



**"Nationalise The Citizen! Spiritualize
the Nation" In *the context of people
with disabilities***

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As a citizen we can spiritualize the society for people with disabilities who have become marginalized „citizens of charity“ in this nation; I have been always thinking how to spiritualize the nation and its citizen to create an inclusive civil society. About 10% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, of whom 2-4% experience significant difficulties in cognitive and intellectual functioning.

We should come out with the belief that “open minds open doors” in order to explain the emerging human condition. Our faith needs to bring several important issues concerning the nature and causes of the encounter between citizen and their rights.

The story of *Ashtavakra* can be cited to highlight the Indian archetype about the nature and cause of disability. This story is referred to in many ancient texts, including the Mahabharata. *Ashtavakra* was the only son of sage Kahod, who was a learned scholar and a teacher of the Holy Vedas. One day, when Kahod was teaching the Vedas to his disciples, *Ashtavakra*, who was still in his mother's womb, expressed disapproval of his father for misinterpreting the Vedas. Kahod felt insulted before his disciples and in a fit of anger cursed the foetus to be crooked in eight parts of the body. *Ashtavakra* was thus born with physical disability. Later he became a very intellectual teacher and spiritually solved the problems of King Janak to save his kingship.

With the colonization of India by the Bruisers, large-scale missionary activities started with official patronage. These charity institutions followed the same philosophy and practices, which they brought along from the west. In the post-independence era, Nehru became the Prime Minister and the Nehruvian model of a welfare state was the guiding principle in all social development programs. This has led to a phenomenal growth of centralized and institutionalized services for the welfare of people with disabilities.

In the '80s, an ideological shift for people with disabilities in the developmental planning - from welfare to human resource development was initiated. The idea was that, rather than making people recipient of state welfare, people should be viewed as a human resource and should be fully developed through education and training.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, emphasised to change attitudes and approaches to a new height and the movement, from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection; moved towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

We invite you to join the hands for humankind and understand the abilities of persons before labelling them disabled. Trust we all can open minds and open doors for all people with disabilities we come across.

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