

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 4 | Issue 3

2021

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Rights of Person with Disability in India

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ABSTRACT

Though the term "disability" implies a lack or deficiency in some people, whether physical, mental, or sensory, but they have the right to life, liberty, equality, security, and dignity by virtue of being human, but people with disabilities are frequently ostracised and discriminated against due to social indifference and psychological barriers, As a result, the rights and laws of disabled people must be comprehended and analysed from different perspectives, including human rights and multiple other laws in India, in order to eventually fill the gaps or bridge the gap between the able - bodied and differently abled people in their accomplishment of identity and integrity in the real sense of the terms.

The disabled have inherent rights to respect for their human dignity, and regardless of the origin, nature, or severity of their disabilities, the current laws ensure their participation, but they are ineffective; the laws are foundation stones that are now fortified and unbalanced, and as a result, disabled people cannot fully realise their rights; modifying and establishing appropriate legislation that will protect their interest and empower their capabilities. It is only a shift in society's vision and creating a friendly environment can give a solution to this problem,

This paper focuses on the numerous legal provisions and regulations available in our nation and conducts an extensive study into how these laws have contributed to the evolution of the legal status of disabled people in India.

Keywords: *Disability, India, Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Human Rights, Disabilities.*

I. INTRODUCTION

More than 50 million individuals in India are somehow confronted by disabilities. The Indian Constitution provides the whole spectrum of civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights to individuals with disabilities. Until recently, the requisite structures have been evidently lacking to implement the constitutional provisions. Often essential human rights are withheld, and society does not welcome them. This is especially the case whenever the mental or psychological disability is involved.

The first widely recognised principle is human rights. Even though the UN and the

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promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are considered by many observers to be the commencement of the contemporary fight to protect human rights. After the Second world war, the constitution of the United Nations is a clear demonstration of the fact that every nation promises to promote 'Universal respect for and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion'.²

In the Indian Constitution discrimination is prohibited, it does not precisely prohibit discrimination on grounds of disability. However, a seven-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court of India in *Indra Sawhney vs. Union of India*³ held that the "Articles 14 (right to equality) 15(1) (right against discrimination) and 16 (right against discrimination in public employment)" allowed for discrimination and affirmative actions for persons with disabilities. The Constitution may be viewed as specifically forbidding discrimination against people with disabilities because of this ruling.

All people in India are guaranteed freedom and dignity via the fundamental right to life contained in the Indian Constitution. This fundamental right to life also includes the right of disabled individuals to respect, dignity, and freedom. However, disability acknowledgment as part of a broader field of human heterogeneity is not yet officially discussed in relation to disability rights.

The Right to Life and Personal Freedom, including the concepts of the inherent dignity and autonomy of everyone residing in India, is protected by Article 22 of the constitution. The Right to Equality before Law in conjunction with Article 14 provides the conditions in which special laws and policies preserve fundamental rights for people.

Today, concerns of the disabled have become a fundamental issue of human rights and no longer just welfare measures, the range of provisions and mechanisms that have been put in place consequent on legislation and policy with reference to special measures demonstrates the constitutional commitment to strengthen non-discrimination through affirmative action.

The Supreme Court in *Indra Sawney and Ors vs. Union of India*⁴ held that 15(1) covers persons with disabilities while 15(2) (3) 8 (4) do not apply, the latter it can be seen subjecting the application of 15 (1) to unrestrained approach. However, the right to vote for those with psychiatric and intellectual problems is constitutionally denied.⁵

Two key acts relating to compensation-related laws are the Workmen's Compensation Act of

² Article 55(C), Chapter IX, Charter of the United Nations

³ 1992 Supp (3) SCC 217

⁴ Ibid 1

⁵ Under Article 326 of the Indian Constitution

1923 and the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. The scenario of the legislation on disability is whether people are disqualified from education or are employed because of their disability. The rules on equal opportunity, protection of rights and full participation are nonetheless crucial, including the RPwD 2016.

One special example of a fundamental discrepancy between legal safeguards is the denial of enfranchisement for individuals with mental disability under Article 326 of the Constitution. There is clearly a disruption between treating disabled individuals other than those with intellectual disabilities.

