

**Social Protection of the Disabled in Russia: A Study of State
Policies and Inclusive Higher Education**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "*Social Protection of the Disabled in Russia: A Study of State Policies and Inclusive Higher Education*" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Social policies and inclusive higher education program are currently under implementation in Russia for the purpose of social protection and integration of people with disability. The preconceived notions and prejudices about the disabled create obstacles for them to education, employment, healthcare and participation in social life. Higher education increases the prospects of enhancing quality of life, self-determination and independent living. Keeping this in view, on the basis of the special articles and provisions in the Russian Constitution government has initiated several social protection measures for the disabled since 1995 (Federal Law of the Russian Federation 1995). Since the ratification of UN Convention of on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in May 2012, President Putin considers the social protection and integration of the disabled as one of the important policy priorities.

Recognition of Russia's commitment is reflected in the words of Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF's Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States who said: "The ratification of the Convention is an historic day for Russia and demonstrates Russia's commitment and leadership to addressing the rights of people with disability and especially children and adolescents, who are among the most marginalized in society" (Unicef 2012). According to Bertrand Bainvel, Head of the UNICEF Moscow Office, the ratification of UNCRPD "is an achievement for all advocates in Russia – policy makers, NGOs, parents' associations, people living with disabilities and children whose voices have been heard. Given Russia's influence regionally and globally," the ratification "is an important landmark for many people with disabilities living beyond Russia's borders" (Ibid).

Arguably, inclusive higher education is accepted in principle as an enabling factor in reducing social exclusion, economic deprivation and humiliation, and enhancing independent living, self-respect, social protection and integration of the disabled. A new national law on education that guarantees inclusive education came into effect on 1 September 2013. The situation of the disabled began to change. Russia is trying to implement inclusive higher education to provide access and better opportunities to the disabled. Putin showed his dedication to promoting respect, inclusion and human dignity for the disabled by hosting the Paralympics in March 2014 in Sochi. As of January 2016, the amended Russian law “On the Social Protection of the Disabled” makes discrimination based on disability in all sectors illegal. However, it could be seen that recognition and protection of human rights of the disabled in Russia is a recent initiative. There are several issues related to implementation, efficacy of programs, understanding concepts, quality and training and so on in Russia. Hence it is necessary to explore the problems of social protection of the disabled in Russia.

Profile of the Problem

While in Russia the case of Paralympics demonstrates Russian government’s commitment towards people with disabilities, the suspension of Russian Paralympics’ from 2016 Rio Olympics shows that the disabled people become the victims of the so-called democratic west’s inhumanity, intolerance, humiliation, discrimination and exclusion. In 1980 during Moscow Olympic Games a western journalist inquired about whether Soviet Union would take part in Para-Olympic games scheduled to take place in Britain later that year to which reply from the Soviet representative was very puzzling. He said “there are no invalids in USSR”. These words encapsulated the political and social exclusion of disabled in Soviet Union. Historically throughout the Soviet bloc, persons with physical and mental disabilities have been stigmatized, hidden from the public, and thus made seemingly invisible. Thus, the current disability rights issues have roots in history.

After the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, the Post-Soviet era academicians have shown interest in the disability studies in Russia. A number of research studies have been carried out on disability in Russia. In the Post-Soviet state, there is a significant attitudinal change both at the governmental and the societal level towards people with disabilities. Change in attitude towards people with disabilities and the respect for civil rights of this part of population is seen as a sign of development of civil society in Russia. Proper social integration of disabled people into main stream society is the key to overall development of every modern society. Inclusive higher education is accepted by the leadership as an enabling factor for achieving the social integration of people with disability.

System of inclusive education enables the disabled students to learn with the non-disabled students without any discrimination. In Russia, inclusive higher education is accepted in principle as an enabling factor in reducing social exclusion and humiliation of the disabled. Professional education for people with disability is social resources to overcome social exclusion and become economically independent. Thus higher education increases the prospect of enhancing quality of life, self-determination and independent living. The current policy of inclusive higher education for the disabled provides ample opportunities for professionalization. It will enable the disabled students to enhance their social integration. Thus, inclusive education is an important component of social integration of people with disabilities. Hence Russia is trying to implement inclusive higher education in order to provide access and opportunity to people with disabilities in the country.

In the last 15 years, there has been significant improvement in the field of social protection of the disabled in Russia. This is evident from the fact that provisions like means of rehabilitation; medical services etc. were introduced in the country. In the federal program [Accessible environment 2011-2015], there is a tendency to intensify measures to support the educational system for the disabled. After the ratification of the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities 2012, the

process of implementing inclusive higher education has started in Russian universities. The social policies created positive outcome but a lot of challenges exist at the implementation of inclusive higher education as an important step towards eliminating social exclusion of the disabled people in Russia. The question of equity, difference, justice etc is pertinent issues to be considered for addressing the issue of the disabled and promoting their rights. Therefore, a socially oriented approach is important for the efficacy of the social protection programmes for the social protection and integration in Russia. However, whether the social protection policies and laws enable them to form a self identity by acquiring capability, asserting rights and challenging the socio-cultural prejudices is an important question concerning the social protection of the disabled.

Theoretical Framework

This study mainly revolves around the notion of social protection, inclusive higher education and disability rights issues in Russia. There are basically two models to understand the issue of disability: one, social model of disability and two, medical model of disability (Yuill, Crinson and Duncan 2010). Social model of disability is more common as most of the western countries have adopted this model to understand disability. On the contrary, Russia from the Soviet times has relied on the medical model of disability.

At present, social policies for persons with disabilities are based predominantly on medical aspects rather than considering disability as a social construction. According to Ekaterina Anasovna (2013), “Disability is not just the condition of a person, but also the result of his/her relations with social environment. Barriers of the existing environment, such as social, legal, cultural issues, are the main reasons for social exclusion of disabled people.” In the words of Tony Booth disability in a socio-cultural context can be defined as “a barrier to participation of people with impairments or chronic illnesses arising from an interaction of the impairment or

illness with discriminatory attitudes, cultures, policies or institutional practices” (Booth 2000 cited in Murugami 2009).

In social systems the identity of a person with disability constructed in such a way that they are subordinated, discriminated and a liability to the family and society. Every society keeps its own attitudes, values and beliefs about the nature of disability. Disability is taboo subject. In the absence of particular policies for the disabled they will be treated discriminately and subject to social exclusion. This means disability causes disadvantage to the person with impairment. The taboo in the social approach tends to develop negative self image and a “second class” identity in the mind disabled persons from childhood itself (Lawson 2001). This situation demands them to create a self identity by themselves. Therefore, socially oriented approach that suggest policies promoting independent living, self-respect, equal opportunities, quality of life improvement and social interaction that helps the realization of human potential. However, the *World Disability Report* (2011) suggests a balanced approach combining both medical and social model of disability considering the multidimensionality and diversity of disability. There are both health, structural and socio-cultural conditions associated with disability.

Although these aspects are nowadays seemed recognized in principle in Russia, social policies for the disabled in Russia are primarily based upon medical model rather than considering disability as a social construction. According to R. Amundsen (1992), there are two main models of disability: medical model and social model. Within the medical model, a disabled person is considered as a person with stable physical, mental, intellectual or sensorial disabilities and, due to this fact, all efforts are directed to improve or to maintain his/her physical and mental condition. Within the social model, disability is considered as a social construction. The attention to the interaction between the disable person, environment and society as a whole is a key point of the social approach to disability (Hughes & Patterson 1997).

Disability is understood as a social and political issue rather than as a medical one (Oliver 1996), meaning that the disability is not just the condition of a person, but also the result of his/her relations with social environment. Disability is generally perceived as an illness rather than physical, developmental or psychological impairment. Russian government defines disability as a person who is suffering from health issues involving persistence disorder of bodily functions due to disease, trauma or defects resulting in restrictions of their livelihood and calling for their social protection. The popular understanding of disability is based on the idea that if someone is unable to perform even the basic tasks due to some bodily problems then he or she is disabled. It is viewed as dependency, tragedy and invalidity across different cultures.

But various studies have shown that disability is a very loaded concept (Lawson 2001; Michailakis 2003; Murugami 2009; Stryker and Burke 2000; Darling 2013). In medical terms, disability could be of various types based on the ailment of different body parts. On the other hand, social model of disability understands the issue of disability in a different way. According to this model, someone acquires disability due to external factors and conditions. In other words, a person becomes disabled when external factors act on that person. These external factors could be of various kinds ranging from social customs and traditions, cultural factors, surroundings consisting of several obstacles and so on. These barriers combined with physical problems are the essence of disability in social model. If we try to understand disability in Russia through this model then we realize that Russian society presents several barriers to its disabled citizens. These barriers are physical, attitudinal and psychological. Barriers at the physical level consists of inaccessible housing, apartment buildings, schools, colleges, universities, government offices, transport system, market places, movie theaters and so on. All these things are deemed to be highly inaccessible because of the following reasons in the context of Russia as elsewhere.

All the buildings in Russia built before 2001 whether that be government buildings, apartment buildings and so on are not disabled friendly. They lack ramps, elevators, they have narrow doors and so on. Buildings built after 2001, have some of the facilities but they are not fully accessible. For example, ramps are too steep. Elevators have too narrow doors. In many cases, staircase does not have railing for support. As a result, people with disabilities specially those on wheelchairs do not leave their apartments for many days at a stretch. System of transport in Russia is not disabled friendly. Inaccessible transport system discourages disabled people to venture out on their own (Human Rights Watch 2013).

Apart from these physical barriers, disabled people also face attitudinal barriers, which mean people do not see disabled people as equals. Still there are many people who hold a very biased view against disabled people. They do not recognize the ability and talent of people with disabilities. All these things lead to prejudice against disabled people. On the other hand, medical model of disability understands the issue of disability in a completely different perspective. It does not take external factors into account like physical and cultural barriers. According to this model, a person is said to be disabled if he or she has defective limbs. So there are different models to understand the issue of disability in a much more nuanced way (Anasovna 2013).

However, disability and physically challenged is a recent innovation. In a common understanding, disability means to be less able, to be at a disadvantageous position in earning one's livelihood or performing the ordinary activities in life. Disability is socially accepted and culturally exacerbated. So the physical or mental disability is not only a trait of an individual but it is an accumulation of conditions, activities and relationships. All of these things are the byproduct of the social environment. So it is the society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something which is imposed at the top of one's impairment by the way one is unnecessarily excluded and isolated from full participation in society. Social exclusion of disabled is mainly due to the existing barriers like social, cultural and legal issues. Hence from the point

of view of socially oriented model, the effort should be made not only in the direction of improving and maintaining the physical condition of the disabled but also removing the existing barriers from the society. The best part of social model is that it shifts the entire focus from individual deficits to the ways in which society includes or excludes them. Instead of essentializing the problem of disability, this model holds that someone's disability is dependent on the social context and differs at different times and in different cultures. So the criticism of this model is that this model view disability as social arrangements which can be reduced and even be eliminated (WHO 2011).

In order to promote disability rights and make disabled people lead a meaningful life, the government must have good disabled friendly laws and policies so that the social protection of such people could be ensured. The main logic behind social protection is to prevent such situations and conditions which act as a hindrance for the social wellbeing of the people. Social protection is nothing but the laws and the policies aimed at reducing social injustices like poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and so on. Social protection aims to increase people's capability to manage social risks like disability, vulnerability and so on. Russian state policy related to social protection makes sure that people with disabilities enjoy equal rights when it comes to enjoying rights and freedom.

The law on social protection in Russia also aims to make disabled people realize their potential on an equal base with other regular citizens in various facets of society such as health, education, culture, employment, transport and communication and so on. It also aims to ensure and facilitate accessibility by getting rid of all the barriers and difficulties which create serious impediments to the surroundings, traveling, physical environment, information and communication, access to the institutions of learning and so on. These policies basically protect those sections of the society who are marginalized. Disabled people belong to the vulnerable/weaker section of the society. They get discriminated on the pretext of their disabilities. Employers do not

show enough confidence in them therefore, they do not get the opportunity to work. They face similar kind of discrimination in the other fields of life such as healthcare and education. Hence, social protection ensures that those who are marginalized get fair treatment in the society.

Review of the Literature

A large body of literature is available on the topic of disability, social protection and inclusive higher education in Russia. Several studies have been done in Russia on this topic. This study uses mainly uses three strands of literature: Soviet legacy of disability protection, Laws and policies of Russia for the social protection of disabled persons and challenges and achievements of inclusive education.

Disability in Russia is stigmatized. Many disabled people in Russia do not have adequate access to facilities and disabled children are commonly institutionalized. This is due to the fact that the disability in Russia is considered shameful and disgraceful. Such discrimination is rampant despite the fact that Russia is a party to the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Russia signed this treaty in September 2008 and ratified it four years later in September 2012. Russian government has legislated policies related to integration and inclusion of disabled people in the society in the recent past.

However, the old believes and attitudes towards people with disabilities will certainly take some more time to come to an end. This is a throwback to the communist era of Russia therefore it will take a long time to change this type of mindset. Unfortunately, many people in Russia see disabled people as drain on society not giving as much as they are receiving. Russian media is also a big problem which show the typical attitudes of Russians towards disability. During the opening games of Sochi Paralympics, the Russian commentators were caught in their own guffaw saying that injured US Olympic Skier should think about starting her Paralympic career. This particular incident goes on to show that even the well educated people in Russia see people with disability from a different lens. Problem is

not related to the relevant laws. There are several laws which promise accessible housing for every single disabled person. There are also provisions related to making apartments and other buildings accessible for people with disabilities. Problem lies at the implementation level. Due to the poor implementation of accessibility laws, the problem of inaccessible environment can be seen everywhere. It has been seen that the common people of Russia are not very enthusiastic about this whole issue of accessibility.

The entire debate of accessible environment has largely remained on paper itself. Both the government and the society have not shown enough commitment and determination to put in practice all those clause that the different accessibility laws talk about. Even today, there are not adequate Braille signs for people with visual impairment in public places like metro stations, shopping malls, museums and so on. There are not adequate display sign boards for people suffering from deafness. There are lack of good quality ramps in public places for wheelchair users.

Most of the ramps are so steep that it becomes very difficult for the wheelchair users to use them. It has also been seen that in market places, people park their cars in front of the ramps making them inaccessible for the wheelchair users. Beside all these, some economists have claimed that given the current economic status of Russia, it is not possible for the Russian government to ensure the full inclusion of invalids in the society. Inaccessibility is the major hindrance to inclusion for people with disabilities. So in order to ensure accessibility in the country, there is a need to become more sensitive towards disability. Mere laws and legislations will not do the trick, implementation of those laws surely will bring change.

Disability Rights Issues in Russia: The Soviet Legacy

In the pre-soviet era, the lives of disabled people were nothing short of a mystery. Very little was known about the lives of the people with disability as historians and ethnologists did not study much about disability. However, literature on the pre-modern period refers to wandering minstrels and strolling beggars who were

primarily blinds and disabled. They solicited charity in and around orthodox churches and monasteries. Such persons were often referred to as ubogi, which means god in Russian language. Due to close association with churches and religion, these disabled people were often respected and revered. As S.D. Phillips (2009) mentioned during 18th century, the main care givers of the disabled were the families, elites and the church. Beside all these, even the czarist state played a very important role in making the lives of disabled people much easier.

During the 19th century, a term called [invalid] emerged in Soviet Union to describe persons with physical disabilities. The term [invalid] in the czarist period was primarily used for the military and the soldiers and it did not carry any negative connotation of one who is less or literally invalid (Play 2006). However, the meaning of invalid changed with the Bolshevik revolution and establishment of the Soviet state.

