

SOCIAL INEQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY: IN CONTEXT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Dr. Sandeep Pandey

Assistant Professor

Email: sandeepalm@yahoo.com

Abstract

Even every one has the right to live but inequality makes it different at every stage. Some people get most of the opportunities in their lives and some one devoid of this. Maybe it all depends on our physical appearance but every society has unequal opportunities. These unequal opportunities are caused by some circumstances such as birth, gender, family status, income, ethnicity etc. In society, social inequalities of opportunities for persons with disabilities are manifest in their welfare and standards of living. It also shows the personal and social relations between general people and them. We blame to disabled persons for their situation and imagine that either they do have not enough capability or do not have painstaking for the improvement of their status. On the opposite, we do not allow them to prove their abilities and do not consider their invisible contributions to society. We must think that everyone should have an equal opportunity to reach a basic standard of living. The main aim of this paper is to explore and examine the inequalities of opportunities which are based on employment and income, caste and gender. These social inequalities are directly associated with persons with disabilities and their living status.

Keywords

Social Inequality, Opportunity, Disability, Income, Gender.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 04.09.2023
Approved: 22.09.2023

Dr. Sandeep Pandey

SOCIAL INEQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY: IN CONTEXT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Article No.29
RJPSS Apr.-Sep. 2023,
Vol. XLVIII No. 2,
pp. 253-260

Online available at:

https://anubooks.com/view?file=3270&session_id=rjpss-2023-vol-xlviii-no2-sept-2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2023.v48i02.029>

Introduction

When people live in the same society then why do not have access to the same opportunities? Social inequality of opportunity is the result of some circumstances which are based on birth, caste, social association, wealth, physical and mental presence etc. The concept of equality of opportunity is rooted in a Rawlsian philosophical tradition (Theory of Justice, 1971) whereby people are expected to construct society in such a way that they would be happy for their place in society to be determined by a random draw (Transition Report, 2016-17). First in India, the pioneering work for inequality was done by Dr. Amartya Sen (1979). He examined the inequality in the context of human capability. The term referred not simply to what people were able to do, but to their freedom to lead the kind of life they valued or had reason to value. In short, capabilities are the capacity and freedom to choose and to act (Sen, 1997). He argued that the development of the society or nation should be based on the enrichment of people's lives and their well-being.

According to an international research seventy-four percent (74 percent) of people believed that opportunities are not fairly distributed. The term social inequality refers to two opposite poles. Which one have enjoying all the facilities and opportunities and others are deprived by some barriers. Joseph Stiglitz in *The Price of Inequality* (2012) argued that the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among various social groups resulted in the vulnerable section of society being denied access to quality education, good health care facilities and suitable employment so on and so forth (Singh, 2014).

There is such a perception in our society that there is no place for the disabled and they are impediments to the development of society. Therefore deprived form some facilities. "Disability is socially constructed. Disability resides in the set of social relationships and outcomes of social practices that tend to disadvantage and marginalize people with impairments, perceived impairments, and physical differences. These relationships are institutional, cultural, and interpersonal social structures" (Pandey, 2017). A legendary scientist Stephen Hawking who is disabled himself argued that "people with disabilities are vulnerable because of the many barriers we face: attitudinal, physical, and financial. Addressing these barriers is within our reach and we have a moral duty to do so..... But most importantly, addressing these barriers will unlock the potential of so many people with so much to contribute to the world. Governments everywhere can no longer overlook the hundreds of millions of people with disabilities who are denied access to health, rehabilitation, support, education and employment—and never get the chance to shine" (A Statistical Profile, 2016).

A report on disability by the World Health Organization presents that many people with disabilities face an avoidable and disadvantageous association with society. Disability is a complex and it can occur at any point in life. An intervention is required for disability disadvantages, which will be multiple, systematic and dependent on context.

J.S.P. Pandey (2017) considered that we all have to move to an empowerment model that is based on an understanding of the complex relationship between disability and society (i.e., society as much or more a source of the problems that particular impairments). In the empowerment model, disabled people and their allies assert their rights, and society's ethical responsibility, to recognize each individual's gifts and organize societal policies and practices in ways that encourage the flourishing of these gifts.

Persons with disabilities are marginalized and deprived by the society. Strip of their rights for many years. Now they should come to the mainstream of the society. So, the main aim of this paper is to explore their life opportunities and socially unequal conditions. The paper is divided into two parts, the first is conceptual and explores the concepts of disability and social inequality and the second, is to examine and explore the social inequalities of opportunities for disabled persons.

Methodology

There will be used qualitative research method, but the investigator collect some data from other secondary sources such as government departments, books, research studies, documents, various research papers, and articles. So, it will be in quantitative in nature. Exploratory and descriptive method has been applied.

