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Marriage of Physically Challenged Women: Status and Issues

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ABSTRACT

It is estimated that 15% of the world's population experiences some form of disability. Disability itself is a hurdle in living and surviving. The vulnerable is always a victim of the situation. Discrimination in accessing human rights is experienced very commonly and again the condition of physically challenged women is worst. In India, still, a girl child is looked upon as unwanted and if she is disabled then is more avoided and neglected. Divyaang women and girls face double standards, which lead to gender-based violence, sexual harassment, injustice, exploitation, and abuse. They face inequalities in education, health care, employment as a means of livelihood and social, civic opportunities and community participation, social stigma, lack of housing, and lack of spouse. This paper aims at knowing the marital status of disabled women/girls. Whether the disabled men accept Divyaang women/ girls as wives, and how their husbands, children, and in-laws treat Divyaang women/girls is also an aim of the paper.

Keywords: Disability, Physically challenged woman, Divyaang, Marital status, Women

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 15% of the world's population lives with some type of disability. Due to natural and man-made disasters, disability amount is increased. According to the World Bank report, 2019 there are more than 2 billion disabled persons throughout the world. In India, 2.21% of people have some type of disability. Disability is a hurdle in living and surviving. There is a huge gap between disabled and normal people in terms of education, profession and business. In a country like India where a girl child is undesirable, becomes more unwelcomely when takes birth with a disability. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, 2005 pointed out that there are hundreds of problems inside and outside in front of a disabled girl; such as negligence, violence, ill-treatment, mental and physical harassment etc. In this research paper, the marital status of physically challenged women is focused on.

Disability: Meaning

Disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movement, sense or activity. It refers to problems, such as impairment, activity limitation or participation restrictions that indicate the negative aspects of functioning. It is defined as a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. Disable person experiences a multidimensional involvement of body parts or minds (UN Report). The Cambridge English Dictionary defines disability as the state of having an illness, injury, or medical condition that makes it difficult to do the things that other people do. Disability is an evolving concept, capturing the interaction between those with a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment and societal barriers hindering their full and effective participation (United Nations). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPD) Act, 2016 in India has classified the types of disability under 5 main categories which are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Classification and Types of Disability

Classification	Types	Sub-Types
Physical Disability	Locomotors Disability	Leprosy Cured Person
		Cerebral Palsy
		Dwarfism Muscular
		Dystrophy
	Visual Impairment	Acid Attack Victims
		Blindness
		Low-Vision
Hearing Impairment	Deaf	
	Hard of Hearing	
	Speech & Language Disability	–
Intellectual Disability	Specific Learning Disabilities	–
	Autism Spectrum Disorder	
Mental Behaviour	–	
Disability Cause due to...	Chronic Neurological Conditions	Multiple Sclerosis Parkinson's Disease
	Blood Disorder	Hemophilia Thalassemia Sickle Cell Disease
Multiple Disability		

In India, as per the 2011 census, out of the 121 Cr population, 2.68 Cr persons are disabled which is 2.21% of the total population. (Disability India Information Resources) However, this figure can be estimated to be lesser than the actual number due to the large spread and prevalent under-reporting. It illustrates that nearly 3% of people live with a disability (Disable Population in India).

Social Problems and Attitude towards Disabled Persons

The United Nations (UNISDR) pointed out that people with disabilities are disproportionately affected due to a range of factors including exclusion from decision-making processes, often poor living conditions, inadequate infrastructure, income inequality or undiversified sources of income, and limited access to basic services, especially education and information. Disabled person is looked at as a burden in any Society. (<http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org/>) There is a huge gap and discrimination in India against disabled people. There were the days when a normal world for some disabilities; e. g. LCP, CP, Multiple Disability, the person was either killed or left to die very commonly. Indians, very slowly are experiencing ails, feelings, emotions, needs, and problems of disabled persons. In the era of Protection of Human Rights, disability is given special attention by UNO and the rest of the world. A normal man slowly has started to open the doors of the world of disabled people and include them as a part of the whole society, though the conditions are not the best, better than previous. The RPD Act passed in 2016 is a safeguard for the rights of persons with disabilities to live in the community. The 23rd session of the Beijing Council highlighted that discriminatory treatment of women with disabilities is an obstacle to the realization of human rights. Divyaang women and girls face double standards, which lead to gender-based violence, sexual harassment, injustice, exploitation, and abuse. They face inequalities in education, health care, employment as a means of livelihood and social, civic opportunities and community participation, social stigma, lack of housing, and lack of spouse.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the obstacles faced by the disabled women / girls in getting a spouse.
- To know the marital status of disabled women / girls whether the men accept Divyaang women / girls as wives, how their husbands, children, in-laws behave with them.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The problem of the social, economic and marital status of disabled women and men needs to be considered through various means of research. This study is clinical and analytical. Primarily a qualitative approach has been adopted in this study in which the case study technique has been used. Experimental study methods are relevant for empirical and person-centred research.

Research Plan

This study is inherently qualitative. It is limited to physically challenged women. The Disability Rights Act, 2016 lists 21 types of physical and mental disability. This research project studies

only physically challenged married women and women who are unable to get married due to disability.