Now the meaning of invalid changed to designating those people who had lost the capacity to work. The meaning and definition of disability and invalidness as a loss of labor capacity became the cornerstone of disability policy in Soviet Union. Level of disability was assessed according to a scale of labor potential. Therefore, Soviet's understanding and approach towards disability was completely different from that of [individual tragic] model of disability which is being pursued in the countries like the USA, UK and elsewhere. Soviet Union adopted a functional model of disability which is based on person's usefulness for the society (Play 2006).

During 1920s and 1930s, there were two sets of people who were considered invalids in Russia, one the elderly people and two the disabled veterans of the First World War and the Russian civil war. In the great patriotic war between 1941 and 1945, the number of disabled increased rapidly in Soviet Union. Stalin's approach towards war disables was guided by two main ideas first, it was considered important to provide enough support to war invalids in order to placate them and prevent them from rebelling against the government as it had happened in 1812. Second, images of war

invalids were excluded from the official interpretations of the war experience and representations of post-war life to silence the negative aspect of Second World War. Hence Soviet Union followed a dual approach towards the war invalids in the post second world war period (Play 2006) .

On the one hand, there was a state provision for the material support for the people with disability on the other hand, there was a social and cultural isolation of people with disability. This dual approach policy was in practice throughout the 20th century in Soviet Union. As a result, it is very hard to predict the exact number of war disables in Soviet Union. In 1980 during Moscow Olympic Games a western journalist inquired about whether Soviet Union would take part in Para-Olympic games scheduled to take place in Britain later that year to which reply from the Soviet representative was very puzzling. He said “there are no invalids in USSR”. These words encapsulated the political and social exclusion of disabled in Soviet Union. Historically throughout the Soviet bloc, persons with physical and mental disabilities have been stigmatized, hidden from the public, and thus made seemingly invisible (Dunn and Dunn 1989).

According to Russia’s ministry of labor and social protection, new measures are based on German model. The main aim of this model is to improve upon the previous mechanism which granted disability benefits according to the type of medical condition and severity of the symptoms. Under the new system the health authorities examine the loss of a particular function of the body regardless of the diagnosis. Under the current system, the grants are awarded according to the loss of a particular function of the body. According to the new system, only those people can apply for financial assistance who have at least 40 percent of disability or more. As a result of this move, the number of disabled people in Russia has gone down drastically. This move of the Russian government has attracted many criticisms by the Russians. Parents of the disabled children have openly expressed their anger saying that this is a monstrous government which has no money for the disabled

children but has millions for war. according to them, the current government is trying to reduce the number of disabled people so that it can cut on disability benefits. Despite all these, we can still say that there have been significant improvements in the field of social protection of the disabled people in the last 15 years for example, provisions like medical services and means of rehabilitation (Russian Constitution 1995; Laws for Disabled 1995, 2013).

The current policy of higher education for the disabled provides a very good chance for professionalization but it limits the option of programs of training. The idea of professional education is related to the prospect of increasing the quality of life of the disabled people. Professional education also increases the prospect of employment. However, development of higher professional education requires the following conditions. One, there should be the appropriate legal framework. Two, availability of necessary infrastructure should be in place. Three, introduction of new form of learning, new educational programs and curricula is required. Four, public opinion supporting social integration of people with disability should be there (Olga Borobkina 2013).

Inclusive higher education is an organization of training process that includes all students irrespective of their physical, mental, intellectual, cultural-ethnic, language, and others features in the higher education system, and are trained with their non-disabled peers taking into consideration their special educational needs, and rendering necessary support (Ainscow 2002). General educational system in Russia should become more flexible so that the rights and opportunities of all children including the disabled children can be ensured. There are several factors which have not allowed the professional higher education to become a great success. It has been noticed that the institutions of higher learning do not have proper teaching staff and instructors to assist the students with disabilities. These institutions do not offer adequate number of skill development training. As a result, many disabled students do not possess enough skills for jobs. Lack of professional skills lead to

unemployment among disabled people. Apart from all these, universities lack accessible campuses. They also do not provide sufficient reading materials to the disabled students. Only a few universities in Russia fulfill the criteria of an inclusive institution of higher learning. So these are some of the challenges which have prevented the institutions of higher learning from becoming fully inclusive. Perception and attitude of the society towards disabled children plays a vital role in their overall progress and development. It is no secret that the Russian society looks down upon disability (Ainscow 2002).

Disability is considered shameful and attempts are always made to hide the disability from the society. Families in Russia abandoning their disabled children are not so uncommon. Therefore, the system of inclusive education is something which will make disabled people not only skilled human beings but also give them the equal respect in the patriarchal Russian society. We should always remember the basic principle of inclusive education which says that the value of a person does not depend upon his abilities and achievements. He is valuable in himself (Tsivilskaya 2013).

However, the system of professional education does not fulfill the needs of people with disabilities. Despite all the efforts of the government to facilitate social integration of the disabled people in the country, so many disabled of working age are still not adequately integrated in the society. This is due to the fact that the system of professional higher education in Russia does not offer enough opportunities for professional specialties. As a result, even after acquiring professional education people with disabilities in Russia are unable to compete with the non-disabled people in the labor market. Hence the specialties of the disabled people do not correspond to the demands of the labor market within the country (Borobkina 2013).

Focus of the Study

Disability, social construction, social integration, social protection, tolerance, inclusive education, social inclusion, otherness, accessibility, environment etc. are some of the important concepts the study focuses to understand the social protection of the disabled people in Russia. Despite all the efforts of the government to facilitate social integration of the disabled in Russia, so many disabled persons of working age are still not adequately integrated in the society. This is due to the fact that the system of professional higher education in Russia does not offer enough opportunities for professional specialties. As a result, even after acquiring professional education disabled in Russia are unable to compete with the non-disabled in the labor market. Therefore, President Vladimir Putin has taken special interest in implementing inclusive education in Russian university system. It is under the implementation level. Moscow State University is the pioneering academic institution where inclusive education programs are implemented successfully to a great extent. But still problems exist right from the level of conceptual understanding and require close examination for successful implementation. The main focus of the study the period taken is from 1995 to the present.

Research Questions

The study tries to answer the following research questions.

1. How do social policies in Russia address the problems the problems faced by the disabled people like social exclusion, discrimination and unemployment within the country?
2. Are disabled people in Russia adequately incorporated and enrolled in the higher education system?
3. Has the inclusive schooling been able to integrate and incorporate disabled children in the mainstream society?
4. How does higher education increase the prospect of enhancing the quality of life, self-determination and independent living of disabled people?

5. Given the Soviet legacy and ambiguity, what are important achievements and challenges on the way of implementation of inclusive higher education?

Hypotheses

The study intends to test two hypotheses.

- The preconceived notions and prejudices about the disabled in Russia create obstacles to education, employment, healthcare and participation in social life for them. Internal changes after Soviet disintegration created certain conditions to look at the problem of disability seriously.
- Since the ratification of UN Convention of on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in May 2012, inclusive higher education has been accepted in principle as an enabling factor in reducing social exclusion, economic deprivation and humiliation, and enhancing independent living, self-respect, social protection and integration of the disabled, but problems exist at the implementation level due to Soviet legacy and ambiguity.

Research Methodology

The study is based upon descriptive, historical and analytical methods using both inductive and deductive methods. It used both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include government documents like education policy documents, social protection ministry's documents, speeches of president etc. Secondary sources are articles published in reputed journals, books, thesis, magazines, journals, and print media, internet sources and so on. Lack of primary data collected through field survey remains as a limitation of the study. However, narratives of experiences by the disabled and media reports are used to fill this gap.

Scheme of Chapters

This research consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the literature review and the conceptual framework on which the study is based. It defines the important concepts useful to understand the complexities of disability. Chapter tries to provide a clear picture of disability and the problems/challenges attached to it in Russia with

a historical background. History of disability and the disabled people at large would be the main focus of this chapter. State response, attitude of the elites and the approach of the religious organizations like church towards the disabled people are also analyzed. Third chapter discusses about the legal aspects of disability in Russia. Russian government has formulated policies and enacted laws related to disability in the recent past. Russia has ratified the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in the year 2012. This chapter seeks to examine the issue of disability from a legal perspective and the influence of international dimensions on the changes in Russia. Chapter four discusses the measures for implementing inclusive higher education in Russia. Main attempt would be to see whether inclusive higher education is effective and successful in Russia and the challenges faced in Russian society. Chapter five summarizes the conclusions and lists out the main findings of the study.

Chapter 2

Disability Rights Issues in Russia: The Soviet Legacy

This chapter will discuss disability in the Soviet era. This is followed by the study of disability policy in the Soviet times. Beside this, discussion regarding system of institutionalization, system of education for the disabled, rights of people with disabilities and so on constitutes a major part of this chapter. To better understand the issues related to disability in the Soviet era, a small section of this chapter is dedicated to disability in the pre-Soviet Russian Empire.

Disability in the pre-Soviet era is not well known. Not much has been written about disability and disabled people. However, it is believed that the lives of disabled people revolved around community life. All the disabled people were well integrated and included in their communities. Existence of community life meant that the disabled people were not socially excluded or socially isolated. They were very much an integral part of the community to which they belonged. Their disability was accepted by all members of the community. In other words, social prejudice and segregation of people with disability in pre-Soviet era was a rare phenomena. Disabled people on the other hand were not the free riders. They worked alongside others to the extent possible, for example making baskets and fishing nets, sewing, and embroidering (Bondarenko 2005). However, the lives of disabled people changed after urbanization. Community based life and community support structures for disabled people got dismantled as more and more people migrated to cities in search of jobs.

In the 18th century under Czar Peter the Great, state began to play an important role in the lives of the disabled people. State did not want the church to be closely associated with the disabled people. Church were the main care givers to the people with disability, specially to those who were mentally ill. The state under Peter the Great became very active and even tried to control the lives of those who were

disabled. In the year 1723, Peter the Great passed a decree according to which no person suffering from mental illness would be allowed to be sent to Monasteries. Instead, various other institutions were established for persons with disabilities. So Peter the Great tried to bring in a number of necessary reforms for persons with disabilities. Interestingly, all the initiatives taken by Peter the Great were discarded by his successors. Catherine II the Great, established regional departments of public welfare in the year 1775. This was an attempt on her part to reform the local government. The newly established regional departments were given the responsibility of building asylums for the mentally ill people (Brown 1989).

In the 19th and 20th century a number of institutions for the disabled people were established in the country. In the second half of 19th century, a number of institutions for people with mental disabilities were established in the Russian empire. Beside this, schools for deaf and blind were also there in Russia. These schools were supported by philanthropists. Establishment of various institutions in the Soviet Empire like schools and hospitals in the 19th and the 20th centuries led to the recognition of disability rights in the Soviet Union. Overall, the pre-revolutionary development of policies and attitudes toward people with disabilities was similar to changes in western countries: increasing state-based interventions, growing networks of institutions to confine and treat individuals, medicalization and the validation of expert knowledge in addressing disability (Brown 1989).

During the 19th century the term invalid was used to denote the disabled people. Whereas in the pre-Soviet era, terms such as *Ubogi* and *Iurodivye* were used to describe the same. In the Czarist period the term invalid was used primarily in reference to the military and soldiers and it did not necessarily carry the negative connotation of one who is “less” or literally “in-valid” (Hartblay 2006). Vladimir Dal in his compiled Russian dictionary defines “invalid” as “one who served, revered warrior; unable to serve because of wounds or physical damage worn out one.”

Early Legislations Related to Disability

After the establishment of Soviet state the meaning and definition of invalid had changed. Now the term invalid referred to those people who had lost the capacity to work. The definition of disability or invalid as loss of labor capacity was a cornerstone of disability policy in Soviet Union (Madison 1989). So Soviet's understanding of disability was very different from that of west's understanding of disability. In the western countries, disability was understood in medical and social terms. In Great Britain many activists and writers believed that social model is the only appropriate understanding or definition of disability. Disability in Great Britain was perceived as social obstacles and barriers that prevent individuals from leading a normal life. There was almost a belief in Great Britain that without the social model there can be no political progress and no social movement of disabled people. On the other hand, disability in the Soviet Union had entirely different meaning and connotation. Here, disability was understood in terms of person's perceived usefulness for society. So, disabled people were defined as those who contributed very little or nothing to the society.

Early Soviet disability policies were formulated in the backdrop of the First World War and the Russian civil war. Both of these events resulted in a large number of war veterans becoming disabled which led to the formulation of several legislations relating to war invalids (Shek 2005). In the year 1918, the Bolshevik government divided invalids into two types: partial invalids and total invalids. Partial invalids were those people who were left with some capacity to work under proper working conditions. Whereas total invalids were those kinds of people who were left with no capacity to work. Soviet government provided support to the partial invalids so that they could return to the work force. Soviet state offered them vocational training so that their labor capacity could be restored. In addition to this, Soviet State had ensured other facilities for the invalids such as medical and educational institutions in every provincial capital of the country. Beside war invalids, the number of disabled orphans was also huge. Therefore, various important steps were taken by

the Soviet government like providing them education, better housing and better medical facilities. In the year 1932, invalids were again classified into three different groups by the soviet state. The main aim of this classification was to put disabled people into separate groups based on their ability to work. Group I comprised of all those people who were left with no capacity to work. Group II comprised of the people who had some capacity to work but work under proper working conditions. Group III consisted of partially disabled people who could do part-time jobs. Thus the Soviet state in the interwar period sought to integrate war disables in the mainstream society by providing them jobs based on their work capacity (Shek 2005)..

Disability in the Post War Scenario

After the great patriotic war, Soviet Union emerged as a super power. There were many changes that took place within Soviet Union. Despite being a super power, Soviet Union was going through an internal turmoil. A large chunk of its population had become disabled after sustaining serious injuries in the Second World War. So the number of invalids in Soviet Union increased rapidly after the Second World War. This was the period in which a number of policies and legislations related to disability were being formulated. The state wanted to placate the war invalids by providing them various kinds of support. The state did not want its own people to rise against the government. Sometimes, the wounded warriors of the Second World War were called “Neo-Decembrists” (Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova 2014).

In December 1826, people revolted against the government and its policies. So in order to prevent the wounded warriors from rebelling against the government, Stalin’s regime sought to provide adequate support to the war disables. In the post war period, war disables were not treated well by the people of Soviet Union. Their disability became a curse for them. They were not well received in the society. In fact people were ashamed of them. They were left at the mercy of god. They did not have enough support both from the government and the society. So war disabled were being ignored and excluded from the mainstream society. Almost no to very

limited employment opportunities became a harsh reality for the disabled people in the post second world war period. Interestingly, Soviet's approach towards invalids in general and war disables in particular was marked by duality. On the one hand, the state was willing to provide the minimum support to the disabled people whereas on the other hand, culture of stigma and social isolation of the disabled characterized the Soviet disability policy in the post war era. Beside this, the subject of disability was considered as a social taboo. Issue of disability was never given adequate importance and attention in the society. This was primarily due to the fact that patriarchy is deeply rooted in Russian society. Male member of the family is always expected to provide care and protection to the family. He is also the main breadwinner of the family. Disabled people on the other hand are considered weak and ineffectual in such societies. People in such societies believe that disabled people cannot take up the responsibility of providing care and protection to the family due to their bodily problems. They cannot go out and earn living for themselves. Instead they are the once who need the support of the family. Therefore, disabled people were treated as the second rated citizens of the country (Fieseler 2014).

In the early 1940s, a number of resolutions were passed by the government. The main aim behind passing the resolution was to provide various benefits to the war invalids. These resolutions were related to housing, education and jobs. Provision regarding providing training to the war disables were also made. Disabled veterans received vocational training from the state. They were trained as cobblers, photographers, carpenters and so on. However, the benefits of the training could not be reaped by many. Only a few number of invalids could take advantage of the vocational training provided by the state. It is very interesting to note here that the Soviet state viewed all the disabled people as potential labor resource. According to the Soviet ideology, every single citizen is a capable being. Therefore, the Soviet state believed that even the disabled citizens of the country can equally contribute to the Soviet society. In other words, disabled people were expected to engage themselves in some productive activities. It was basically an attempt by the Soviet

government to facilitate a strong workforce in the country. However, recruitment of war disabled into workforce happened at the cost of their social status. It was noticed that war disabled were given low skilled work (Fieseler 2006). On the other hand, the government was making all its effort to channelize and organize the work and work capacity of the invalids. Their production activities were assessed for improvement. All the invalids were expected to learn the productive works which were assigned to them.

