

**SOCIAL SECURITY CONCERNS FOR VISUALLY
CHALLENGED PERSONS: A STUDY OF SELECT
DISTRICTS OF WEST BENGAL (2000-2021)**

SYNOPSIS

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Social Security Concerns for Visually Challenged Persons: A Study of Select Districts of West Bengal (2000-2021)

(Synopsis)

Decades after decades, it has been seen that Persons with Disability in different form suffering from problems and difficulties and struggling with to lead a healthy and prosperous life. Though it is an universal phenomena, persons with disability from the third world or developing country's perspective have more prone to disadvantages and humiliations. India as a developing country confronted with multifarious socio-economic and political problems affecting each and every corner of the society. Among various problems of socio-economic implications on harmonious and balanced society, the problems of the disabled people have been negatively affecting to visualize a balanced socio-political and economic order. According to 2011 census data around and approx. 2.21 percent (26.81 million) disabled peoples in India of which around 18.8 percent peoples are visually challenged category. According to Census Report of Persons with Disabilities, 2011 in West Bengal, there are 20, 17,406 (2.20 percent) persons with disabilities including visual, hearing speech, locomotor, mental retardation, mental illness and multiple disabilities of which around (21.04 percent) visually challenged persons. In the district of Purba Medinipur, the total number of persons with disabilities is 114088, which is around 2.23 percent along with seeing 20.84 percent, hearing 12.65 percent, speech 7.87 percent, movement 18.62 percent, mental retardation 7.32 percent, mental illness 3.64 percent, multiple disabilities 12.24 percent and others 16.78 percent. Among them, there are significant number of visually challenged persons is 23787, which is around 20.84 percent. In the district of South 24 Parganas District, the total number of persons with disabilities is 227129 (2.78 percent) comprising seeing 26.68 percent, hearing 14.51 percent, speech 5.97 percent, movement 13.07 percent, mental

retardation 6.25 percent, mental illness 2.87 percent, multiple disabilities 8.93 percent, and 21.69 percent, where the most significant highest number of visually challenged persons is 60614 which is approximately (26.68 percent). In both of the districts of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas, the visually challenged persons are suffered from multifarious nature of disability problems. It has seen that all the constitutional, legal and developmental provisions and initiatives from states perspective to solve the menace are not satisfactory to achieve their objectives. The persons with disability Act, 1995 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 which designed as a state responsibility to empower disabled persons with providing equal opportunities, protection of their rights and equal participation development discourse are far away from achieving its objectives. As a result of which persons with disabilities are frequently prone to harassment, humiliation and multifarious disadvantages which pose a threat to the objectives of the preambles of the constitution in many respect. Interpretation to the problems of the disabled people on space and region wide provides a mis-match and imbalanced approaches from formal and non-formal and Governmental and non-governmental perspectives. There are regions on states in India which are witnessed as proactive to solve the problems of disabled people and according taken steps and initiative in both formal and informal areas of activities. But there are regions which are witnessed as inactive and pay less attention to incorporate in national debate and discourses. Another dimension which has been intimately linked with the menace is the provision of social security as provided by the state to them through formal and informal for the realization of a welfare and balanced society. The social security provision for disabled persons in India encompassing health, education, and economic development are very much negligible and occupy an insignificant place in national and regional policy-making discourse. The formal initiatives as designed by the state are less helpful to the cause of disable

people. As a result, the disabled peoples, particularly the visually challenged persons do not get opportunities for their social and economic development. As contrast to this arguments and logic, in most of the industrialized countries under social security provision, special initiatives and programs have been designed to cover the problematic aspects. In less-industrial and low-countries, the aspects of structural adjustment programs and socio-economic changes have produced large number of vulnerable groups including the disabled sections of the society and inroad to various social insurance schemes.

In India provision of social security has been a concurrent subject which encompasses both Union and State legislation. Thus, it has been the duty and responsibility on part of both Central Government and State Government to make legislation for the shaping of provisions and initiatives in formal set up.

