech, Bachelor and Master Degree in

Audiology and Speech Rehabilitation, Primary and Secondary Level Teachers' Training Programme for Visually Handicapped and Training Course for Orientation and Mobility Instructors for Visually Handicapped and so on.

Moreover, these institutes also conduct various short-term training programmes from time to time for governmental and non-governmental personnel involved in the field of education, vocational training, employment etc. as also workshops, seminars to provide the opportunity to professionals to keep themselves posted with the latest trends and developments in the disability sector. Significantly, these courses are conducted either at the headquarters of the institutes or in their regional centres located in the sister institutes and also in collaboration with State Governments/Central Government Ministries/Departments as also NGOs. These institutes are playing a crucial role in imparting training to the professionals working in this area.

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