(A) Meaning of Disablement

Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. — World Health Organization, Disabilities⁶ In pursuance of the U.N. Charter, the General Assembly of the United Nations, adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Disabled Persons.⁷

Society believes that disability is a tragedy rather than an inconvenience⁸. The disabilities, such as visual, auditory, physical, vocals, cognitive and neurological, are estimated as one tenth of the world's population. In contrast to laws on disability in different nations, the Act 1995 in India only recognises certain kinds of disability such as:

- i. Blindness
- ii. Low vision
- iii. Leprosy-cured
- iv. Hearing impairment
- v. Locomotor's disability
- vi. Mental retardation
- vii. Mental illness

Disability implies the condition or condition of being or being physically or mentally disabled,

⁶ World Health Organization, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)external icon. Geneva: 2001, WHO

⁷ U.N.G.S, Resolution 3447 (XXX), 9th December 1975

⁸ Laddha, Chaitanya, Rights of Person with Disabilities: A Human Right Approach (March 29, 2016). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2763440> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2763440>

or of being incapable / unable to carry out a given work based on physical or mental disabilities, wish or legal qualifications.

II. HUMAN RIGHTS OF DISABLED PERSONS

(A) History of Disability Legislation in India

The Persons with Disability Act, 1995 was the principal legislation of India on PwDs before the RPwD Act. It was the first significant statute by the Indian government that expressed PwDs' rights. The focus of many of the rules has been on ensuring equal chances for PwDs and not denying access to basic requirements, such education, and jobs. This statute identified seven distinct sorts of disabilities between "blindness" and "mental disease." Although this law constituted a major shift in the government's policies, criticism indicated various legal shortcomings and loopholes making it impossible to enforce.

India in 2007 signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which "proclaims that disability results from an interaction of impairments with attitudinal and environmental barriers which hinders full and active participation in society on an equal basis".⁹ This convention signalled a transition from a medical problem to a society problem in the way disability is seen. India committed to reviewing and amending current legislation in line with the UNCRPD because of this Convention. This approach ultimately led to the RPwD Act being passed.

On 14 December 2016, the Government of India approved the Legislation for Disability Rights (RPwD), a law which drastically enlarged the scope of recognition and opportunity of persons with disabilities (PwDs).

The Act extends the PDA by raising the number of recognised forms of disabilities from 7 to 21, with disabilities including sickle cell disease, muscular dystrophy, and autism. The PwD's reserves in government employment have risen from 3% to 4%.¹⁰

While the RPwD act 2016 is widely declared to be an important legislative step forward, the application of the law has disappointingly stopped throughout the years after its implementation.¹¹ Only 12 states have begun to enforce the statute three years after the RPwD

⁹ Math, Suresh. "The Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016: Challenges and Opportunities." *PubMed Central (PMC)*, 1 Apr. 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6482682/>.

¹⁰ "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 – Extended to Private Employers." *Employment Law Alliance*, 11 Dec. 2017, <https://www.ela.law/firms/trilegal/articles/the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-act-2016-extended-to-private-employers>.

¹¹ Service, Express. "'Odisha, among 12 States, to Notify RPwD Act.'" *The New Indian Express*, 16 June 2020, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2019/feb/10/odisha-among-12-states-to-notify-rpwd-act-1936901.html>.

Act 2016 was approved. Many states still have not appointed Commissioners for Disability, and few have disclosed how many equal opportunities policies they have received.¹²

(B) Fundamental Rights of Disabled Persons.

1. Right to Education

The right to training for all children, including those with disabilities, is guaranteed under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. The law on the education of children with disabilities and non-formal education plans and programmes, development of skilled labour in education, transport facilities and literature for children with disabilities, contained explicit requirements of the PWD Act. In Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, there are specific regulations on education for children - interventions for children with special needs.

2. Freedom of Movement

Under Article 21 and Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, the rights to freedom and freedom of movement are part of fundamental rights that all the citizens have accessible. Article 14 of the Constitution provides all people with equal rights before the law and equal protection of law. The right to mobility and freedom must, however, be assessed regarding the people with disabilities together with the implementation of certain measures that permit the enjoyment of freedom of movement for individuals with disabilities.

In addition, the Supreme Court ruled in *Javed Abidi vs Union of India*¹³ (1999) the Supreme Court further held that Indians not only need to make their aircraft more accessible but that they must also offer a concession of 50 percent available to all disabled individuals, as defined in the Disability Act.

A limited number of efforts have been made across the country to ensure ease and liberty of movement for persons with disabilities. Mumbai introduced disabled-friendly buses after being ordered to do so by a Bombay High Court order. Annual reports of government establishments often do not include information on facilities extended to persons with disabilities.