Regional initiative and approaches to the problems of disability in both formal and informal structure has not been up to the mark as expected. In West Bengal, Government has taken initiatives through formal and legal instrument, for the enhancement of social security provisions which are not specifically targeted. Large number of non-formal initiatives and organizations are working for the cause of disabled people and their upliftment. However, the realization of a secure environment materializing their need and requirement in long run has been distance dream as they are humiliated victimized, and exploited in every walk of their lives.

Review of Literature

The proposed research intend to involves with the study of numerous literatures in the form of Government documents, treaties, reports, books and articles from journals field visit to reach out the objectives and proposed hypothesis of the research.

Review of Books

The book ***“Education and Employment of the Blind –The Case Study of West Bengal”***, by Bikash C Sanyal, P.K. Giri, M. Roychowdhury, A.K. Pati, M. K. Mukharji and N.K. De, South Asian Publishers Pvt.,1985. The book depicts how Government of West Bengal unable to create the favourable circumstance for the blind to avail the basic facilities. Particular reference has been provided for all disabled persons including blind people.

The book ***“Inclusive education for the challenged children present context”***, by Dr. Bishnupada Nanda and Sunita Mondal (ed.), published by Jadavpur University press, 2014. Reference has been made for those visually challenged students who are expelled from mainstream school and to point out the negative attitude towards visually challenged in society.

The book ***“Disability & Rehabilitation in Santhals & Lodhas of West Bengal”***, by Krishna Kabir, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013. The book demonstrated the attitude of the family and community about the problem of disability. It addressed the issues of inclusive education programme for the disabled persons from the view point of the National policies and Programmes along with initiative with from the NGOs.

The book ***“Challenged Children: Problems and Management”***, Dr. Bishupada Nanda(ed), Published by Right Ankush Prakashana, 2012. The book is about the misery of number of students with disabilities at Narandrapur, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, who faces many problems regarding educational equipments.

The book ***“NGOs: The New Lexicon of Health Care”***, by Ashok K. Sarkar, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 2005. The book represents a gloomy picture of social problems of handicapped and the role of NGOs in West Bengal.

The book ***“Social Security for the Old: Myth and reality”***, by A. B. Bose, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 2006. The book varying lucidly addressed the issues of social security concerns in West Bengal for visually challenged persons above the age of 60.

The book ***“Children with visual impairments: Social interaction, language and learning”***, by Alec Webster and João Roe, Routledge, 1998. The book depicts the special educational qualification and experiences of the both class and subject teacher working with visual children with a great details in educational policy and provision.

The book ***“Visual Impairments: Determining Eligibility for Social Security Benefits”***, by Peter Lennie and Susan B. Van Hemel (ed.), published by National Academies Press, 2002. The book points out the social security provisions that will provide facilities for visually disabled along with of public health problems as well as the prevalence and significance of Visual Impairments.

The book ***“Disability and Disadvantage”***, by Kimberley Brownlee and Adam Cureton(ed), published by Oxford University Press Inc., 2009. In my research, focuses on some longstanding problem which affects the disabled people in the society along with governmental policies towards disabled people.

The book ***“Overcoming Disabling Barriers”***, by Len Barton(ed), published by Routledge, 2006. In my research, addressed the public awareness campaign towards disabled people and also pointed out the past, present and future of the disability rights movement.

The book ***“Education for Visually Impaired Children”***, by Sachin Srivastava, Sonali Publications, 2011. In work, discussed the issues of visually impair children who may not be able to form a connection between the spoken words and real objects because of visual disability.

Besides, the book refer to the implication of modern technology in day to day life of visually handicapped.

The book ***“Disability: Challenges Vs Responses,”*** by Ali Baquer and Anjali Sharma(ed), published by Can Concerned Action Now (CAN), 2006. In my work, represented the obstacles and prospectors of education and employment services for visually handicapped according to the persons with disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act,1995.