In 1944, a resolution regarding disability pension was passed. Disability pension provided by the state was not enough to lead a decent life. Disability pension was provided based on military rank and degree of disability. Life of war veterans in the post war period became a nightmare. They did not have a proper support from the state. They did not have proper jobs either. Many of them had to even sell their meager possessions in order to sustain their living. Hence, it would not be wrong to argue that the disabled people in Soviet Union literally became impoverished in the post war period (Burstein 2014).

Besides providing financial aid in the form of disability pension, the Soviet state also tried to ensure that the disabled veteran get the appropriate medical attention. However, war disabled could not benefit much out of it due to various reasons. For example, hospitals were established but conditions in those hospitals were sub-par (Tchueva 2008). Number of beds were not sufficient. There were not enough nurses to look after the patients. Special hospitals were only few in number which were not fully equipped. Thus one can say that the Soviet government undertook an exhalant project of providing medical relief to the disabled war veterans by establishing special hospitals in the important cities of Soviet Union. However, the number of beneficiaries of the scheme were not big in numbers as hospitals lacked proper medical standards. Furthermore, the medical services that the state decided to provide to the war disabled like prosthetic limbs and wheelchairs were not adequate.

After the Second World War, the number of people suffering from disability increased rapidly in the country. Many soldiers sustained fatal injuries during the war which rendered them handicapped permanently. Many of them lost their eyesight. Others lost their limbs. Many of the soldiers became disabled perilously whereas disability of some other soldiers was not so critical. Still the bottom line was that a large number of Soviet soldiers became disabled in the battle ground. They virtually lost everything while fighting for their motherland. When these soldiers returned from the battle ground, their act of heroism and valor was celebrated in the entire Soviet Union. Some of the disabled war heroes were even glorified in Soviet literature. Their selfless love and sacrifice for the country left an ever lasting impact on the minds of the people (Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova 2014).

However, disability became a curse for the war disabled. They could no longer lead a normal life. Their disability prevented them from being the active citizens of the country. A large chunk of the disabled souls were made redundant owing to the poor support structure in the country. There were not enough mechanisms in place to ensure proper rehabilitation of the war disables in the post war scenario. Many were seen fighting for their own lives. Medical support was not very sound. Thus poor medical facilities in the Soviet Union is another factor which rendered the war disables helpless. In many ways, they became dependent on others. Public life of such people virtually came to an end. Disabled people were hardly seen in the public sphere. In other words, people with disability were isolated and excluded from the public sphere. Private sphere such as home and institutions became the place of solace for the war disabled. Disabled veterans received care from their mothers and wives at home. Thus, homes and institutions became the healing place for the war disables. Within the confines of the home, disabled people found a new meaning of life. Here, they got moral, psychological and ethical support. Here they had family members around them who understood their feelings and were always ready to help them out in all circumstances (Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova 2014).

It is very interesting to note here is that in the great patriotic war, almost every Soviet family lost one of its son. Some families even lost more than one male member of the family. A major part of Soviet's male population had been wiped out in the second world war. War casualties had been reported from nearly every family in the country. Thus it can be argued that the great patriotic war brought sorrow and misfortune to the Soviet society at large. Not only the valiant soldiers were killed in the war, but also injured badly. Some of the serious injuries later turned into disability for many Soviet soldiers. Disability had become a major social concern for the Soviet society. It was time for the Soviet state to chip in and ensure social security to the vulnerable section of the society.

On the contrary, disabled soldiers received maximum support from their own family members and relatives. Female members of the family provided care and support to the traumatized male souls of the family. Wives, sisters and mothers played the role of social therapists of disabled soldiers. Increasing role of the women in the overall rehabilitation process of war wounded revealed the fact that Soviet state shifted the responsibility of supporting the people with disabilities to the social support networks like family. Unfortunately, not every war disabled had the support of the family. There were disabled veterans who did not have the luxury of family support structures. Thus it can be said that the Soviet state's decision of shifting the responsibility to the families was not a good solution to the problem. Soviet state viewed disabled veterans as burden on society. This is evident from the fact that rather than carving out a smooth and a barrier free path for the war disables, Soviet state chose to turn a blind eye to the problem of disability in the country. Problems ranging from rehabilitation, employment, social inclusion and so on were clearly overlooked by the government(Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov 2014).

Soviet state was not willing to waste its resources on its disabled citizens. This was due to the negative attitude of the government towards disability and disabled people. There was a perception in Soviet Union that disabled people do not give as much as they receive. Hence, the Soviet disability policy was marked by prejudice

and discrimination towards the disabled people. It was this negative and negligent approach of the government which made the lives of war disables even harder. In order to overcome such problems and provide some monetary support to the war veterans, the Czarist tradition of charity and benevolence was revived in the Soviet Union. People in the cities and towns were called upon to make charitable donations for the war invalids. However, volunteerism can never be a way out to any societal dilemma. It could provide a momentary assistance but not a permanent solution (Phillips 2009).

There was a very dismal side to Soviet disability policy. After the Second World War, disabled veterans were forcefully made to leave the major cities of Soviet Russia. They were relocated in the remote areas. Penal camps were established for disabled prisoners and disabled veterans of the Russian civil war and the two World Wars (Fieseler 2006). Thousands of such disabled people were secretly deported in the far off places. Many of them died and others became a mystery. It is believed that extremely cold conditions and inhuman treatment of the war disabled resulted in several deaths. Many of the disabled veterans were accompanied by their wives to the exile. This kind of inhuman treatment of the war disables by the Soviet government clearly reflects its awful disability policy. These policies undermined the human rights of disabled people.

There was a clear violation of the rights of the disabled veterans. Not only were they sent off to the far off places but were also compelled to lead a painful life away from their families and friends. Every individual is entitled to certain rights which is inviolable in nature. These rights cannot be taken away from an individual in any circumstances. However, Soviet Union had a different understanding of the concept of human rights altogether. In 20th century, a large number of Russians both disables and non-disables were sent to camps in Siberia as a part of punishment. Their fundamental right which is right to life had been clearly violated. This kind of a ruthless policy can never be justified on any ground. Soviet government was ruthlessly punishing its own people for not being compliant enough (Tchueva 2008).

In the early 1920s, Lenin came up with the policy of war communism. Under this policy, the lands of the farmers were being taken away from them forcefully. Bolshevik red army used to take away all the extra produce and life stock of the farmers because they had to feed their army. They use to leave Only some amount of produce with the farmers. There were revolts against the policies of red army. Red army had the upper hand and they managed to put down the resistance from the white army and were able to control most of the major cities of Soviet Union. In 1921, they adopted a new economic policy which tried to dilute the harshness of war communism. Now farmers were allowed to sell their goods in the market to get some profit. Small scale trade was also allowed under new economic policy. By the end of 1920s, Stalin could foresee that another war is looming over Europe which is unavoidable. New economic policy according to him was not going to take soviet union very far therefore he decided to take very drastic measures to develop and industrialize communist Russia. For this purpose he adopted very coercive policies they are as follows.

One, policy of collectivization of land. It means bringing all land under state control. So it was state ownership creating collective farms through forceful means. Two, de-kulakisation. Kulaks were those farmers who would employ wage laborers on their fields to work. Kulaks were dealt with very harshly because they opposed the policy. millions of kulaks died and rest of them were sent to Serbia to labor camps. Hence, Soviet's extreme harsh policies proved very costly to its own citizens. One could argue that Soviet Union was not a favorable place for those who resisted Soviet policies. Many of its policies were not people friendly. Those who opposed it had to pay a heavy price. Soviet government was not ready to listen to its own people. Everything was being imposed from the top and the common people had to live with it.

Soviet's Differentiation Principle of Disability

Soviet policy of disability was characterized by the principle of differentiation. So Soviet's approach towards disability classification and disability pension was marked by differentiation principle. All the benefits related to disability were allocated not equally but according to different scales. For example, people suffering from different kinds of disabilities were entitled to different pensions. So the cause and degree of disability, onset of disability and so on were measured based on differentiation principle. This principle was not only applicable across various categories of disability but within the same category as well. For instance, war disables received different disability pension according to their ranks and pre-disability salary. Similarly, cause of disability had its own importance. People those who acquired disability in the war or while working were entitled to more privileges than other disabled people. Disability of disabled veterans and those who became disabled on the job got recognition in the post war scenario. Disabled people belonging to these two categories were singled out and appreciated for their service to the country (Shek 2005).

Capacity to work was the main idea which defined the functional model of Soviet Union. Hence, those who did not possess the capacity to work like disabled children, mentally disabled and so on were offer fewer entitlements. Main reason behind this kind of treatment was the belief that disabled people are less useful for society because they could not work like others. Interestingly, Soviet's model of disability created a hierarchy of invalids in the country. Origin of this kind of differentiation lie in the early Soviet period. The most privileged were the war invalids of the second world war. Second in line were the soldiers who became disabled while serving the country in Afghanistan, Hungary, Chechnya and so on. Further back in line were the invalids of KGB and military service. Next comes the tern of those who became disabled at the work place. Last in line were those kind of people who acquired invalidness due to some unfortunate accidents. Congenitally disabled people also fall in the same category. However, the idea of categorization of invalids did not go

down well with many disabled people in the country. Ranking of disabled groups based on their cause of disability created friction among all existing disabled groups in the country. The main reason behind friction among different groups of disability was the fact that it is not fair to treat the problem of disability differently. Many members of the different disability groups did not like the idea that some groups will be given more privilege over others. It also meant that some particular kinds of disabilities were given first priority over others for example, war veterans were entitled to more privileges than those who were congenitally disabled. This official classification unfortunately resulted in a clear segregation among various disability groups like blindness, deafness and so on. All these developments resulted in a sense of competition among disabled groups. In other words, all disabled groups lacked the sense of unity among themselves. It can be argued that the Soviet government very smartly suppressed the potential protests and dissent against the current regime. Differentiation or classification of disabled people into different categories served the main purpose of the Soviet state which was to encourage competition and resentment among various groups. Lack of cooperation and unity among the disabled groups meant that there would not be collective action against the state. Hence, Soviet government constantly sought to divide and set apart different disabled groups so that they do not rise against the government.

Institutionalization of the Invalids in the 20th Century

Soviet government had built special residence for the disabled people in the country. The special residence were called doma-internaty. Soviet government started to build special residence for its disabled citizens back in 1920s. Soviet government continued to establish special residences even after the second world war. Number of internaty in the country grew exponentially in the early phase of cold war. There were mainly four kinds of internaty. Some internaties were exclusively established for old citizens who were disabled. Others were for young disables like deaf, blind and so on. Third kind of internaty meant for those disabled veterans who had served the country for a long period of time. Fourth kind of doma-internaties were meant for

people suffering from psycho-neurological problems. Beside this, Soviet Union also had the system of internaty for children until 16 years of age. System of internaty stretched across the entire country. The main objective of doma-internaty was to provide care to the residents. It also sought to provide good living conditions to all the people. The main idea was to ensure home like living conditions for all the people suffering from different kinds of disabilities. In general, internaty were total institutions that were functioning as medico-social institutions intended for permanent residence of the elderly and disabled who require constant practical and medical assistance (Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov 2002). System of doma-internaty certainly became a standard in the country though other options were also explored. According to Olga Shek, there were two main factors that were responsible for the establishment of doma-internaty all across the Soviet Union. Firstly, there was a need to send out a positive message to the world that Soviet state is a beneficent force. So there was an attempt by the Soviet state to enhance its image on the global platform by ensuring basic needs to all its people. Secondly, to present a clear picture of Soviet Union to the world that it is a healthy nation free from social problems.

System of Education for the Invalids

After the formation of Soviet Union, special education for disabled children became the purview of the Soviet state. However, the idea of special education was developed in the beginning of 20th century itself. The system of special education could not become a reality because of Soviet's commitment to the First World War. Soviet Union got completely involved in the First World War. Many of its soldiers died who were ill-led, ill-equipped, ill-paid, ill-clothed, ill-trained and so on. Defeat of Russian forces precipitated a revolution in February march 1917. This was the time when Soviet Union was going through some internal turmoil. There was a civil war in the country which made the life of Bolshevik party very difficult. Due to all these reasons, Bolshevik party could not bring in policies or enact laws related to special education for its disabled citizens.

In 1930s, proper arrangements were made to implement the system of special education in the country. However, the measures that were taken to implement the system of special education were far from satisfactory. There was not enough state funding to the special schools called doma-internaty. In the first half of 20th century, the control of the internaty was in the hands of local administration. Members of local administration who had the responsibility to ensure a proper functioning of doma-internaty by providing them adequate financing always seemed uninterested in the project. As a result, school-internaty could not accomplish the kind of outcome as expected. School-internaty lacked proper infrastructure. Teacher student ratio was very low in those schools. However, in 1950s and 1960s, Soviet state decided to provide financial assistance to all residential school-internaty. State's intervention in the system of special education was a welcome change. More state funding to residential school-internaty meant that the students and teachers would have better facilities to learn and to teach (Shek 2005).

Special education for the disabled students consisted of following disciplines like pedagogy, medicine and so on. On the other hand, general system of education in Soviet Union was totally biased towards disabled people. It did not take into account the needs of disabled students. General system of education was not disabled friendly either. Special education was based on the science of defectology (Grigorenko 1998). It took into account various aspects of children's education such as social, physiological and psychological part. However, the science of defectology which earlier focused upon social and psychological aspect, reduced to medical and psychological aspect in the second half of 20th century. Earlier the system was more wholesome and humanistic as it included all the component of disability (Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov 2002).

On the contrary, Soviet defectology was modified to a medical defectology. So the science of defectology became more medicalised in nature. More medicalization of the special education meant that there would be classification and differentiation of

the students on medical grounds. The main problem with this kind of differentiation was that it saw disabled children as defective beings who needed correction on their part. This sought of understanding changed the entire discourse of disability and special education of disabled students in the country. A common medical belief which surfaced at the time was not in consonance with the earlier understanding of disability. Now the issue of disability was perceived and approached in medical terms. Now it was believed that physical ailment such as lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb constitute the idea of disability. So disability was seen as individual's problem where societal barriers and prejudices were not taken into account. It was conceived that a person is disabled because he is incapable of performing daily tasks and contributing to the society through his work. So the new model of disability located disability in an individual and completely excluded the role of society. Social and cultural barriers that are major obstacles to people with disability were also overlooked. Hence, it can be said that the new model envisaged the solution or cure of disability only in the medical terms (Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov 2002).

Soviet's system of special education was not inclusive in its true sense. Special schools were not meant for all kinds of disabilities. Special schools were primarily offered to students suffering from blindness, deafness, cognitive disabilities and so on. On the other hand, children suffering from multiple disabilities, mentally handicapped children, children suffering from autism and so on were literally excluded and rejected from the entire system of education of Soviet Union. The main reason behind this sought of treatment was the fact that children suffering from serious disabilities were not deemed fit for receiving education. There was a dearth of support staff for children with special needs. Those seriously disabled did not have much option as far as their education was concerned. The Soviet state could only provide basic training and some elementary education to seriously disabled children. There were not enough mechanisms in place to ensure a proper system of education for those young children whose disability was very serious. The basic

education that these children were getting was not beneficial in the long run because despite of their severe physical condition, they received the same treatment and the same common education along with their counterpart. Hence, it can be said that the education of children suffering from multiple disabilities, mental illness and so on was not given much importance like blind and deaf children (Sutton 1988).

