

## Day Care—As a Method of Disability Care towards the Inclusion

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The second decade of this century has often hailed as the decade of aspirations, ambitions and development, yet relinquished the phenomenon of inclusion at the back benches of the developmental discourses. Disabled persons constitute fifteen percent of world population. The stigmatizing terminology ‘mental retardation’ was in use world over till late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This term has been gradually replaced by ‘intellectual disability’ in most of English speaking countries very recently.

Marginalised sections, specially the disabled, have been left with primordial care and limited to institutions which haven’t been able to keep pace with time. The ever increasing demand for trained professionals and services has stressed the care mechanism which in turn has impaired the vision of a libertarian society. The 1999 National Trust of India act aimed at empowering the persons with intellectual disability, autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities and providing crisis based services to their families. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have paved way for basic education of all the disabled persons through mainstreaming, integration and inclusive set up. The penultimate aim of education being employability, vocational training became crucial, especially for intellectually disabled persons.

The adolescent and adult intellectually challenged persons spend their life waiting for interventions which would render more dignity and meaning to their existence. The ‘Day Care’ as a method of rehabilitation and care has evolved as an effective instrument for such persons. Its successful and impactful implementation in various western as well as in some Indian setup demands robust consideration for its universal implementation and infusion.

Day care as a rehabilitation method has evolved with meticulous contemplation of the intricacies and ineffectiveness of the previous paradigm of disability care. It’s a concept where, along with education, various vocational, sports and recreational activities are provided for the best realisation of one’s potential. Implementation of Day care in the community set up separates it from previous intervention distinctly.

Day care is a unique and innovative platform which serves multiple purposes, and has much implication in domestic, personal and social dimensions. It provides space for the social services, arts, channelizing various potentials and experimentation as well. Day care has defined the scope of care much beyond simply looking after or surveillance. It entails the very essence of rehabilitation. “Creativity leading to learning” is the prime idea behind the activities programmed for the rehabilitation.

Often, adolescent intellectually challenged persons are literally dumped into some care homes without any follow ups. Their faith is what they rely up to. Under the social condition where their restricted educational capacities halt their progress and performance, they are often seen as veritable curse by their families and society. Further, their non cognizance has often led to various sexual and physical abuses, especially in cases of girls. Organ trade and even slavery becomes the fate of such persons.

The Rehabilitation Council of India has indicated of the discrepancies and inadequacy of the data and services respectively. It further asserted the need of increasing services by many folds. Apparently 38000 trained persons are deployed for the purpose whereas the need is of at least 300000. Under such circumstance, imagination of inclusive society remains a far cry. The day care as an embodiment is not just another institutional solution to the problem but a mechanism or an idea which is potent of bringing shifts from the medical to social model. It can be instrumental in removing the difference between the construct of THEM and WE.

The National Trust introduced the aspiration or Day Care centre Scheme with the aim to work with children of 0 to 6 years with developmental disabilities, to make them ready for mainstream and special schools. Assessment & evaluation of children with disabilities, motivation & counselling of parents and families etc. are done under this scheme. They suggest operating the system with 20 children in a group, 10 from below poverty line and 10 from lower income group. Though a handful of schemes exist under various government organizations, such day care homes are very less

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It becomes pertinent to consider Akshay Pratishtan (an NGO working for inclusion' and 'inclusive education'), which has started a Day-Care centre for intellectually challenged persons. The successful implementation of the system has made it an epitome of this model. It was started under community based rehabilitation program four years ago to benefit those who were hitherto left over to either ostracised treatment or inefficient care. Through proactive work and commitment of the social workers and recruited staff at the community and the centre respectively, the program has brought about some remarkable rehabilitation in the lives of intellectually challenged persons. Along with basic education, some vocational skills and group activities were taught or done with the persons, not leaving aside the recreational and sports activities as well. Nearly two dozen have benefited from this. Mr Praveen, a mentally challenged person enrolled into the day care unit, is now successfully placed in a catering and hospitality service. Ms Pushpa, after going through rehabilitation process, is now working at the NGO itself in the beading and stitching section of the craft and art department. Such implementation has provided an alternative to the 24\*7 institutionalisation where often indolence, lethargy and inadequate programs have rendered the rehabilitation and 'inclusion' ineffective.

The community level implementation of this model would make the vision of 'inclusion' a reality. The day care system in its ideal form presents a model where each community, society or the apartment cluster shall have at least one day care unit whereby a space like a room, community and club can be designated for its set up. It shall be operational during specific day hours. The disabled persons can come to the unit and be the

part of the rehabilitation. The force behind the conducting and functioning of the unit will be the parents support group. Parents of such persons shall have similar concerns, issues and problems which in turn will help them to unite and form the parents support group. They shall hire professionals with the support of the Community welfare association or the local authority for the other settings. This shall further enlist the community people by effective mobilizing, campaign and even counselling. The community, out of altruism and sympathy, shall come forward to support this set up. This shall also mean that the community assumes utter legitimacy. Community in due course shall fund various requirements like logistics, professionals and activities causing increased intra group cohesion. This would mark the very prelude towards the inclusion. The nexus would be a form for developmental and inclusive discourses.

Day care will also provide employment opportunities to people who shall receive proper training and qualification prior to the joining. One possible way is with short courses from the Modular Employable Scheme (MES) of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India within the day care premises. Many such avenues may open up if several day care centres begin and utilise the potentials of the intellectually challenged to the fullest.

Too much stress has been laid on the institutionalism and medical model which has vitiated the inclusive vision. Under current circumstances, the day care shall prove to be the best alternative. It would also remove the ever mounting stress from the currently working NGOs. Its effective implementation shall definitely provide a ray of hope to the persons who need to live with the sense of worth and dignity.