The Concept of Disability and Social Inequality

We used the word disability as a complex phenomenon. Many researchers and scientists are studying the disability from medical, social, psychological and anthropological perspectives but the disability is broadly defined in only two perspectives, one is medical and the second is social. Medical perspective defines in it form of impairment of physical or mental health. The World Health Organization defines disability as "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". These impairments may be present

as physical, sensory, mental and cognitive or developmental illnesses. Disability can occur by birth or at any stage of the life.

The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) however, uses the term disability to refer to the loss of health, where health is conceptualized in terms of functioning capacity in a set of health domains such as mobility, cognition, hearing and vision (Sen, 1988). Although disability has many definitions and no one agreed on one of them but the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the disabled persons defines a disabled “as any person unable to ensure by himself or herself, wholly or partly, the necessities of a normal individual and or social life, as a result of a deficiency, either congenital or not, in his/her physical or mental capabilities” (Singh & Kachhap, 2008). On 13 December 2006 the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) considered that disability is a result of the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The social perspective has an opposite scenario from the medical perspective. It explained that the disability is created by the society. Society restricts the disabled persons from enjoying the resources. Some social factors such as norms and values, culture, religion, caste, class, occupation and social ethics are responsible for creating a lot of barriers in their daily life.

In this perspective Oliver (1996) defines the term disability as “the disadvantages or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization, which takes no or little account of people who have...impairment and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities”. Thomas (1999) argued that “disability is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well being”. Thomas coined the term ‘impairment effect’, which defines the relation between society and disability (Singh, 2014). That means society generates the hurdles and deprives them of their rights. Therefore, disability is produced by the society by inequitable distribution of opportunities and resources.

The term Social Inequality presents the differences of life chances, lifestyles and living standards between the people of society. Social inequality is the unequal distribution of rewards and opportunities in different groups of individuals or societies (Encyclopedia). This type of inequality is basically based on race, caste, income, education, religion, norms, values, political power etc. On the other side, we can say that the differences among societal prestige, estates, rights and opportunities in the society are a symbol of social inequality.

Sociologists argue that there are five types of inequalities present in society, which are -

1. **Political Inequality:** This type of inequality has no civic equality in front of the law or state.
2. **Income and Wealth Inequality:** It is the equality of outcome or result which is primarily on income and wealth.
3. **Life Inequality:** It is based on inequalities of opportunities and life standards and life chances.
4. **Inequality of Treatment and Responsibility:** Although this idea is less examined but it generates problems in agency and responsibility.
5. **Inequality of Membership:** This exists on equality of membership in society.

Even though, social inequality has many faces under many circumstances but it depends on social resources, and the distribution of unequal social resources is called social inequality.

Examine and Explore the Social Inequality of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities

Disability is a very large area for study but it is lingering for many years. The work has been starting in this area in the last few decades but there is still a lot to be done. Disability is also a part of society, so many sociologists have increased their focus on this. Disability is explained in many perspectives but socially it is considered as a social deprivation.

Indian Hindu society believes in 'Karma'. The concept of Karma is that God give us some rewards or punish for our act. Disability is the result of punishment. Society could not be concerned that the disability may occur medically or socially or bio-centrally. They believed that charity was a good religious work. Perhaps is that disabled people are helpless and unable to work. So, it is our duty to help them in any form (as money, food, clothes etc.). Doing this act our next birth will be nice.

Karma is divided on a caste basis and the caste belongs to their ancestral work. After independence, the constitution of India defined all castes into four types-General, Other Backward Class (OBC), Scheduled Caste(SC) and Scheduled Tribes(ST). An upper caste (General, OBC) enjoys all the necessary facilities of society while a lower caste (SC, ST) is deprived of that. As a result of this upper class gained all developments (economically, socially, politically etc.) and the lower class still suffers from substantial deprivation. A census of India (2011) on disability-focused that highest 2.45 percent of disabled people belong to SC than 2.05 percent

to ST and other categories (General and OBC) are 2.18 percent. That means the lower castes are more vulnerable to the upper castes.

Gender-wise disability shows that males have more share than females. Among the total disabled population (2.21 percent), 55.9 percent of males and 44.1 percent of females are afflicted by disability. But it is the unfortunate for females that they are more suffer from discrimination and exploitation than males. Maybe, the one reason is that they are live in a male-dominant society. Second is that women are tied to traditional orthodoxy norms and values of society. Their socio-economic freedom is abated by society and they are left to depend on family. The dealing with the male disabled in society is not better but is slightly higher than women disabled. The data of the census(2011) manifest that 45.7 percent of disabled (male and female) are dependent on the mercy of their family. This illustration shows that the discrimination of opportunity and abilities are not the same for both disabled. Society looks at them downcast in comparison to normal persons.

Income plays an important role in human life. It is an opportunity to fulfill their daily needs. Besides this it is also a symbol of social status in society. Although income is directly proposed to employment. Disabled people have only three ways to generate their income. First, in government sector employment, second in private sector employment and the third in self-employment. But, in the government sector, the state has only 3 percent reservation in jobs and the private sector considers them as non-productive resources. If they get jobs in the private sector they get lesser wages and exploitation at the workplace than non disabled persons. However, Article 39 of the constitution of India directive that the citizens, men and women equally have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. In, the self-employment sector, the government provides financial assistance to set up an income-generating activities for disabled persons. Many schemes have been launched for this sector. But, unfortunately either they do not know many schemes or the advantages of those schemes could not reach properly. So, it could be considered a slow pace of growth in the employment sector.