Disability Rights in Soviet Union

In the post second world war era, there were protests against the disability policies of the government. These protests were led by the activists who were rather enthusiasts. Most of the activists were disabled Russians. These disabled people living in internaties all across the country formed informal groups to fight for the rights of disabled people. These protests gained momentum in 1960s and 1970s. Protests mainly revolved around three important areas of education, employment and housing. There was a demand for more rights in these three areas. These protests were mainly visible in cities like Moscow and Saint Petersburg (Raymond 1989).

Fight for the rights of disabled people further intensified by 1980s. For example one of the active members of the disability rights movement founded the action group to ensure the rights of people with disabilities. This group acted as a platform from where information related to disability and disability rights was disseminated. This group published a special publication called the information bulletin. The information bulletin mainly targeted the government policy for people with disabilities. It was highly critical of the Soviet disability policy. Through this publication, common people became aware of the prejudice and abuse that disabled people faced in their day to day lives (Indolev 1998).

However, the action group could not carry out its function for too long as its activities were halted by the Soviet State. The leaders of this group were hunted down by the intelligence and internal security agency of the country called KGB. Apart from this group, there were many groups that came up around same time in Soviet Union like Korchaginets, Prometei and so on. These groups aimed to put

pressure on the government to provide support to disables. However, these demands were not in opposition to the disability policy of Soviet Union. Many controversial issues were also not raised. Thus it can be said that many of the groups which fought for the rights of disabled people played within the rules of the land.

Invalidness and Employment

After the formation of USSR, various halfhearted attempts were made by the Soviet state to provide rehabilitation and employment to people with disabilities. People suffering from various kinds of disabilities became conscious of their social status. Disabled people from all over the country formed various associations like VOS, VOG and VIKO to ensure inclusion of the invalids in the workforce. These associations acted as important tool of economic empowerment of people with disabilities in Soviet Union. VOS and VOG ensured that disabled people get secondary and higher education, suitable employment and other kinds of productive work. Describing the work of VOS in 1920s, Bernice Madison writes, “the effort to do away with the problem of illiteracy among the blind people in the country began”. VOG also played a very important role in ensuring the integration of deaf people. Disability studies scholar Sarah Phillips opined that VOG helped the deaf people to nurture deaf culture. According to her, VOG also helped improve the social status of such people in the country. All these associations were located in isolated places. In fact, these associations were promoted as an oasis where rights of disabled people could be ensured and protected. Since these special organizations were exclusively meant for disabled people, the chances of any kind of prejudice or mistreatment based on their disability was very low. As these associations were segregated from any other regular organization, they had their own work culture and infrastructure to meet the requirements of disabled workers (Indolev 1998).

By 1960s, the number of organizations for the disabled grew immensely. There was also a great increase in the number of disabled workers in these associations. There were more than two lakhs disabled people working in over four thousand artel organizations (Indolev 1998). However, growing numbers of organizations for the

disables in the country did not mean that they were free from state's control. VOS and VOG were controlled by the ministry of social services. On the other hand, industrial ministry took possession of VIKO following which the organization came to an end. The main reasons behind the control and liquidation of these organizations were many. It was believed that these organizations did not have much utility. It was merely serving the noble cause of providing job benefits to those who had limited capacity to work. Soviet state felt that it has enough resources to tackle the problem of disability in the country. There was also a belief that these special organizations were not efficient economically. Hence, these organizations were under constant surveillance of the state. Some of them were even acquired by the authorities. Beside this, other factors which prompted Soviet State to keep a check on these organizations was the fact that according to the Soviet State, cooperative work culture could promote collective consciousness against the state. As a result, organizations such as All-Russian of the blind (VOS), All-Russian Production-Consumption Union of Invalids (VIKO) and so on were considered as a threat to the state.

All the disabled people working in these organizations got some employment. They were earning their livelihood by selling their labor. It essentially meant that they were no more parasites on the state. They became more powerful economically. Working together in groups strengthened close bonding among these people. So there was a feeling of oneness among all the disabled people working in these organizations. There was a growing collective consciousness among the invalids which was perceived as a threat by the Soviet state. Despite this, some of the organizations continued to function as earlier. Disability other than blind and deaf were not given the same attention. One can argue that these organizations could not provide inclusive work environment as they were exclusively designed and meant for disabled people. However, these organizations very much succeeded in making a big difference in the lives of people with disabilities (Fieseler 2005).

To sum up, various factors that shaped the lives of disabled people in Soviet Union in 20th century have found a description in this chapter. A clear overview of disability policy and application of those policies to the issue of disability and invalidness has been mentioned here. Invalid people of this country did not always get what they deserved in terms of disability rights. However, it would be wrong to say that the Soviet State turned a blind eye to the issue of disability. Soviet state was very much responsive towards the needs and requirements of war invalids. Attempts were also made to incorporate disabled citizens into workforce. However, disabled people were not allowed to work alongside non-disabled people. Many disabled people earned their livelihood by working in special organizations or internatsies. One can argue that segregation of work places for the disabled was not an inclusive approach. Anyhow, the benefits of the employment cannot be ignored. Thus, it can be said that disabled people of Soviet Union sometimes got overwhelming state's care and attention and at the same time, they received too little attention from the state.

It is very interesting to note here that the disability in Soviet Union was hidden from the outside world. No one had any idea about the fate of disabled people in this country. Disability was certainly a mystery in Soviet Union. Exact number of disabled people was not known. It is believed that the actual number of disabled people in the country was much higher than the official number.

Soviet State sought to control almost every aspect of life of disabled people. Disabled citizens were not considered as active agents. Many of the disabled people had very limited education. They also lacked in various skills. It would not be wrong to say here that the Soviet State did very little in order to empower disabled people to compete with other non-disabled workers. In fact, Soviet State kept a close eye on the organizations such as VIKO so that it can regulate the growth of disability consciousness. It did not want its own people rising against the government and its disability policies. Hence it can be said that Soviet's approach towards disability and rights of people with disability was rather rigid in its nature.

Chapter 3

State and Social Protection of People with Disabilities: Legal Framework and Policies

Russia is one of the developed countries of 21st century. It is considered as an emerging superpower. It is the largest country in the world in terms of geographical area. It also possesses nuclear capability. Russia has also got natural resources in abundance like hydrocarbons, natural gas and so on. Russian Federation came into being in the year 1991 after the dissolution of USSR. Russia had many challenges ahead for example securing successful economic and political transition. Early part of 1990s was completely chaotic for the Russians as the fruits of reforms were not visible immediately. Old system got dismantled. As a result subsidies, pensions and other kinds of securities were being withdrawn by the government. As a result, the living conditions of the common people worsened after the reforms. After disintegration, the disabled community in Russia could not find its voice. For several years after the disintegration, disabled people continued to lead secluded lives. Disability was stigmatized in USSR and persons with disabilities were largely excluded from the society (Dunn and Dunn, 1989).

Prior to the dissolution, disabled citizens of Russia were hardly seen in the public places. It seemed as if public sphere did not belong to the disabled people of the country. All kinds of physically challenged Russians were cast aside and hidden from the public (Dunn and Dunn, 1989). Lives of such people revolved around hospitals, care facilities and other such institutions. Several persons with disabilities in USSR spent their entire lives within the confines of their homes. Hence, persons with disabilities did not lead productive lives in USSR. In other words, people with disabilities had become invisible in the society. This veil of invisibility was not lifted immediately after the disintegration. It took several years for the society to acknowledge the fact that even the disabled people can lead a healthy and a dignified

life by contributing enough to the society. So there was an attitudinal change in people's perception towards disability. This chapter is an attempt to assess and analyze state and societal attitude and sensitivity towards people with disabilities. This chapter will also deal with the recent laws and policies of the state. In last 25 years after disintegration, Russia has made several promises and commitments to ensuring accessible and disabled friendly country for all its disabled citizens. We will see in this chapter whether the state has been able to keep up to its promises and commitments in the recent past. This chapter will also deal with the legal aspects of disability and see whether the Russian government has made any progress on the implementation part of laws and policies related to disability.

The old Soviet Union came to an end in December 1991 which gave birth to 15 new states. Russia was one among them. Russia became the successor of the great USSR. So Russia was a new country with new neighbors and borders. It faced a major challenge of transition from socialist economy to capitalist economy. It was a first case of this sought in the entire world. Another type of transition that the entire Russia was going through was the political transition. This transition was from one party communist state to a multi-party democracy in a span of two years. Immediately after disintegration, new Russian government had to grapple with various domestic turmoil. Therefore, the new Russian government could not focus much upon the issue of disability. Amidst chaos and all kinds of disabilities, the disabled community of new Russia was struggling for its own identity. They were trying to carve out a new path for themselves which would take them to great heights. They needed respect and recognition in the society (Dunn and Dunn, 1989).

The transition phase of Russian society brought with it a new wave of hopes and aspirations among the entire disabled community of Russia. They were not ready to lead a life of anonymity like before. They wanted to see themselves in public realm. They wanted to contribute to the society in every possible way. They wanted to defy the odds and lead a more meaningful life. After disintegration, Russian society started to open up gradually. Interestingly, the ugly picture of hiding disabled people

from the rest of the world became hazy gradually. So the veil of inhumanity and intolerance was lifted finally. After 1991, Russian society at large started to view disability in a new light altogether. All these changes were not conspicuous immediately after the reforms. These changes were more at the psychological level than physical level. In other words, these changes could be felt but not seen. These changes were about new attitudes, new perceptions, trust and tolerance towards people with disabilities in the country. So the people with disabilities were no more outcast like before. Their disability was no more looked down upon like earlier. Common people of Russia had become more accommodative towards persons with disabilities. They became much more understanding and sensitive towards disabled fellow beings. All these positive changes can be attributed to the federal law on social protection of persons with disabilities in Russia which was introduced in the year 1995. Even the academicians started to show interest in the issue of disability in the post disintegration period. So government's initiatives in the form of laws and policies created a sense of awareness about disability among the common people of Russia (Fefelov, 1986).

Prior to disintegration, the topic of disability was not much talked about. Disability was considered as a social taboo in Soviet times. Soviet government did not want to spend its resources on its disabled citizens because of the popular Communist/Marxist belief that the disabled people do not give back as much as they receive. So one of the reasons why disabled people in Soviet Union were outcast was the fact that they were viewed as worthless. This kind of belief is also present in Plato's Republic. In an attempt to build an ideal state, Plato talks about eugenics in order to achieve the best race of offspring's. Plato's ideal state consisted of best possible race of human beings. According to him, the resources of the state should not be wasted on weak people. He was of the opinion that the weak should be left in the sun to die. So the entire debate revolves around creating a perfect society. People with disabilities cannot be a part of such societies because they are liability on the state. So it was an obsession with a perfect society which made the Soviet state

maintain a huge distance from its disabled citizens. Soviet state's attitude towards its own disabled citizens could be best summed up in the following words. During 1980 Moscow Olympics a western journalist asked a Soviet representative whether Soviet Union would take part in the Para-Olympic games which were to be held in Britain later that year to which the reply of the Soviet diplomat was very shocking. He said "there are no invalids in USSR" (Fefelov, 1986). These words encapsulated the social and political exclusion of disabled people in USSR. Such an attitude of a government official sent out a very negative message to the entire world. These words were enough to conclude that Soviet government did not treat its disabled citizens on par with other citizens of the country. According to the Soviet government, disabled people were not the asset but the liability on the state.

However, 1991 marked a new beginning in the lives of disabled people of Russia. Old political system had vanished. USSR and its undemocratic practices were history now. People were no longer subject to harsh treatments from the top. They were no longer living under an authoritarian regime. All these new changes had a very positive impact on Russian people in general and disabled people of Russia in particular. Earlier, people could not protest against the government and its policies due to lack of freedom of expression. There was no freedom of press either. Everything was tightly controlled from the top. Therefore, the world never really came to know about the injustices that the people belonging to the deprived section of the society were experiencing in their day to day lives (Polozniuk, 2005).

As a result, government officials could easily say to the press that Russia does not have invalids. So the lack of transparency made Soviet Union a mysterious society for the outsiders. No one exactly knew what was going on within Soviet Union. Only those things became public which had government's approval. Outsiders could see and read only those aspects of Soviet society which the Soviet Government wanted them to know. Due to all these reasons, Soviet Union could successfully hide its disabled citizens from the rest of the world. Soviet Union never revealed the exact figures of its disabled citizens. It is believed that the actual numbers of disabled

people could be much higher than the official numbers (Polozniuk, 2005). Thus, Soviet Union chose to hide its disabled citizens from the rest of the world because it wanted to portray itself as an ideal society to the rest of the world. It wanted to show to the western world that the USSR is an efficient society wherein people are not deprived of anything. Soviet Government considered disabled people as its weakest link. It did not want to reveal to the world that Soviet Union is home to thousands of disabled people. Soviet leaders felt that USSR would lose out on ideological front to the western world if they come to know about its ugly reality. People in the western world led a good quality life. Their lives were not as tough as it was for the Russians. Not many people were deprived of basic amenities in the western societies. Even the people with disabilities had fairly comfortable lives. They were not totally excluded from the mainstream society like USSR. So it was a conscious attempt by the Soviet Government to overlook its domestic issues so that it could focus upon the psychological war with the US.

Cold war had a big impact on both domestic and external policies of the USSR. Soviet Union was competing with the US for a greater influence in the region. Both of them were leading their respective blocs. Both of them wanted to reach out to the newly emerging countries in order to expand their economic and strategic influence. Both of these countries were trying to expand their ideological influence across the globe. Both the super powers were willing to go to any extent to gain extra points against the other. In the midst of all these, it was the weaker and the deprived section of the Soviet society that suffered the most. During the period of cold war, the domestic situation of Soviet Union became really worst. Standard of living of the common people went down drastically. Number of poor people in the country went up several notches. Let alone disabled citizens, Soviet Society at large had to bear the brunt of government's ambitious and expensive projects. Due to all these reasons, weaker sections of the society had their backs against the wall. So the disabled people had very little support from the government. Soviet society had very limited understanding and awareness about disability back then. Therefore, disabled

people had to confront with several barriers on day to day basis. These barriers were present everywhere ranging from social, cultural to physical. Prior to disintegration, physical accessibility in Soviet Union was appalling. Roads were not accessible. Footpaths did not have tactile markings. Buildings did not have ramps and elevators. Transport system was not disabled friendly. Shops, malls, shopping centers and other market places were not designed keeping in mind the needs of disabled citizens (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Visually impaired people were not allowed to travel in airplanes. System of inclusive education did not exist then. Hence, physical barriers were many for the disabled people which prevented them from venturing out of their homes on their own. Presence of all these barriers in the environment seriously limited their mobility. Wheelchair users could not move around freely due to lack of ramps and elevators. Many buildings and apartments had narrow doorways due to which wheelchair users could not enter those apartments. Even the corridors were too narrow for such people. Many wheelchair users have said publically that they could not leave their homes for months due to highly inaccessible surroundings (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Some apartments had ramps but they were too steep for the wheelchair users. Most of the buildings did not have the facilities of elevators. Many wheelchair bound individuals have revealed that they were stuck in their homes for several days due to highly inaccessible apartments. Till the end of Soviet regime, situation remained the same for the disabled people. Till 1990, disabled people were hardly seen out in the public (Polozniuk, 2005). It was not a common sight to see disabled people out on the roads of Moscow and Saint Petersburg back then. The transport system of Soviet Union was not very accessible either. Low floor buses did not play on the roads. Buses did not have announcement system for the blind citizens. Buses did not have signs and visual description for the deaf people either. All these conditions existed very much till 1991. Then came the biggest event of 20th century which marked the end of history.