3. Political and Cultural Rights

In 2005, in order that persons with physical disabilities should be allowed to vote the Election Commission directed the Chief Secretaries of all States/Union territories to build permanent ramps in every public office which include a polling station, and the Disabled Rights Group alleged that these instructions had not been carried out in all areas, together with other non-

¹² Deoc. An Assessment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016. 3 Dec. 2018, <https://www.deoc.in/view-point/an-assessment-of-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-rpwd-act-2016/>.

¹³ 1999 AIR (SC) 512

governmental organisations.

However, the policies in place both in the Constitution and in the Representation of the People Act (1950), which actively prohibit those with mental disabilities or mental health from participating in political life through voting or standing up for elections, are not even in spirit of the attempts to ensure access to polling places to persons with physical disabilities. Full equality will not occur unless these regulations are changed to prevent huge numbers of disabled electors becoming disenfranchised.

4. The Right to Work

In Article 41 of the Constitution of India, the right to work is protected but has also been declared included by the Supreme Court in the 'right to life' provided in Article 21. The Persons with Disabilities Act stipulates government initiatives to help integrate disabled people into the workforce. These include developing plans for the formation of people with disabilities, reserving jobs in government institutions to members of the disabled community and providing companies with a policy which provides equal benefits and remuneration for those who have become disabled.

In the Indian courts the provisions of the Person with Disabilities Act have constantly been enforced and a comprehensive "right to work" has therefore been upheld. However, there are still inconsistencies between respect for the right to work under the Personal Disabilities Act and Indian labour legislation.

The Persons with Disabilities Act safeguards the rights of disabled people to continue as an employee in a position of equal benefit and pay in the same institution, thereby preserving their right to work, but at best other labour laws deal with the other disabled from a charitable viewpoint through compensation and at best guarantee the complete termination of service.

5. Directive Principles of State Policy and the Fundamental Rights

The State Policy and Fundamental Rights Directive entrenched in the Constitution provides for an extremely favourable role for the State in favour of its disadvantaged citizens. Article 41 declares that '(T)he State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provision for securing the right to work to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement.'

6. Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993

The Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 entered into force in India following the adoption of the International Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Convention (ICESCres) and the

International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This Act allows for a stronger protection of human rights to be established by the National Human Rights Committee and the Human Rights Commissions of the States. Section 2(d) of this Act defines 'human rights' as 'the rights of persons, which are protected by the Constitution, liberty, equality and dignity under international covenants and are enforceable by Indian courts.'

(B) Laws & Acts for Disabled Persons

1. Family Laws

Various government marriage laws for Diverse communities are equally applicable to persons with disabilities. In most of these Acts, it has been given to prevent someone from entering a marriage under the following situations. The following are:

- When either party is an idiotic or lunatic,
- When one party is unable to give a valid consent due to unsoundness of mind or is suffering from a mental illness and extent as to be unfit for 'marriage' or for "procreation of children'
- If, unless authorised by custom or use, the parties are within the degree of the prohibited relationship or are sapindas of each other.
- When either of the party has a living spouse

Subject to terms of various marital acts such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Christian Marriage Act, 1872, and the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1935, the rights and obligations of partners in marriage, whether for disability or not are controlled by regulations.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 (amended in 1978 to prohibit child weddings from being solemnised) also applies to the disabled as other marriage legislation is in place.

Under the Guardians and Wards Operate of 1890 a person with a disability cannot act as a guardian of a minor if the disability is so high that a person cannot function as a child's guardian.

2. Succession Laws

Under the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 for Hindus, a person is expressly permitted to be not disentitled from inheriting ancestral property by physical impairment or physical deformity. Likewise, there is no clause that deprives disabled people of ancestral property, which applies under the Indian Succession Act, of 1925, in the case of an interstate and testamentary succession. Parsis and the Muslims have the same position. Indeed, a person with a disability can also dispose of his or her property by writing a "will," if he or she is competent to appreciate

the importance of writing a will at the time of writing a will.

3. Income Tax Law

i. Relief for Handicapped

Section 80 DD: Section 80 DD allows for a deduction for expenses incurred by an individual or Hindu Undivided Family resident in India for the medical treatment (including nursing), training, and rehabilitation of handicapped dependants, among other things. The deduction limit for officiating the higher cost of such maintenance has been adjusted from Rs.12000/- to Rs.20000/-.

Section 80 V: A new section 80V has been implemented to guarantee that the parent whose income of a permanently crippled youngster has been clubbed under Section 64 can claim a deduction of up to Rs.20000/- under Section 80 V.