The census of India (2011) shows that only 36 percent of the population of disabled people are workers. Among these only 47 percent are male and 36 percent are female disabled workers. Approx 1.71 crore (73 percent) disabled population belongs non-working category, in which 46 percent of male and 54 percent of female non-workers and 45.7 percent of disabled persons are dependent on others (as family, shelter homes, rehabilitation centers etc.).

The average employment rate in the government sector is 0.54 percent and in the private sector is 0.28 percent. A World Health Organization (WHO) report

indicates that 87 percent of disabled people work in the informal sector and the employment rate of disabled people has been down 5.1 percent from the last decades (1991-2002). The International Labour Organization reports (2011) present a dreadful pictures of the disabled that 73.6 percent of the disabled in India are still outside the labour force.

Almost all employer have desire for some productivity in their workplace and some disabled can not fit in that frame. So, maybe this is the one reason that disabled people deprived of employment opportunities. "Inequality of wealth may tell us things about the persistence and generation of inequalities of other types, even when our ultimate concern may be with inequality in living standard and quality of life....."(Sen, 2003)

Conclusion

Disabled people get limited opportunities to participate in mainstream of social, political and economic activities (as mains are gender, caste, and employment), thereby having fewer chances of empowerment. Lots of barriers to opportunities make their life difficult and less their life chances, so they cannot live their interruption-free life. To envision a better society, the value of equality of opportunity would be to participate in a key role. Opportunities to be equal within a group and each member of that group. Whereby there will be no discrimination against anybody. Persons with disabilities should be included in the mainstream of society and turn to decision-making roles. Hereto, our primary objective should be the improvement of the quality of life and give a better position in society.

References

1. (2016). Disabled Person in India. A Statistical Profile. Social Statistics Division. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. GoI. https://smartnet.niua.org/sites/default/files/resources/disabled_persons_in_india_2016.pdf.
2. (2008). Five Types of Inequalities. http://equality-ne.co.uk/downloads/337_FivetypesofInequality.pdf.
3. Hans, Asha. (2015). "Disability, Gender and the Trajectories of Power". SAGE Publication: New Delhi.
4. Kumar, Sudesh., Mudasir, Ahmad Lone. (2013). "A Sociological Investigation of Disability : Theory, Debate and Perspectives". *Acme International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*. Volume I. Issue IX (Sep 2013). www.researchjournals.in/AIJMR/2013/1904.pdf.

5. (2011). NCPEDP Report on Employment. National Centre For Promotion Of Employment For Disabled People. New Delhi. (Accessed on 05/11/2017). <http://www.ncpedp.org/Employment>.
6. Pandey, J.S.P. (2017). "Disability and Social Security". Mount Hill Publishing Company: Delhi.
7. Rawat, Harikrishn. (2006). Advanced Encyclopedia of Sociology. Rawat Publication: Jaipur.
8. Sen, Amartya. (1979). "Equality of What? Tanner Lecture on Human Values". Tanner Lectures, Stanford University: USA. <http://hdrnet.org/43/1/sen80.pdf>.
9. Sen, Amartya. (1997). "From Income Inequality to Economic Inequality". *Southern Economic Journal*. Vol. 64. No. 2. October. Pg. 384-401. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.329.9696&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.
10. Sen, Amartya. (2003). "Development as Capability Expansion". Readings in Human Development, Fukuda-Parr. S. et al. (eds.). Oxford University Press: New Delhi and New York. http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sen-2003_Development-as-Capability-Expansion.pdf.
11. Singh, Ashish. (2010). "Inequality of Opportunity in India". Munich Personal RePEc Archive. https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/32993/1/MPRA_paper_32993.pdf
12. Singh, Pooja. (2014). "Persons with Disabilities and Economic Inequalities in India". *Indian Anthropologist Association*. Vol. 44. No. 2. July-December. Pg. 65-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43899390>.
13. Transition Report. (2016-17). "Inequality of Opportunity". Chapter-Three. Pg. 45-59. www.ebrd.com/documents/oce/pdf-transition-report-201617-english.pdf.
14. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 13th December 2006. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.
15. World Bank Report. (2008). "Inequality of Opportunity: What It Is, How It Can Be Measured, and Why It Matters". http://siteresources.worldbank.org/LACEXT/Resources/258553-1222276310889/Chapter1_HOI.pdf
16. World Health Organization. Disability Definition on Health Topic. (Accessed on 23/10/2017). <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/>.
17. World Health Organization. (2011). "World Report on Disability". https://www.unicef.org/protection/World_report_on_disability_eng.pdf.