Dissolution of the great USSR in December 1991 changed the map of world politics. After disintegration, the USSR was no longer a super giant. It had disintegrated into 15 different parts. This disintegration was in keeping with the local constitution which had given its union republic the right to secede. Right to secede was given only to the union republic and not to the autonomous republic. Another major cause of disintegration was the fact that in 1991, the legitimacy of the party itself became questionable. Therefore, the right to secede became an important real right which was initially on paper. Another reason for the dissolution of USSR was the fact that the Russian leaders wanted to join the west. Russian leaders talked about common European home therefore, they decided to leave aside Central Asian and Caucasian people and join Europe and the west. They felt that this was their natural path and destiny. Hence, the big Soviet empire collapsed leaving behind 15 tiny territories which form modern day Central Asia, Caucasia and Baltic states. Russia happens to be the biggest of all in terms of geography. It stretches from the Baltic sea in the east to the pacific ocean in the west.

Post Soviet Russia and Disability

Russia became the successor state to Soviet Union. Almost all the countries worldwide recognized Russia as the successor state of Soviet Union immediately. Soviet's place in UN security council and other international bodies was taken over by Russia. However, Russia was a new independent country. It had to start everything from the scratch. It was a new country with new borders. It had to establish good foreign relations with all its new neighbors. It had to lay the foundation for a liberal democratic constitution. Russia also had to introduce democratic institutions and practices like creating a new constitution, conducting multi-party elections, creating a new type of judicial system, introducing market reforms etc. For the Russians, these things were completely new therefore they found these things very hard to adapt (O'Brien and Wegren 2002).

After disintegration, the domestic situation of Russia was slightly out of order.

Common people of Russia were going through several internal upheavals. Both the state and the society were in a state of shock as Russia gave away large chunk of its territory. It became a major challenge for the Russian government to deal with its new neighbors. So there were several issues and challenges that the Yeltsin government was up against throughout 1990s. Besides political and economic issues, another issue which made headlines back then was the issue related to social wellbeing and social protection of the people of Russia. Quality of living had gone down drastically after disintegration. Old system of social support was no longer a reality in Post Soviet Russia. Therefore, the fruits of reforms were not visible immediately. Another major reason behind poor social status of common Russians was the fact that the Russian economy was going through a very difficult time. Russian GDP shrunk by 50 percent during this time. As a result, social support system of Russia was in a total disarray. Owing to all these reasons, the vulnerable sections of the society found themselves at the receiving end. There was poverty, unemployment and marginalization of certain sections of the society. People with disabilities constituted the vulnerable and the deprived sections of the society. Like any other deprived section of the society, even the disabled community of Russia needed positive intervention of the state. They needed social protection from the state in order to defy and overcome all the existing barriers (Vladimerova 2006).

Barriers for people with disabilities are multiple in nature. Almost all the barriers are social in nature. These barriers are created and perpetuated by the members of the society. Historically, Russia was not a liberal democratic society. It is a society where government plays a big part in people's lives. It is a country where people did not have the right to criticize the government till the recent past. It was basically a tightly controlled society within an authoritarian regime. It was a society with very limited freedom to the people. So all these factors make Russian society a closed, undemocratic society. Due to all these reasons, the weaker sections of the society such as disabled communities did not have much freedom to choose the course of their own lives. The issue of disability and social protection of such people in Post

Soviet Russia can be studied at both state and societal levels. In the last 25 years, people's attitude towards disability has undergone a major change. Not only at the societal level, but also at the government level the changes could be seen very clearly. After 1991, Russian society started to accept disability gradually. State supported it by bringing in some important laws in mid 1990s and in the early part of 21st century. So there was a greater awareness both at the societal level and the state level in Post Soviet Russia. After disintegration, people's attitude towards disability began to change for the better. It was more of an attitudinal change than anything else. People started to realize that the respect and the recognition of civil rights of disabled community is a sign of development of the Russian civil society (Borodkina, 2014). So unlike earlier, there was an element of acceptance of disabled people among the common people of Russia.

One of the main reasons behind change in people's perception towards disability was the fact that Russia was no longer a communist/authoritarian society. Russia after disintegration had changed its path of politics and economy. It became a democratic country. However, it was a limited democracy. Anyhow, government was responsible and accountable to its people. Therefore various NGOs and parents of disabled children could put forth their demands and concerns regarding rights of disabled children. This change in people's behavior compelled the government to take necessary actions. After 1991, Russian government also had the pressure from the international community to ensure basic human rights to the disabled citizens of its country. Russia could not have adopted its earlier policies of treating disabled people as the second rated citizens of the country. This was also due to the fact that Russia had become a transparent society. There was also the emergence of independent media which played its part in making Post Soviet Russia a transparent and an open society. So, all these factors induced the Russian government to take necessary steps in the form of relevant laws and policies to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged sections in the mainstream society.

Disability and Social Protection

Disability is typically perceived as illness rather than a set of physical, developmental or psychosocial impairments. Disability in Russia is defined through work. The Russian word for a person with disability is [invalid]. The government defines disability as an individual who has health problems involving persistence disorder of bodily functions due to disease, trauma or defects resulting in restrictions of their livelihood and calling for their social protection. Disability and social protection are closely associated with each other. Disability results from various social and medical barriers. Social barriers such as inaccessible environment makes a person disabled. Inaccessible environment consists of lack of ramps and elevators in the apartments, educational institutions, government buildings and so on. It also includes inaccessible pathways, bus stops, railway stations, shopping malls, market places and so on. Beside these things, cultural barriers and lack of awareness among common people regarding disability create major obstacles for persons with disabilities (Iarskaia-Smirnova 2001).

Social protection on the other hand is equivalent to providing social assistance to the vulnerable sections in the society. The idea of social protection is primarily concerned with preventing and overcoming situations which adversely affect people's wellbeing. Social protection consists of government's policies, laws and programs which are aimed at reducing vulnerability, poverty, exploitation and so on. Social protection also seeks to enhance people's capability for managing social and economic risks such as disability, exclusion, sickness, unemployment and so on. Russian federation guarantees equality of rights to all citizens including the disabled citizens. Russian state also guarantees to protect the human dignity of its citizens including that of disabled people (Constitution of Russia 1993).

One of the laws on social protection of disabled people understands disability in the following way. A person is considered as disabled who is suffering from some health problems with persistent disorder of body functions caused by trauma, diseases or defects resulting in the limitation of activities which calls for social protection. So

the term disability refers to the negative aspects of interactions between an individual and environment which is shaped by his poor health conditions. Russian state policy with regard to social protection of disabled people ensures that disabled citizens enjoy equal opportunities with other citizens when it comes to exercising rights and freedom. The law on social protection in Russia also aims to make disabled people realize their potential on an equal bases with other regular citizens in various facets of society such as health, education, culture, employment, transport and communication and so on. The law on social protection guarantees that the people belonging to disable category can govern in the above mentioned areas. The laws and policies related to social protection aim to ensure and facilitate accessibility by getting rid of all the barriers, difficulties and hindrance which create serious impediments to the surroundings, traveling, physical environment, information and communication, access to the institutions of learning and so on (Federal Law Of The Russian Federation 1995)

Beside all these, the state policies of Russia attaches great importance to the overall development of the children. The policy seeks to promote mental, moral, intellectual, spiritual and physical development of all the children. Russian legislations guarantee equal rights to the disabled children along with other non-disabled children. State seeks to promote socialization, social adaptation and social integration of children with disabilities. At present various laws and policies that exist aim to promote full participation of disabled children in public life, high quality education at all levels, qualified medical care, vocational training, social and legal protection etc (Nazarova, 1998).

Russian federation has also taken important steps to promote adoption of orphan children, guardianship custody, foster family, foster care and so on. In the federal program accessible environment 2011 to 2015, various campaigns were conducted in order to raise awareness regarding disability in the country. The main motto of these campaigns was to help general public overcome prejudices against disabled children and disabled adults. Various programs were organized to

spread the knowledge that disabled people can achieve anything if they get enough backing from the state and the society. So the attempts were being made to brake the mental barriers which had kept disabled people of the country marginalized for centuries. It is no doubt that the disabled people in Soviet Union were not treated as equals. Issue of disability was sidelined then and the problem of disability was considered a social taboo. So there was a mental barrier which prevented common citizens of Russia from recognizing and acknowledging the capabilities and the potentialities of disabled citizens of the country. Program of accessible environment 2011 to 2015 sought to make Russia a barrier free country for its disabled citizens (The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Mintrud) government.ru 2017). It was a daunting task but not impossible by any stretch of imagination. The main aim of the federal program was to make the lives of disabled children and disabled adults more comfortable and meaningful (Sinyavskaya and Vassin 2003).

As a key component of implementing the CRPD, Russia carried out multibillion ruble accessible environment program which involved federal funding and advisory support to increase access for people with disabilities to healthcare, education, transportation and other public services in many Russian regions. Apart from removing physical barriers, various organizations have been trying to remove the psychological/mental barriers from the minds of the common people regarding disability. Some NGOs are promoting awareness among the parents of disabled children. So in the recent past, several attempts have been made to raise awareness throughout Russia regarding disability (Gontmakher, Evgeny et al. 2009).

Russian government ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the year 2012. The CRPD obligates states to protect equal enjoyment of all human rights and basic freedoms by persons with disabilities. The CRPD clearly indicates that persons with disabilities must have equal access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications and other facilities and services that are available to the common public (UN 2013).

In March 2014, Russia successfully conducted Winter Paralympic games in Sochi, a Black sea resort city which is home to roughly 350,000 people. By hosting Paralympic Games, Russia sent out a very positive message to the world that it is open and committed to ensuring social integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society. Over 1,300 athletes with disabilities from 45 countries competed in five Winter Paralympic sports during the games. The Olympic Organizing Committee made all the efforts to make the environment accessible for all the participants, spectators and officials with disabilities. Working with regional and local governments, the Olympic Organizing Committee took an initiative of improving accessibility for people with disabilities in Sochi. The Committee also took a major step of increasing awareness about disability and disability rights in the other parts of Russia (www.paralympic.org/sochi-2014).

Despite these several initiatives, many people with disabilities in Russia find it extremely difficult to take part in the basic activities of daily life such as going to school or university, spending time with friends or relatives, attending cultural events, going to work, buying groceries, visiting the doctor and so on. These things occur due to presence of several barriers in the society. Barriers can be physical like absence of ramps and elevators in an apartment, train station or at the work place and so on. Barriers can also be attitudinal or psychological for example practice of discrimination towards people with disabilities by people such as employers, shopkeepers, doctors and so on. As a result of all these physical and attitudinal barriers, a large chunk of disabled people remain confined to their homes. They have incomplete education and may never start a family or have meaningful employment (Merkuryeva 2007).

Russia has always had an uneasy relationship with its disabled citizens where most of them are injured veterans of the Chechen wars or the Soviet war in Afghanistan. These are the incidents that many would love to forget despite the fact that these disabled veterans have won several gold medals representing their country.

However, Russia has come a long way since a Soviet official infamously stated that there are no invalids in the USSR. This phrase went down in history and clearly reflected upon the unequal status of disabled people in the society. After 34 years, Russia agreed to host the Paralympic games with a slogan (a person with limited opportunities, a euphemism for disability). At the closing ceremony, IPC Chairman Philip Craven asked an excited crowd of thousands, “how are your barrier free minds tonight?” the energy level at that moment made it very clear that Paralympics had reached well beyond the framework of disability. So Russia’s progress from no invalids in 1980 to champions in 2014 is a perfect example for others to follow. While Sochi Paralympic games demonstrated government’s commitment towards people with disabilities, the suspension of Russian disabled athletes from 2016 Rio Olympics shows that the disabled people become victims of so-called democratic west’s inhumanity, humiliation, exclusion, intolerance and discrimination. Russia’s president Vladimir Putin condemned the move as a smear campaign against Russia’s Olympic heroes. Speaking at an award ceremony at the Kremlin, Putin slammed the cynical ruling as outside the bounds of law, morality and humanity. He also promised that Russia would host games for its banned Paralympic athletes (Aljazeera 2016, 7 August).

Disability and Inaccessible Environment

Disability and inaccessibility go hand in hand. Inaccessible surroundings contribute immensely to someone’s disability. In other words, one of the major causes of disability is various kinds of inaccessibility’s. Inaccessible environment makes a differently able person feel disabled. So inaccessibility is a barrier which has a negative impact on both physical and psychological levels. Inaccessibility is a barrier which results from the absence of those things which help a physically challenged person lead a normal life. Inaccessibility prevents a physically challenged person from going out and taking part in various social activities. Russia has not been able to provide accessible/barrier free environment to its physically challenged people. Some parts of Russia are relatively more accessible than other parts of Russia.

However, the entire country of Russia cannot be termed as fully inaccessible for people with disabilities. Several attempts have been made to bring out disabled people from their homes and institutions to foster the process of social integration. Russia has rather progressive laws which guarantee accessible infrastructure, education, healthcare and information to people with disabilities (Erkovich 2012).

However, the main problem relates to the enforcement of those laws. Russia does not consistently enforce the laws related to accessibility and disability. At the top of all these, the laws contain many flaws and omissions for example, absence of proper mechanisms to ensure and monitor its enforcement. There are lack of enforcement mechanisms at the federal level where enforcement is left to the discretion of regional and city governments. Besides this, law makes it mandatory for the private owners to make their private services accessible for the disabled people or to face fines. On the other hand, the same law does not make it compulsory for the government agencies to make the government services accessible if they deem it beyond their budget. A new Federal Law came into effect on 14 July 2013 on the social protection of disabled persons in the Russian Federation (www.iuslaboris.com).

Many people with disabilities have revealed the fact that when they submitted written or oral complains to the government regarding inaccessible environment and services, they either received no response from the government or they got the written notice stating that the government cannot do much regarding their accessibility needs. Russia ratified United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in the year 2012. After ratifying UNCRPD it has become mandatory for Russia to follow all the guidelines related to disability. Russia has made several attempts like ratifying UNCRPD in the last five years but people with disabilities continue to face physical and attitudinal barriers. There are about 1.3 crores disabled people in Russia today. People with various kinds of disabilities like people with cerebral palsy, people with vision impairment, people with deafness, people suffering from Down Syndrome or Autism and so on live in every major city,

town and rural area of Russia. Despite several steps taken by the Russian government after the ratification of UNCRPD, the problem of inaccessible environment continues to haunt the disabled people in Russia.

In February 2013, a woman of 26 years of age was stuck in her apartment for four months in the city of Sochi. She was a wheelchair user and lived on the third floor of the apartment. She had to put up with all these because the entryway of the building was accessible only by staircase and the elevator functioned intermittently. All the apartment buildings that were built before 2001, prior to the development of federal construction norms, have doorways and elevators which are too narrow for the wheelchair users to enter and exit them. These buildings also lack appropriate ramps and elevators making the lives of disabled people very difficult. In several cases, buildings constructed after 2001 lack these facilities as well. Whenever people with disabilities took up this issue with the local housing administration, the reply was never satisfactory. In several cases these local bodies insist that the tenants buy new apartments at their own expense. Many people with disabilities have also complained about inaccessible and unfriendly transport system of Russia. Many people have admitted the fact that entering train stations and bus stops is an uphill task for them as they are not designed keeping in mind the needs of disabled people. A blind man who commutes from Moscow suburbs to the city center on job purpose said that he fell down thrice from the platform of the commuter train. He fell down because the platforms in railway stations are inaccessible for the disabled people (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Platforms of major railway stations in Russia are not equipped with the tactile markings which help the visually impaired persons tread along the path. So the absence of tactile marking meant that he could not locate the edges of the platform and fell down on the railway track. Poor and inaccessible transportation system further excludes people with disabilities from the rest of the society. An inaccessible transportation makes it almost impossible for the persons with disabilities to go out for a movie, museums, restaurants and so on. Lack of accessible transportation is

also a big obstacle for employment as disabled people find it very tough to travel to their work places. So poor transportation discourages disabled people and compels them to remain secluded. However, some major cities have started to provide accessible buses and taxis which are few in number and highly infrequent. Apart from all these, even the accessible footpaths and the street crossings are only few in number. At the top of all these, the problem of inaccessibility increases many folds during the winter season as the streets in the cities become covered with the ice and snow. Streets covered with ice and snow makes it very difficult for the disabled people particularly for people suffering from blindness to navigate. Snow and ice are very common in Russia during winter season. If they are not cleared regularly from the public places, they can become a serious barrier for persons with disabilities.