Section 88B: This provision allows a resident individual who has reached the age of 65 to get an extra refund from the net tax payable. It has been revised to enhance the refund from 10% to 20% in circumstances where the gross total income does not exceed Rs.75000/- (as opposed to the previous limit of Rs.50000/-).

Disability Laws

A continuous struggle for protection and the acknowledgment of their human rights was launched in the 1970s by the separate self-defence movement of persons with disabilities. It intended to implement a comprehensive law with a rights-based approach with a particular emphasis on social and economic rights. While the government recognised that such a law was needed already in 1980, it was only adopted in 1995.

To fulfil its international duties, Article 249 of the Constitution permits the Parliament to act on any topic that falls on any list. Some of the other key acts are:

4. Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995- (After the implementation of RPwD 2016, the PWD Act 1995 was repealed¹⁴

This Act combines the following approaches:

to the prohibition of discrimination based on disabilities in different areas of life; positive discrimination on account of disability, and support for people with disabilities; relaxation in favour of their respective disabilities; and their inclusion in mainstream programmes. This Act

¹⁴ Pg. 33, Section 102, Chapter XVII, The rights of Person With Disabilities

is a combination of services and rights-based legislation.

The Act includes both preventative and promotional rehabilitation features, such as education, employment and vocational education, reserves, research and workforce development, and the construction of an environment that is free of barriers.

5. National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999

Parliament has adopted the Act with a highly progressive aim: to make it possible for people with disabilities to live in and around the communities they belong to as freely and as completely as possible.

The notion does not consist in forcing individuals out of society, but instead of encouraging their family to live in residential facilities. They are entitled to live with their family. Another purpose is to develop processes for the appointment of guardians and trustees for disabled people. The law also ensures that the community is conducive to its environment and provides for advice and training to families with disability.

6. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992

This Act gives assurances to ensure that varied rehabilitation staff perform excellent quality services. The list of the assurances is as follows:

1. Have the rights to be served by certified and competent rehabilitators whose names are kept in the Council's Register.
2. Ensure that basic education standards are maintained necessary by universities and institutions in India to recognise rehabilitation qualifications.
3. Ensure rehabilitation professionals maintain the requirements of professional behaviour and ethics to protect them from penalties for disciplinary action and remove them from the Council Register.
4. A statutory Council under the jurisdiction of central government and within the limitations provided by the Statute should have guaranteed to regulate the profession of rehabilitation professionals.

7. The Mental Health Act, 1987

The Mental Health Act provides for several rights for people with mental illness in 1987. In mental and care centres they have a right to treatment. You may also be dismissed in line with the requirements of the Law if you are healed.

The Act also empowers the police to take a wandering or disregarded person in prison and alert his relative. The police have a duty to guard and maintain these sites. Unless such an agreement has been made, the expense of maintaining such installations must be met by the state government.

8. The Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act, 2016

The RPWD Act of 2016 promises free health care in the immediate neighbourhood, particularly in rural regions, subject to “such family income” as may be specified. The RPWD Act should be updated while maintaining the legislation's "rights-based" character. The sentence should be changed to read, "everyone shall have a right to obtain physical and mental health care without regard to money." This would be true empowerment and rights-based legislation for people with disabilities. Certainly, the RPWD Act of 2016 specifies that “state authorities shall achieve this within their economic capabilities and development.” This goes against the concept of granting "Rights" and permits the "State" to abdicate its responsibilities.

III. INDIAN JUDICIARY AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The role of the judiciary in safeguarding and empowering disabled people is crucial. The Indian court has emerged recently as the guardian of human rights and has been enthusiastic about its reactions to the abuse of human rights. In a series of instances, in the Disability Act of 1995 the Supreme Court has gradually interpreted the advantages of individuals with disabilities.

In *Javed Abidi v. Union of India*¹⁵, In keeping with the aims of the Act the Supreme Court holds that, to create a barrier-free environment for people with disabilities and to make special provisions for the integration of persons with disabilities in social mainstreaming, the Court cannot ignore the true mind and purpose of the Act.

In *National Federation of Blind v. Union Public Service Commission*¹⁶, The Supreme Court was activated to enable blind individuals to compete in Indian Administrative and Allied Service examinations to be referred to a Public Service Commission. The Court permitted the petition. The Court also acceded to a request by the petitioner for an examination to be written either in braille or by the scribe.

The Law against Torture has not yet been sanctioned by India. Certainly, human rights movements in the nation have implemented procedures to impose government responsibility, notably in jail, for torture. And these methods are also applicable to disabled persons.