Selection of Sample

Cases have been carefully selected for this study. Physically handicapped women have been studied with their families. Out of the 21 types of physical and mental disabilities mentioned in the Disability Rights Act, 2016, 4 types have been selected for this study. A total of 6 women have been selected for the study, as follows:

Loco motor: 2

Visually Impaired: 2

Hearing Impaired: 2

Multiple Disability: 1 (Parent)

Also two special teachers and two social workers were studied for additional information about the selected cases.

CONCLUSION

Following are the conclusions of this study:

Marital Status

Marriage is the most serious question facing women. A disabled man does not prefer to marry disabled women. Marriage is an issue of social prestige. Some socio-universal criteria are applied to the appearance of the wife and it is expected that the wife should be the same, e.g., fair, slender, with a straight nose, undressed, etc., absolute beauty is the first criterion. However, in this study, most of the people in the study are married and all of them got married without any effort. The marriages of the individuals in this study are due to their intellectual, educational, professional and financial strength. This leads to the conclusion that if disabled girls/women are educated and self-reliant, their most difficult marital problem can be solved. Even so, whether a boy is ready to marry a crippled girl or he has taken the initiative, his family-mother and father need to be ready. After getting married, he must treat the (crippled) bride with respect. Sune is still not treated with respect in Indian society and the fact that she is crippled is enough to treat her badly. Divyaang girls sometimes have to deal with issues like divorce.

Lack of Organized Efforts

There are a number of specialized organizations in Indian society that work for women - according to their needs, according to the nature of the problem; such as: widows, orphans,

abandoned women, working women, single women, etc. But organizations that work specifically for women with disabilities do not exist. Disabled women's issues are not considered separately. In general, women's issues are considered to be the issues of persons with disabilities, that is, men with disabilities. There are no NGOs working for women with disabilities. As a result, there is a lack of mechanisms to address the issues of women with disabilities regarding their marriage and all.

Families of Divyaang girls

Families of Divyaang girls need to nurture them with a noble attitude. As a child, 'girl' means 'nakoshi' - even then she is disabled, 'she has no value in the marriage market'. Such a mindset does not even consider the need for her self-sufficiency. Even if she gets married, she will not be accepted by her in-law's congregation and will not be treated with respect! Sometimes the father-in-law's congregations do not know how to deal with a disabled girl, nor do they get counselling.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With these conclusions following suggestions are made:

Changing Social Mindset

It is never easy to reach the top level at the very bottom of the social ladder. Divyaang women are at the very end of this ladder. Not only the disabled but any person has to prove him/herself while gaining a place in society. But society gives easily to the common man, gives some to the ordinary woman, while the crippled woman - who is below all these on this slope, has to find such an opportunity. Examples of a crippled woman gaining social prestige by proving herself are a sign of social perversion when society does not give her such an opportunity. Therefore, this social mentality should be changed and as much as any ordinary person should have faith in disabled women, they should be given educational and professional opportunities.

Special and Inclusive Education

Education is a way out of the social vicious cycle. However, even this path is not as easy for disabled women as it may be for the average person. If disabled women want to break the cycle of social evil, they have to follow the path of education. Educational concessions are provided for disabled women and girls, they and their families should take advantage of them. Take advantage of specialized or inclusive education. If disabled girls become well

educated and self-reliant, their married life can be settled. Therefore, girls should be careful about educating themselves. Even if their family situation is not very favourable, they should know the developmental schemes and plans for girls and take educational facilities. Priority should be given to skill-based courses in girls' education, and employment-oriented education should be imparted so that girls/women can become self-reliant. This can be a factor in their marriage. Financial independence can lead to parallel status at the family level. In today's social situation, getting married has become a matter of concern for all. Sustaining marriage is also a social challenge. In such a situation, this challenge has become even bitter for disabled girls. Therefore, every disabled girl should be financially self-sufficient before marriage.

Inclusion of Divyaang women in the mainstream

If Divyaang women are to be included in the mainstream of society, they should be given the same responsibilities as all the common people. It is just as important not to keep them unnecessarily safe that they should not be treated as inferior. This inclusion at all the general levels while joining the society will avoid showing undue compassion and empathy.

Counselling of the Family

The family of the disabled girl should accept that she is a divine organ. Her rehabilitation should be considered rather than disrespecting her. Teach her, make her self-reliant. But if this is not possible in the case of multi-disabled girls, if it is not possible to give them school education, then at least skill-based education should be given. So that she can earn a minimum and not be a full burden on the family. The family should be counselled to have a family mindset of accepting responsibility. In the case of marriage of a disabled girl, it is necessary to take care in some matters; as such, care must be taken that her job, salary alone is not the reason for the marriage. Although financial independence is a criterion for determining marriage, it should not be the primary criterion; otherwise, it can only be used for financial reasons. Whether a boy marries a crippled girl or not, his role in marrying her should be clear. It is necessary to explain that after marriage, care will be taken so that she will not be disrespected, and her human rights and feelings will not be violated. Against this background, the groom and the in-laws should be counselled.

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