In many cities roads and footpaths are covered with ice and snow for almost six months. In cities such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg, sidewalks are highly inaccessible for people with low vision and blindness. Sidewalks in these two cities have several billboards and government advertisement boards erected here and there which makes the mobility of low vision and blind people on those sidewalks very difficult. In some cases, people sustain serious bruises after colliding with those blockades. In 2008, a blind man was prevented from boarding an airplane in Russia because of his visual impairment. However, this kind of incident is unlikely to take place in the future in Russia due to the recent amendment in Russia's air transport code. Disabled people have also said that they face discrimination with regard to job allotment. Many employers in Russia practice discrimination when it comes to providing job opportunities to disabled people. Employers have openly stated that they would not hire people with disabilities. Some employers have even fired their workers on the basis of disability. Widespread practice of discrimination against people with disabilities have rendered them unemployed. According to the government figures, only 20 percent of people with disabilities of working age are employed. So the disabled people of working age are not adequately integrated into society (Borodkina, 2014).

However, current government is trying to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by creating special work places for them. Due to the environment of discrimination against disability and disabled people, many disabled employees try to hide their disability at the work place. So one can say that the present situation in Russia is not so congenial for persons with disabilities as far as employment is concerned. Beside employment, disabled people face problems while accessing healthcare facilities. Deaf people face troubles in getting emergency services. Some disabled people also noted that some healthcare workers refused to talk to them directly. Some healthcare professionals exhibit inhuman attitude towards people with disabilities. For example, disabled people are often pressurized for not having a family of their own. Disabled women are often told not to have a child of their own. It happens everywhere. In one of the cases, healthcare officials pressurized a woman with disability to go for an abortion (Elena 2005).

Many current laws and policies in Russia are rooted in the Soviet practices when policy makers provided people with disabilities with material benefits but limited their public participation and isolated them from public view. Even today, people with disabilities in Russia are categorized on the bases of three tier system which was established in the year 1932. Russia also practices the Soviet system of institutionalizing the disabled people. Thousands of disabled children and adults are kept in closed institutions who are otherwise in need of constant care. Many of these children and adults could very much lead independent life with minimal social support. Unfortunately, many people with disability in Russia spend their entire lives in these closed institutions (Elena 2005).

Russian society has its roots in Soviet and Czarist Russia. Many of the practices, treatments and attitudes towards people with disabilities have a huge influence of Soviet and Czarist culture. Disabled members of those societies were passive citizens. They were considered weak and ineffectual. As a result, they were often seen doing minuscule jobs. The present generation of Russia has acquired all those believes and negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. Last few years have

witnessed some welcome changes in Russian civil society. Thanks to recent laws and policies which have made all kinds of discrimination illegal towards people with disabilities. However, even today many people with disabilities are not adequately integrated in the society. There are thousands of young disabled people of working age who are unemployed. They do not have enough job opportunities. On several occasions they get overlooked due to their disabilities. Government should try to induct these young people into some productive jobs. Young adults are always an asset to the society. They are skilled, full of energy and have a hunger to achieve something in life. If a government properly channelizes the young available talent the society can surely reach great heights. Russian government should treat its disabled citizens as a resource. As JS Mill said once that if women are not given the rights and education to develop their mental faculty then the society will be deprived of half the mental mass that is available. In the same manner, if the disabled citizens of a country are not given the opportunity to work, opportunity to lead a meaningful life then the society would be deprived of valuable contributions that the disabled people can make to their societies. Disabled children and disabled adults are very much part of any society. They can be as productive as others. Therefore, the government should make it a point that it treats everyone equal. It should try to integrate people with disabilities in the mainstream society.

In the last couple of decades, the technology has evolved at a very rapid pace. It has made our lives much easier. Today, with the help of technology, a disabled person can lead an independent life. He can nearly complete any task with the help of technology. So all the government officials, employers and other higher authorities should acknowledge this and adopt more liberal and human approach towards people with disabilities particularly towards disabled adults who are unemployed. These things will boost the confidence of disabled people and will result in greater participation by such people in various productive activities.

To sum up the attitude towards disability has gradually undergone a change in Russia. Disabled people have witnessed a remarkable transformation in

government's attitude towards people with disability. At present, Russian government recognizes the fact that a large part of its population is disabled who needs social protection. Russia has formulated several legislations to ensure equal rights, opportunities and dignity of people with disabilities. In 2011, Russia introduced federal program of accessible environment which basically sought to make all surroundings and services accessible to people with disabilities. One year later in 2012, Russia ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities.

After becoming a party to UNCRPD, it has become obligatory for the Russian government to promote, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. In 2016, Russia passed a law which makes all forms of discrimination based on disability in all sectors illegal. However, even today persons with disabilities get discriminated at the work place. According to the official statistics, only 20 percent of the disabled people belonging to the working age category are employed in Russia. The system of healthcare is below par for people with disabilities in the country. Many people are denied medical services on the pretext of their disabilities. It has been seen that the healthcare workers show a very negligent attitude towards people with disabilities. Beside all these, system of transport, quality of education, people's participation in the social and community activities and so on need some impetus from the government.

Present day Russia is far more barrier free than what it was a decade ago. Russians have started to recognize disability. Government has shown in the recent past that it is committed to providing equal rights and opportunities to people with disabilities. Recent legislations are clear indication of government's commitment towards its disabled citizens. We can only keep our fingers crossed and hope that Russia is not very far away from becoming a barrier free society for the disabled people and setting a perfect example for others to follow.

Chapter 4

Inclusive Higher Education: Understanding Social Integration and Tolerance

This chapter will deal with the study of inclusive higher education in the post Soviet Russia. Russia has always maintained a system of separate education for the disabled children. A child with a disability living in Russia has a significant chance that he will not receive a quality education. In many cases, children with disability do not receive any education at all. Those who receive education are segregated and receive education in separate schools. Other children receive education at their homes with visits from teachers only a few times a week. In order to ensure quality education for all, the Russian government has undertaken various steps in the recent past. Inclusive education has become a buzzword among Russians in the last few years. Inclusive education is regarded as the most appropriate means for the government to ensure universality and nondiscrimination in the right to education. Inclusive education is also a prerequisite to overcome the isolation and segregation of disabled children. This chapter will highlight the reasons why people with disability still struggle for being included and integrated in the mainstream society. We will see whether people's perception has changed vis-à-vis integration and tolerance towards people with disability. Integration and inclusion of people with disability in the society happens at multiple levels. Factors such as access to education, healthcare, employment and active participation in the social activities determines the level of integration of such people. This chapter will mainly focus upon inclusive higher education in the country. We will see whether Russian government has been able to provide barrier free university campuses to its disabled children.

In the last few decades, people's perception towards disability has undergone a major change. Traditionally, disability was understood as a some kind of inadequacy. But now in the contemporary age, disability is commonly viewed as a part of human

diversity. Even on the university campuses, attempts are being made to locate the definition of disability within the discourses of diversity and multi-culturalism.

The main purpose of all modern states is to foster the process of development of the entire society. It is the responsibility of the state to provide conditions wherein socially vulnerable people could lead a productive life. People with disability constitute the socially vulnerable section of the society. Therefore, the priority of the Russian state is to provide quality education to all the disabled children in the country. However, one of the important issues in almost all the countries is the availability of education to all the sections in the society particularly for the disadvantaged people. Among disadvantaged groups, a special place is occupied by the disabled children. Getting them quality education is often hindered for them by constraints in one way or another (Aksenova, 1997). Besides providing quality education to the disabled children, Russian state has also given enough attention to the idea of nurturing an inclusive environment in the country. Inclusive and accessible environment facilitates proper channel for interaction between disabled and non-disabled people. However, social integration of disabled people is directly related to their quality of lives. The process of social integration becomes much easier if socially excluded people have proper access to education, cultural values and full participation in social and cultural life in all forms (Raizberg, 1999).

One of the key ways of ensuring social integration of disabled people is by providing them professional education. Education is a very important part in everyone's life. It is the opportunity to learn new things. For people with disability, the importance of education is far more greater as it acts as social resources to overcome social exclusion and social ostracism. Education is a means to financial independence. Education system in Russia has not been alike for all kinds of disabilities. People suffering from severe disability have been segregated and alienated from the mainstream society (Dimenstein & Larikova, 2000). Children with severe and multiple disabilities could never receive proper education in Russia. In fact, such children were put in separate institutions under the supervision of Social Welfare

Department. However, after 1991, various changes took place in Russia both at the government level and the societal level. All old practices had either been done away with or being modified to meet the current requirements. After disintegration Russia experimented with democratic practices and democratic institutions. So at least Russia had become a democratic country on the paper. Now they had the moral obligation of following the international norms. The new government now had the responsibility of protecting the rights of people with disability. New government could no longer claim that the country does not have any disabled people. So Russia could no longer hide its disabled citizens from the rest of the world like earlier. After disintegration there was more transparency at the government level. It was not only accountable to its people but it also had to abide by certain rules laid down by the UNO. Therefore, the living conditions of people with disability improved marginally. Greater emphasis was laid upon the importance of education of people with disability. So the system of education began to change after disintegration. There was a recognition of the fact that there is a need to move from institutionalization to integration. Focus had also shifted from ensuring equal rights to providing equal opportunities (Smolin, 2006).

Education is one of the powerful means of achieving inclusion and integration of disabled children in the main stream society. There were various approaches adopted to provide inclusive education to all the children with disability. Some intellectuals believed that disabled students must have the option of receiving special education of their parents choice (Smolin, 2006). Others supported the idea of inclusive schools within the country. Inclusive education or inclusive schooling is a practice of co-education wherein disabled and non-disabled children receive education together. Inclusive schooling is about children with disability whether the disability is mild or severe, hidden or obvious participating in everyday activities, just like they would if their disability were not present. Law makers, families and educators in Russia are struggling for the policies and legislations which could ensure that children with disabilities have rich social experiences with their peers and also that their

educational needs are met. As a result, several changes have been introduced in the educational programs over the past 20 years which include the following: 1. The development of opportunities for integration in the schools students with disabilities can attend public schools in separate classrooms. 2. Academic and instructional support for all students and 3. Research regarding how to improve the educational opportunities for students with disabilities by giving teachers the adequate training (Godvonikova, 2009). The model of inclusive education in Russia has been successfully implemented in some parts of the country so far. Moscow, ST Petersburg, Samara and Arkhangelsk were the first to take the initiative of implementing the system of inclusive education. This practice has gained momentum in the country off late. Other regions have slowly started to adopt inclusive schooling for the disabled children. Trans-Baikal in south central Russia is a place where children with disability pursue their education in regular schools with non-disabled children. In many other regions of Russia like Perm, Tomsk, Karelia, Komi Republic and so on veteran teachers continue to learn recommendations to make education more inclusive (Alehina, 2012).

Social integration of the Disabled

Social integration of all serves as an engine of development of the entire society. The idea of social integration encompasses various concepts such as tolerance, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, respect for diversity and participation of disabled people in the social activities. According to (Nazarova, 1998), integration is a process, result and a condition in which invalids are not segregated or isolated and participates in all forms of Social life. Integration aims to achieve the inclusion and participation of those who otherwise get overlooked or sidelined by the government and the society. Integration or inclusion is a process of incorporation of privileged and underprivileged people in the society. In order to insure integration of disabled people, there should be a departure from the common understanding of integration and inclusion. The common understanding of social integration of disabled people revolves around the idea that people with disability need to be accepted by the non-

disabled people to the conventional way of life. On the contrary, human rights approach puts social environment at the centre. According to this approach, social environment plays a key role in the overall practice of integration of disabled people. The advocates of this approach argue that by doing away with institutions which practice exclusion of people with disabilities, the integration of such people in the society could be achieved. However, integration of disabled people is a loaded concept. It is no wonder that violation of human rights, discriminative practice and attitudes of the people, inequality in the society and so on are some of the common features of a modern society. Various existing barriers such as social, cultural and economic barriers impede the entire process of integration of disabled people. For example, a girl suffering from autism and cerebral palsy was thrown out of a café in the recent past in the city of Nizhny Novgorod. Such incidents reveal the fact that children with disabilities in Russia still cannot lead a normal life. Certain section of the Russian society still believes that the disabled children do not have the right to be out in public and lead a dignified life. It is interesting to note here is that such practices are not region specific. In fact, such practices are universal in nature. People with disability all across the globe more or less face the same kinds of social and environmental barriers. Thus, it would not be wrong to argue that disabled people in all societies constitute the vulnerable section of the society. Russian society is no exception (Nazarova, 1998),.

Right from the Soviet times, Russian society, its culture and various other factors have presented a major hindrance to the notion of barrier free environment for the disabled people. After disintegration, the process of integration and inclusion of disabled people gained some momentum. This was owing to the fact that Russian society had become somewhat empathetic and receptive towards the needs and requirements of people with disabilities. Beside political and institutional restructuring, Russian society had also undergone a major attitudinal change in post 1991 development. People of post Soviet Russia started to view disability differently. A new cultural perception started to emerge in Russia wherein disabled

people were viewed as acceptable members of society. People even started to view education for children with disabilities as a basic human right. There was a strong requirement for the inclusion of the excluded people in the society. However, this was not an easy task. There were many obstacles to the integration of the disabled people like poor interaction with the community and the society. Another major challenge was the poor accessibility and harsh conditions which prevented people with disability from becoming capable beings. Beside this, lack of goal and purpose in life due to limited access to economic and social activities create a serious barrier to the overall development of the disabled people (Khudorendo, 2011).

Problem of unemployment is very high among disabled people in Russia. Due to unemployment, disabled people do not get the chance to interact with the other fellow beings at the work place. Despite possessing all necessary qualities and work ethics, disabled people get overlooked when it comes to job placement. It basically happens due to social prejudice about the low productivity of the disabled people. Issue of unemployment strengthens the whole structure of social discrimination. Disability with unemployment is a double burden. Unemployed people do not have a proper source of income and their disability make things even worse for them. A proper job is not only a source of income but also guaranties some sought of dignity to that individual. So the employment and the idea of dignity are intertwined with each other. A disabled person who is employed commands more respect in the society than those disabled persons who are jobless. However, finding a suitable job in Russia is a serious challenge for the disabled people. There are various reasons that have left disabled people in Russia unemployed off late. Firstly, it has been seen that employers do not show much interest in employing disabled workers. This is due to the common perception that disabled workers are less productive. Therefore, most of the employers do not take the risk of employing disabled people as it might lead to low productivity. Secondly, disabled people do not have professional training in any specific area. Their level of education is also very low than what is required to sustain them in the competitive market. So low level of education and lack of

professional training is another major cause of unemployment among disabled people in Russia. Thirdly, type of disability, family background, special ability for retraining and so on also determines the chances of employment for the disabled persons. People suffering from certain kinds of disability have greater chances of getting employment than people suffering from some other kinds of disabilities. For example, a person suffering from both visual impairment and deafness has a very limited job opportunities. On the other hand, a person suffering from deafness only may have a greater chance of finding a job. So the bottom line is that type of disability and degree of disability determines whether a person suffering from disability is employed or unemployed. A person who has multiple disabilities will not have many job opportunities coming his way due to his acute physical condition. As a result, such individuals get excluded from the entire scheme of things. This leads to low morale and sense of rejection among such people. Currently, any form of discrimination in any sector in Russia is illegal under national law. At present, nearly 15 percent of the disabled adults are employed. While most of these are menial jobs, they are typically permanent (Khudorendo, 2011).