¹⁵ AIR 1999 SC 512

¹⁶ (1993) 2 SCC 411.

It was worrying that there were over a couple of cases of torture in custody leading to disability in trials and convicted convicts - blind prison suspects (the Bhagalpur blinds), and women who had been "mentally unwell" subjected to sexual torture in detention.

One law only applies to mentally handicapped people, not to people with physical disabilities. Section 81 (Chapter VIII) of the Mental Health Law of 1987 stipulates that no individual with a mental illness is exposed in treatment to indignity or cruelty. In numerous notable cases, this concept has been strengthened:

In the case of *Sheela Barse vs. Union of India* (1986)¹⁷, The Court denounced apparently common practise of putting mentally and physically impaired children in prison for "safe custody" and put the state government's obligation to shift them in a setting where adequate care, medical care and vocational training could be provided when feasible.

In *Dr Upendra Baxi vs. State of Uttar Pradesh* (1983)¹⁸, A medical panel to review the Agra Home prisoners was ordered by the Supreme Court. The study showed that although most prisoners had different levels of mental illness, some had not been assessed by the Superintendent and no means to go to their hometowns were given. Psychiatric therapy was recommended by the Court.

In *Rakesh Chandra Narayan vs State of Bihar*¹⁹ (1989), The Mental Hospital in Ranchi was deemed inhuman by the Supreme Court to constitute a site-visiting committee and to give a report on operations and standards of care of the hospital.

In *Chandan Kumar Banik vs. State of West Bengal*²⁰ (1995), The Supreme Court reprimanded, the terrible circumstances at the Mankundu Mental Hospital in Hooghli District, the court the prohibited use of iron chains for patients and ordered drug treatments for them.

IV. SUGGESTION & RECOMMENDATIONS

All initiatives in India to provide equal rights and opportunities for disabled people are exclusively centred on the medical model and lack a social, economic, and legal viewpoint that discriminates against such protection. However, the future of persons with a disability is not all that dim, as the current RPwD Act 2016 offers ample space for amendments:

- Inclusion of a new definition for 'disabled' individuals that validates the social model for disability.

¹⁷ (1986) 3 SCC 632, Vide order dated 15.4.1986.

¹⁸ (1983) 2 SCC 308

¹⁹ (1989) SUPP 1 SCC 644

²⁰ [(1995) Supp. 4 SCC 505]

- Promoting the right to equal and non-discriminatory rights and the State to "reasonable accommodation" would allow them, in all aspects of their rights to life, to have access to employment, to participate or to advance in employment, to have equal legal capacities with others.
- The more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and abuse of any type are women and girls with disabilities. They must be taken care of in all settings.
- A Disability Rights Authority (DRA) must be established to promote, defend, and enforce the rights of disabled individuals on an equal basis with others.
- The law enforcement authorities need to be made more aware that they can be made easier by handicapped people to provide the finest evidence. You only need to know about technology and remove yourself of attitude barriers to disabled people.
- In regard of disabled individuals, the Indian penal law must also be changed. A new category of "offences against persons with disabilities" must thus be defined. This contributes to lowering the amount of victimisation.
- In addition to old age, the category of disabled individuals should also be included within the Act, as they cannot do many things without shouting and crying because of ageing.
- They and their free transportation to hospitals should be supplied with free and inexpensive health treatments in remote areas.
- The period of validity of the certificate must be included in the disability certificate. Therefore, nobody can benefit from false disability.

V. CONCLUSION

India is a signatory to the Declaration on the Participation and Equality of Disabled People in Asia-Pacific. India has been part of the UN Convention for the protection and advancement of the rights and dignity of disabled persons. To implement the proclaim on full involvement and equality of disabled people in Asia and the Pacific, The National Policy for Individuals with Disabilities was also approved in 2006 as a two-way process targeted at the realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights for persons with disabilities to promote these international commitments. A framework for the implementation of the UN convention on disability is being developed by the Government. After the implementation of The Right of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, The Supreme Court of India, is enforcing and making amendments for the disabled people.

The international movement for disability rights has created a new idea for non-disabled people

that disabled people also need to be given equal chances and equal treatment in society. The foundation was laid in certain circumstances whilst in others a start needed to be made. While legislation for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities have been passed, their enforcement is late. The laws will not, however, give disabled people's rights until, as human beings, we consider all persons with a disability to have a safe, and affordable environment respectful of their dignity, in addition to access, education, health care, rehabilitation and work. With proper regard for all their diversity, we must learn to treat all human beings as human beings.

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