Inclusive education and integration

Roughly 12 percent of Russia's total population is disabled. This is a very large number given the fact that the total population of the country is about 150 million. Integrating those 12 percent of the population within the mainstream society has been a real challenge for the Russian state. In September 2008, Russia signed the convention on the rights of persons with disability and thus committed to the implementation of article 24 which is related to education. The article talks about right to education without any discrimination and states that all the stakeholders must ensure system of inclusive education at all levels (Alekhina, 2012). Government's educational policies have tried to improve the overall system of inclusive education since 2008, but widespread implementation of these policies are yet to become a reality (Godovnikova, 2009). In May 2012, Russia ratified the U.N. convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. After the ratification, there has been some

positive improvements in the last five years. Russian cities like Moscow and ST Petersburg have become somewhat accessible for the disabled people. Apart from physical accessibility, a law on education was introduced on September first 2013 which guarantees inclusive education for all disabled children. After the implementation of this law, the entire system of inclusive education in Russia has got a great push. After signing the UNCRPD, it became obligatory for Russia to ensure that people with disabilities have an access to locally based high quality inclusive primary and secondary education within the community where they live. Apart from this, Russian government is also required to provide the access to tertiary education, vocational training and adult education on equal bases with others. CRPD also requires the government to provide reasonable accommodation for the disabled individuals (Godovnikova, 2009).

CRPD calls on all the member states to enable the people with disabilities to learn social development skills. Integration or inclusion of disabled people in the society is mainly dependent upon certain factors like education, health care, employment and so on. Inclusive education provides a solid foundation for an inclusive society. People with disabilities have an exclusive right which is guaranteed under international law according to which, people with disabilities have the right to be included in their communities equally with others. This can only be achieved with their education at all levels. Inclusive schools provide a unique ambiance wherein both disabled and non-disabled children can study together. In such environment, students develop good understanding towards each other. They become more sensitive towards each other. They can also learn about each other's weaknesses. So it is basically a system in which children with and without disability study together, with adequate support based on their individual learning needs. Various research suggest that when a child with disability attends classes along with non-disabled children, it has a positive impact on the disabled children. Inclusive schooling is also very important because it challenges the common perception that the special education is equal to the separate education. However, there is no denying the fact

that merely putting disabled and non-disabled children in the same school will not bring out any positive result. Inclusive education occurs when there is proper planning, support and commitment. Inclusive education is based on the idea that every child and family has equal worth and deserves the same opportunities and experiences. The inclusion movement gained its momentum with the passing of Salamanca statement and framework for action (UNESCO, 1994) which stated that those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs. At present, consensus exists across Russia that education should be available to all children, including students with disabilities (Malofeev, 1998).

However, inclusive schooling implies that not only the disabled students but also the non-disabled students need to undergo certain adjustments in order to share the same learning space with each other. Inclusive education is not only beneficial for the disabled children but it is equally beneficial for the non-disabled children. There have been some cases of school authorities denying admission to disabled children because they feel that these children are very slow to learn and are unsafe around other children. Every single children has a different style of learning. In certain cases, friends and teachers could play a very vital role in terms of assisting a child to learn a particular concept. Even the use of technology and other specially made materials could be of great help for learning. It is very important for the friends, family and teachers to understand that disabled children should not be over helped. They should be assisted or helped only to the extent what is necessary. A student must be left to tackle things on his own so that he or she could become independent. Inclusive schooling gives these children the opportunity to learn various social skills. Regular interaction with the non-disabled children helps them to overcome their inhibition. They start to feel confident and a sense of self independence creeps in (Malofeev, 1998).

Beside all this, inclusive schooling has immense benefits for the children with disabilities. Firstly, inclusive schooling strengthens the bond between disabled and

non-disabled children. Secondly, through regular interaction with their peer groups disabled children develop a better understanding of the society and social awareness. Thirdly, inclusive education helps disabled children shed their negative attitude towards people and society. In order to make inclusive education more effective in the country, Russian government must ensure certain things such as: higher authorities must ensure that children are not restricted to home study or distant learning due to inaccessible environment like lack of ramps and elevators in their apartments, poor transportation and so on. Government must prepare guidelines to promote and expand inclusive education in general schools and colleges by ensuring that centers of Medical, Psychological-Pedagogical and social assistance serve as resource centers to the general schools for the implementation of inclusive education as mentioned in the law on education article 42, part 4 (Federal Law 1995).

School administration must nurture the culture of inclusive schooling in all general schools across the country. It can be achieved by promoting awareness about disability on the school campuses. Both disabled and non-disabled children must be made to participate in several activities together so that they can develop mutual respect and understanding towards each other. Teachers must be given adequate training regarding how to teach and communicate with the students of all kinds of disabilities. It is very important that all the institutions of higher learning have adequate number of teaching staff to accommodate disabled students. It is also equally important that all the universities and colleges have enough resources to promote inclusive higher education. There should be adequate funding for all the higher and professional institutions throughout the country. Several non-governmental organizations have contributed immensely to the promotion of inclusive education in the country. They have provided information, training and other kinds of support to children and teachers in mainstream schools. Some (NGOs) even provide direct services to children and adults with disabilities. They raise awareness among common people about disability. Lack of knowledge about disability in a society creates a major social barrier for the disabled people of that

society. Various non-governmental organizations have been creating awareness so that the society becomes more sensitive and receptive towards people with disabilities (Iarskaia-Smirnova - 2007).

Education and Disability

Russia is counted among those countries which have a very good system of education. Russian system of education is divided into four levels. Preschool education, general education, vocational education and higher education. Preschool education is not compulsory. It basically consists of nursery and kindergarten schools. General education in the country consists of elementary education, basic secondary education and upper secondary education. Secondary education is compulsory for all. Reforms of 1980s and 1990s had diverse impact on the system of education. These reforms brought various positive changes in the entire system of education. School curriculums were upgraded to meet the current requirements. School administration had become more powerful which enabled them to foster the process of integration and inclusion at regional, municipal and school levels. On the other hand, reforms of 1980s and 1990s had an adverse effect on the Russian society. These reforms resulted in stratification of Russian society. Certain section benefited out of the reforms and became affluent economically. Whereas for others reforms did not bring good kismet. In the midst of all these, maintaining high quality education for all irrespective of the family income and the place of residence became a real challenge for the new Russian government. Special schools were not accessible for all the disabled children. In most of the cases, schools were located in far off places. It meant that disabled children had to travel a lot to get to their schools. It was not a very favorable condition for the promotion of special education. It is very important to have special schools in nearby places so that they are easily accessible for the disabled children. On the contrary, special schools in Russia are highly inaccessible for the children. Beside accessibility, quality of education in these special schools is far below than a normal standard. Almost 90 percent of the teachers do not have a degree in special education. They lacked skills and knowledge about inclusive

pedagogy. It simply meant that the special schooling was not going to benefit these children much. A special school must have teachers who understand disability and who can teach students with a lot of patients. It is also very important for a special school to recruit teachers who have a degree in special education. But in reality there is a lack of trained teacher assistants. Even the funding is not always available to support them. Teachers must have formal training before they are allowed to take up this profession (Kulagina, 2007).

Many Russian leaders and policy makers have realized of late the importance of education for the disabled children. Now they know it very well that in order to promote disability rights, inclusive education is an important component. In last few years, the government has shown some urgency to promote and expand inclusive education across Russia. It can be said that in the last few years, Russia has gained a major victory in terms of formulating policies related to the promotion of inclusive education in the country. However, despite so many legislations, still there are problems related to implementation.

In 2011, a federal program called federal program of education development was introduced. The main motto of this federal program was to decide as to how quality general education could be given to the children with disabilities. Taking this initiative forward, Russian government has made a commitment of 287.7 million rubles in the year 2015 for the purpose of improving the school environment so that both disabled and non-disabled children can study together. Teachers are being given special training to ensure better quality of teaching of disabled children. Another important initiative called Our New School has been taken which emphasizes upon the fact that each schools must be open for all kinds of children. This initiative necessitated all the schools to ensure social integration for all the disabled children. In Russia every child has the right to education. In the year 2012, a law was passed which enabled the parents to enroll their children in any nearby local schools. In 2010, a legislation was introduced which addressed the issue of training of disabled children. It was called the Moscow Law on Education of Persons With Disabilities

(2010), which established inclusive education, it also provided clear training instructions for educating all children including disabled children. The training mainly focused upon areas such as academic skills, behavioral intervention and leisure activities. Despite all the laws and policies related to disability, things have not changed much. There is still a long way to go before one can say that Russia has made a remarkable progress in terms of ensuring barrier free environment to its disabled students. Substantial improvements are yet to be seen in university campuses.

System of inclusive higher education has not been able to provide fully barrier free campuses to its disabled students till date. Despite all the promises, university campuses are still highly inaccessible. The university campuses do not have enough ramps and elevators to ensure the mobility of wheelchair users within the campus. Lack of ramps and elevators in the campus compel the disabled students to restrict themselves to certain places only. These physical barriers not only make the surroundings highly inaccessible but also compel the disabled children to become dependent on others for mobility. As a result the entire purpose of inclusive education gets defeated. Inclusive education is believed to promote the sense of self reliance and self confidence among disabled children. But on the contrary, presence of so many physical barriers in and around the college premises render disabled children helpless. There should be enough funding for all the universities so that ramps and elevators could be installed in the university buildings. Beside lack of ramps and lifts, most of the institutions of higher learning also do not have assistive technology for the students. Special equipment is limited. Students do not have adequate text books to study. Institutions also lack specialized expertise like psychologists, pathologists, speech therapists and so on to support inclusive education (Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov 2007).

Availability of resources is a major issue which determines whether a country could ensure welfare to its citizens or not. According to the experts of education, given the current financial status of Russia it is early to talk about full implementation of

inclusive education (Lesnevskiy & Miyakawa 2009). Russia's current economic circumstances does not allow it to spend billions of rubles to facilitate full inclusion of disabled people. At present, Russia's economy is going through a rough patch. Price of oil has gone down in the international market. Russia's main export has suffered a major blow in the last few years and Russia is also dealing with the western sanctions in the wake of its conflict with eastern Ukraine. Beside all these, Russia has spent billions of dollars on 2018 FIFA world cup preparation. All these factors make Russian economy slightly weak and unstable. Therefore, many intellectuals opine that Russia cannot keep up its promise of guaranteeing full integration of disabled children. Ensuring full integration of disabled children in the society is a multifaceted task. It carries various meanings and it is perceived somewhat differently by different people. Russian government has shown the right intent and commitment of improving its overall image of disabled friendly country particularly in the last 10 years (Lesnevskiy & Miyakawa 2009).

Since 2013, professional higher education has found a new meaning in Russia. It has not only been made a legal affair but also has been equally supported by the people of Russia. Russian society has become far more sensitive towards disability in last few years. In Soviet Russia, disability was seen more or less as a burden on the society. There were separate institutions meant for disabled people where such people spent almost their entire lives. These people were literally forced to lead such miserable lives away from their family members. In some cases, these people had to reside in inhuman conditions like in some special institutions, there were not enough people to look after the disabled people suffering from acute physical disability. Throughout Soviet period, disabled people were hidden from the public. Till early 1990s, disabled people were not to be seen in the public realm. Given the treatment and social status of disabled people in Soviet era, one can argue that the issue of disability was being looked down upon throughout the Soviet time. Everybody believed that disabled people must be kept in separate institutions along with other disabled citizens. So this is how disabled people were excluded from the mainstream

society then. But after disintegration, many of these old practices came to an end. People became somewhat tolerant towards the issue of disability. This new attitude of the people towards disability paves the way for an inclusive and a tolerant society (Aehina 2012).

After disintegration, various laws were enacted and policies were framed in order to ensure better quality of life to the disables by providing them good education. In last five years, government has been trying every bit possible to improve the quality of living of disabled people. The main focus is on education. Government wants' to bring disabled and non-disabled children together under the same roof for the purpose of learning. Russia took a big step forward in the field of education when it introduced a law on education on 1 September 2013. This law has brought a paradigm shift in the Russian system of education. This law enables all the schools and universities across Russia to admit disabled children. It guarantees inclusive education for all disabled children in Russia. After September 2013, government has shown a lot of interest in promoting inclusive education in Russia. Beside primary and secondary education, even the higher education has become inclusive in the country. Introduction of a law on education proved a point that Russians do not feel anymore that the disabled children should receive separate education. At present most of the common Russians welcome inclusive education in the country (Alehina 2015).

However, the picture is not all that rosy related to inclusive higher education in the country. It's hardly been four years since the inclusive education was made legal in Russia. Still many colleges and universities are trying to come to terms with the reality of some new developments in the country. Inclusive education has picked up pace in several colleges and universities specially in the western part of the country. Institutions in the other parts of the country are slow to adopt the new changes related to inclusive education. Moscow, ST Petersburg, Sochi and Samara are some of the cities where number of disabled children are relatively higher as compared to other major cities. Major educational institutions in these cities have accepted

inclusive education at least in principle. Several institutions for higher and professional education in the country have started to offer inclusive education after the introduction of a special law in 2013. However, there are various physical and communication barriers in the universities which make the lives of adult disabled students very difficult. The Civic Chamber reported in 2015 that out of more than hundred institutions of higher learning, only 12 institutions fulfill the criteria of inclusive institutions for higher education. Beside this, only 50 percent of the enrolled disabled students in these universities complete their graduation. Furthermore, disabled students do not choose a university keeping in mind their interest or subject instead they choose a university keeping in mind whether that particular university could provide necessary conditions to pursue their education. Generally children face several barriers which discourage them from going for the higher studies. These barriers exist in all forms such as instructors in universities and special colleges do not have proper training and knowledge regarding the ways in which disabled children should be instructed (Ibid).

Russia does not have a proper mechanism in place to ensure that instructors in universities and colleges have proper pedagogical training to adjust their curriculums for students with diverse learning needs. These institutions also do not have adequate professional skills training for students with developmental disabilities. As a result, many people with disabilities are unable to secure jobs despite their academic achievements. Joblessness of young disabled people all across Russia does not allow them to lead an independent life and be fully integrated in their communities as mandated by the CRPD. Some specialized colleges meant for students with developmental disabilities have started to implement federal guidelines for professional education such as organizing craft workshops for drawing and ceramics. Focus on these activities is not beneficial for the disabled children in the long run as it does not guarantee them employment. These are basically unprofessional courses which hardly prepare disabled children for the competition ahead (Morova 2012).

Universities and colleges across Russia are still not fully accessible for persons with disabilities. Even the best of universities lack ramps and elevators within the campus. Due to lack of ramps and elevators, wheel chair users cannot attend classes on regular bases. In order to overcome this barrier, such students have no other option but to take help of their classmates for reaching the classroom. Classes generally do not take place on the ground floor which means such students are forced to exclude themselves from their friends and academic activities. People who are deaf and hard of hearing face many barriers within the university campus. University does not provide enough reading materials in print. They do not have adequate visual material to understand their subjects. There are no palantype systems to assist them in learning. There are no speech-to-text reporting systems which produce captions for deaf and hard of hearing students. They must also be provided with sign language interpreters within their classes. Even blind and low vision students do not have enough assistive devices for learning. Large print textbooks and Braille signs are not available everywhere. There are not adequate Braille textbooks available for blind students in the college libraries. All Colleges do not provide assistive technology such as screen reading softwares to its blind and low vision students (Zhavoronkov 2011).

Colleges also do not provide books in electronic and audio formats to its students. Colleges must provide video magnifier, Braille printer and Braille display to such students. Universities must have mobility specialists who could train students for better mobility. There should also be a provision for both individual and group rehabilitative training. All the universities must have a proper system to assess the progress of disabled students. It is necessary to have qualified teachers for the disabled students. Teachers must have proper training of dealing with the disabled students. The main issue with teaching is that teachers do not know how to teach students with disability. It requires special skills and knowledge to teach students with disability. Universities and colleges must also have resource centers for providing better accessible environment for the students with disabilities. The main

goal of resource centers is to remove all barriers and provide the students with necessary technical and educational assistance (Ibid).

Besides above mentioned factors which are responsible for inaccessible higher education for the disabled children, there are various other factors which compel the students with disability to exclude themselves from the academic activities. Barriers exist in all forms which limit the educational opportunities of the disabled children. Barriers such as not being able to commute due to poor transport system, highly inaccessible buildings and so on compels disabled children to exclude themselves from various social activities and academic activities. Many places, buildings and services are not accessible for the people with disability in Russia. High level of inaccessible environment curtails the freedom of such people. Inaccessible surroundings makes it very difficult for the disabled people to take part in the activities of their communities. Presence of all kinds of obstacles make the disabled people lead a constraint life. They willingly choose not to indulge in various social activities. They do not interact enough with the outsiders. As a result of all these, their academic career suffers a major setback. Many children discontinue their education after schooling. Parents do not exhibit enough confidence in sending their children for higher studies (Alehina 2012b).

Higher education for the disabled children does not guarantee them a better quality of life (Moscow Law On Education of Persons with Disabilities 2012). Only a few youths manage to find a job for themselves. Data suggests that only 20 percent of the graduates go on to secure some kind of employment in Russia. Many disabled youths on the other hand, fail to secure any kind of employment despite having a degree. The main reason for high unemployment among disabled youths in Russia is the fact that these youths lack professional skills. They do not possess expertise in any specific area. Therefore, companies do not show much interest in hiring people with disabilities. Limited employment opportunities of such people basically means that education does not guarantee them integration in the society. Those disabled youths who do not get jobs lead an isolated life. Hence, there are several barriers within and

outside the university campuses which do not allow people with disabilities to lead a normal life just like anyone else.

To sum up, currently there is a common belief among all teachers and families of disabled children that integration of such children into the mainstream society is the best way to provide them education. At present consensus exists all across Russia that there should be common schooling for both disabled and non-disabled children. Recent wave of legislations and change in people's attitude have paved the way for an inclusive society in Russia. The current national law on education provides a major impetus to the entire notion of integration and inclusion of people with disabilities. Inclusive education allows disabled children to attend classes with non-disabled children. Inclusive higher education on the other hand, provides disabled students the opportunities to acquire professional skills. It allows disabled adults to lead an independent life.

However, we have seen in this chapter that not all major universities in Russia fulfill the criteria of inclusive institution. Most of the universities do not have enough resources to teach disabled students alongside other students. Therefore, disabled students do not get encouraged to take up higher professional education. Those who go for higher studies, they choose their universities and colleges keeping in mind the accessibility factor. They do not bother much about their area of interest. They are willing to compromise on their course for accessibility. So the inclusive higher education has not been able to serve the main purpose of promoting inclusion of disabled students. In other words, inclusive higher education has not been very successful in the country so far. Russian government has already made its intentions clear by attempting to build barrier free infrastructure for the disabled children.

However, there are many impediments which have slowed down the entire process of inclusion and integration of the disabled people such as inadequate financial resources, lack of qualified teachers and non-implementation of the existing laws. Several non-governmental organizations have come forward to aid the entire process

of inclusion of disabled children. Russian government is also trying to make the surroundings much more accessible for the people with disabilities. Government is planning to install ramps and elevators in all important buildings like apartments, government buildings, schools, colleges, universities and so on. Government is also determined to make bus stops, railway stations and transport system more accessible for the people with disabilities to foster the process of integration. Ramps, elevators, tactile paths etc have been installed in the Major stations of the country. Hence, it can be said that Russia is very much on the way to becoming a disabled friendly country. However, it is still a long way to go before one can say that Russia is a fully inclusive society.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study presents a clear picture of disability in the Soviet Union. The appropriate term for the disabled in the Soviet Union was the word invalids. The definition of disability or invalidness as loss of labor capacity was a cornerstone of disability policy in the Soviet Union. So the Soviet's understanding of disability was completely different from that of western understanding of disability. In the western countries, disability was perceived as social and cultural barriers which prevent an individual from leading a normal life.

In the year 1932, invalids were classified into three different groups by the Soviet state. The main aim of this classification was to put disabled people into separate groups based on their ability to work. Group one comprised of those people who were suffering from severe disabilities. People belonging to this group were left with no capacity to work. Group two comprised of those people who had limited capacity to work but could work under proper working conditions. Group three comprised of those kinds of people who were partially disabled and were fit enough to carry out part-time jobs.

In the post world war period, war disabled were not treated well by the Soviet people. They were not well received in the society. People were ashamed of them. Such people had very limited support from the state and the society. Soviet's approach towards its disabled citizens was marked by duality. On the one hand, the state was willing to provide the minimum support to the disabled people whereas on the other hand, culture of stigma and social isolation of the disabled people characterized the Soviet disability policy in the post war scenario. In 1940s, Soviet government passed several resolutions. The main motto of these resolutions was to offer various benefits to the war invalids. These resolutions were related to education, employment and housing. Apart from this, vocational trainings

were also provided to the war disables. Only a few war invalids could receive vocational training provided by the state. Soviet government wanted to induct invalids into workforce because it viewed invalids as potential labor resource. However, recruitment of invalids into workforce happened at the cost of their social status. It was noticed that the war invalids were given low skilled work like carpenters, cobblers, photographers and so on.

Soviet State provided disability pension to the invalids. Disability pension was provided based on degree of disability and military rank. The pension provided by the state was not enough to lead a decent life. Life of war veterans became very difficult in the post war scenario. They literally became impoverished. Many of them had to even sell their meager possessions in order to survive. Beside all these, the medical conditions for the invalids in the Soviet Union were sub-par. In other words, the quality of lives of disabled people in Soviet Union was below par. However, it cannot be said that the Soviet State turned a blind eye to the issue of disability. It sought to induct invalids into workforce giving them employment opportunities. However, disabled people were not allowed to work alongside non-disabled people. Many disabled people earned their livelihood by working in special organizations or internatsies. One can argue that segregation of work places for the disabled was not an inclusive approach. Anyhow, the benefits of the employment cannot be ignored. Thus, it can be said that disabled people of Soviet Union sometimes got overwhelming state's care and attention and at the same time, they received too little attention from the state.

It is very interesting to note here that the disability in Soviet Union was hidden from the outside world. No one had any idea about the fate of disabled people in this country. Disability was certainly a mystery in Soviet Union. Exact number of disabled people was not known. It is believed that the actual number of disabled people in the country was much higher than the official numbers. Soviet State tried to control the every aspect of the lives of disabled citizens. It

basically wanted to regulate the growth of disability consciousness in the country. Differentiation principle of disability was a big step in that direction. Differentiation or classification of disabled people into different categories served the main purpose of the Soviet state which was to encourage competition and resentment among various disabled groups. Lack of cooperation and unity among the disabled groups meant that there would not be collective action against the state. Therefore, Soviet government constantly sought to divide and set apart different disabled groups so that they do not rise against the government and its disability policies. Hence, it can be said that Soviet's approach towards disability and rights of people with disability was rather rigid in its nature.

Second substantive chapter of this study deals with the social protection of the people with disabilities both at the state and the societal level. In the last 25 years, people's attitude towards disability has undergone a major change. Not only at the societal level, but also at the government level the changes could be seen very clearly. After disintegration, there was a greater awareness about disability in Russia. People started to realize that the recognition of civil rights of disabled community is a sign of development of the Russian civil society. So there was an element of acceptance of disabled people among the common people of Russia. However, slight change in people's attitude does not mean that all the barriers ceased to exist all of a sudden. All the barriers such as social, cultural, environmental and so on were still very much the part of Russian society. Disabled people still had to face various obstacles in their day to day lives. People with disabilities still constituted a part of deprived section of the Russian society. Therefore, disabled people needed positive intervention from the state. They needed social protection so that they could enhance their capabilities and be an active citizen of the country.

Social protection consists of government's policies, laws and programs which are aimed at reducing vulnerability, poverty, exploitation and so on. Social protection also seeks to enhance people's capability for managing social and economic risks such as disability, exclusion, sickness, unemployment and so on. The law on social

protection aims to make disabled people realize their capabilities and potentiality on par with other citizens of the country in various aspects of life such as education, employment, culture, health, transport and communication and so on. Laws and policies related to social protection seek to remove all kinds of barriers present in the environment so that people with disabilities can enjoy barrier free environment. In the federal program accessible environment 2011 to 2015, various attempts were made to educate the common people of Russia about disability. The main aim of these programs was to target the old mindset of common Russians. It was an attempt to help the common people of Russia to overcome prejudices against disabled children and disabled adults. So the attempts were being made to brake the mental barriers which had kept disabled people of the country marginalized for centuries.

As a key component of implementing the CRPD, Russia carried out multibillion ruble accessible environment program which involved federal funding and advisory support to increase access for people with disabilities to healthcare, education, transportation and other public services in many Russian regions. One year later in 2012, Russia ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities. After becoming a party to UNCRPD, it has become obligatory for the Russian government to promote, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that such people enjoy full equality under the law. Four years later in 2016, Russian government passed a law which made all kinds of discrimination at the work place illegal.

However, this law has not been able to fully curb the instances of discrimination at the work place. Even today, people with disabilities get rejected in job interviews based on their disabilities. As a result, rate of unemployment is very high among disabled Russians. It is believed that only 20 percent of disabled adults are employed in Russia. Among those who are employed, most of them are seen doing menial jobs. Hence, it can be said that social prejudice and negative attitude towards disability still continues to play a big part in the lives of people with disabilities. Beside employment, disabled people face discrimination in the healthcare sector as well.

The medical services are below par for people with disabilities. Many people are even denied medical services on the pretext of their disabilities. Beside all these, system of transport, quality of education, people's participation in the social and community activities and so on need some impetus from the government so that they could be made more accessible for people with disabilities. Government has certainly shown in the last few years that it is committed to providing equal rights and opportunities to people with disabilities in all sectors.

Third substantive chapter of this study deals with the inclusive higher education in Russia. A national law on education was passed on September first 2013. After the implementation of this law, things started to change for students with disabilities. Inclusive education had been made legal. With this law, the practice of separate education for disabled students came to an end. Now disabled students have the luxury of attending even the best of schools with non-disabled children. In fact, inclusive education has become buzzword in Russia in last few years. At present consensus exists all across Russia that there should be common schooling for both disabled and non-disabled children.

Inclusive higher or professional education enables disabled adults to learn professional skills with non-disabled students. Institutions of higher learning provide various skill development training which prepare disabled students to fully equip themselves for job purposes. However, recent studies suggest that the inclusive education in Russia has not been fully successful so far. There are several factors that have prevented the inclusive education from flourishing in Russia. The main problem lies at the implementation level. The law on inclusive education is a very progressive law but several schools and institutions of higher learning all across Russia have not implemented it properly.

The Civic Chamber reported in 2015 that out of more than hundred institutions of higher learning, only 12 institutions fulfill the criteria of inclusive institutions for higher education. Beside this, only 50 percent of the enrolled disabled students in

these universities complete their courses. At the top of all these, institutions of higher learning do not have enough teaching staff members who can teach disabled students. These institutions also do not provide enough professional skills training to the disabled students. It won't be wrong to argue that the poor quality of professional education is a major cause which renders disabled adults jobless. Apart from this, accessibility of university campuses is yet another reason which has caused inclusive higher education in Russia a major setback.

Government has not been able to make university campuses fully accessible for students with disabilities. University buildings are not disabled friendly. In many cases, buildings do not have the facilities of ramps and elevators. Due to the absence of ramps and elevators, wheelchair users cannot navigate around the campus. It has been seen in some cases that elevators are installed in the building but they do not function properly. Some elevators have too narrow doors which do not allow the wheelchair users to use them. Apart from all these things, universities face the problem of shortage of study material for the disabled students. For example, blind students face the problem of shortage of text books in Braille. Deaf students do not have sufficient study material in print and so on. So there are several issues that need to be sought out if inclusive higher education has to become a big success in Russia.

The study intends to test the following hypotheses.

- The preconceived notions and prejudices about the disabled in Russia create obstacles to education, employment, healthcare and participation in social life for them. Internal changes after Soviet disintegration created certain conditions to look at the problem of disability seriously.
- Since the ratification of UN Convention of on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in May 2012, inclusive higher education has been accepted in principle as an enabling factor in reducing social exclusion, economic deprivation and humiliation, and enhancing independent living, self-respect, social protection and integration of the disabled, but problems exist at the implementation level due to Soviet legacy and ambiguity.

Both the above hypotheses have relatives proved positive. Right from the Soviet times, disabled people in Russia have faced discrimination and prejudice in various aspects of life. However after disintegration, various developments both internal and external made Russians adopt a different outlook towards the issue of disability. Various external forces such as UNO played a major role in raising awareness about disability rights in the country. Russia was a new country with a new government. This new government claimed itself to be democratic. Therefore, it was up to the new government to see to it that all its citizens including disabled citizens enjoy basic human rights. So after disintegration, it was the element of democracy in the Russian society that created certain conditions to look at the issue of disability seriously.

Transparency was another major factor which determined the actions of government vis-à-vis the issue of disability in the country. There was also a change in people's attitude towards disability in the post Soviet Russia. So, all these factors resulted in several legislations related to the issue of disability. Russia signed UNCRPD in 2012. Attempts have been made to improve the quality of living of disabled people. Despite all these changes, it cannot be said that the disabled are well treated in society. Even today they face discrimination in employment, healthcare and so on. Only 20 percent of disabled adults have jobs. Out of those 20 percent employed, most of them are into low skilled jobs. Medical services are below par.

In 2015, government introduced a massive cut in medical expenditure. At present, people suffering from 40 percent disability or more are eligible to avail medical benefits. Those who are suffering from less than 40 percent disability cannot claim medical benefits. It shows inhuman attitude of the government towards disabled people. Law on education is a very good law which guarantees inclusive education. However, inclusive higher education has not been very successful in Russia so far due to poor infrastructure and lack of funding. Hence, it could be said that the

positive changes have been made at the government level but the substantial changes are yet to be seen in the lives of the disabled people.

Russia ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities in May 2012. After that, inclusive higher education became legal. It was accepted as an enabling principle which would end social exclusion and humiliation for persons with disabilities. However, the implementation part has not been achieved fully so far. During the time of Soviet Union, there was a system of separate education for people with disabilities. Inclusive education is a breakaway from that old practice. Many people still challenge the new system and say that the disabled children should be sent to special schools because they have special needs. They feel that special schooling is more beneficial for such people than inclusive schooling.

Beside this, there are parents who do not want to send their children to the inclusive schools because they feel that it will hamper the development of their child. Apart from all these things, there are various other factors which are responsible for the poor implementation of inclusive higher education in Russia. There is a serious problem of funding in institutions of higher learning. As a result, universities are unable to provide barrier free campuses to the disabled students. Many universities all across Russia do not provide basic facilities such as ramps and elevators. Those universities which provide these facilities are very few in numbers. Ramps are steep, elevators function sporadically, doors of the elevators are very narrow and so on. Universities do not offer adequate professional skills training and so on. Hence, there are several problems related to the implementation of inclusive higher education in the country. On the other hand, system of inclusive higher education provides whole lot of opportunities to the disabled students to become skilled and capable in their area of interest.

Higher education enables the disabled people to become more productive. After receiving professional education, many people go on to find a job for themselves. They become independent. Their exclusion and humiliation come to an end. They

get more respect in the society. Hence, system of inclusive higher professional education is a great way to foster the process of inclusion of the excluded.

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