Review of Articles

The article, ***“Evaluation of Registered Visually Disabled Individuals in a District of West Bengal, India”***, by Sambuddha Ghosh, Subhalakshmi Mukhopadhyay, Krishnendu Sarkar, Manas Bandyopadhyay, Dipankar Maji, Gautam Bhaduri, Indian Journal of Community Medicine, Vol. 33, Issue 3, July 2008, addressed the socio-demographic characteristics, degree and cause of visual disability among certified visually disabled individuals in a rural district of West Bengal and to identify possible lacunae in the existing certification system.

The article, ***“A Study of Visual acuity among the students in a Rural Girls High School of West Bengal”***, written by Dr Kakali Mondal, Dr Nirmalya Manna, Dr Urmila Dasgupta, Dr Arup Chakraborty, Dr Soumi Biswas, and Dr Malay Mundle, IOSR Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences (IOSR-JDMS), Volume 10, Issue 2 (Sep.- Oct. 2013), described the assess to the visual acuity and visual impairment among the students in a Rural Girls High school of West

Bengal and to identify the socio-demographic, Physical and nutritional factors contributing to visual impairments.

The article, ***“Visual Impairment in Urban School Children of Low-Income Families in Kolkata, India”***, by Sambuddha Ghosh, Udayaditya Mukhopadhyay, Dipankar Maji, Gautam Bhaduri , Indian Journal of Public Health, Volume 56, Issue 2, April-June, 2012, attention has been made with reference to the particular need of a special group of children coming from low-income families. Besides, data on the pattern of eye health problems in children from low-income families is necessary for planning need-based program for them.

The article, ***“Sarva Siksha Mission and Primary Education in Kolkata: Changes and Challenges”***, by Indrajit Roy Chowdhury, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, Volume 3, Issue 11, November. 2014, pointed out many opportunities in providing human capabilities to all learners including visually challenged through provision of community owned quality education in a mission mode.

The article, ***“Prevalence of Hearing Impairment in the Medinipur Sadar Subdivision, Paschim Medinipore district, West Bengal, India”***, by Dr. Kausik Chatterjee and Dr. Dipak Kumar Bhuniya, in International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), Volume 3 Issue 10, October 2014, represented the prevalence of hearing with visually impairment and also try to provides the significant implications on the need of resource development for prevention and rehabilitation.

The article, ***“A Comparative Evaluation of Dental Caries Status among Visually Impaired and Normal Children of Malda, West Bengal: A New Caries Assessment System”***, by Sudipta Kar, Gautam Kundu, Shyamal. Kumar Maiti, Chiranjit Ghosh, Badruddin Ahamed Bazmi, and

Santanu Mukhopadhyay, International Journal of Therapeutic Applications, Volume 20, 2015. In research, narrated the process of the evaluation and comparison of the prevalence of dental caries in visually impaired and normal children of Malda, West Bengal utilizing Caries Assessment Spectrum and Treatment.

The article, “*Insight into Self-Concept of the Adolescents who are Visually Impaired in India*”, by Santoshi Halder and Poulomee Datta, International Journal of Special Education, Vol 27, No: 2, 2012, explored the behaviour, Intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, happiness and satisfaction of the sighted adolescents and the adolescents with a visual impairment who need help and support, in order to develop positive self-concept.

The report, “*Employment of Disabled People in India*”, which is a Base Line Report and Prepared for National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) by Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC), February 2009, pointed out a wide gap between the employment rate of people including blind with and without disabilities in the country, which requires proactive initiative on the part of all concerned to ensure that disability is included in the employment programmes of the Government and the private sector.

প্রতিস্পর্ধী বার্তা (Pratispardhi Barta), পশ্চিমবঙ্গ রাজ্য প্রতিবন্ধী সম্মিলনীর মুখপত্র, 1st Year, No-1, September-2013, a). Movement of Disabled Peoples: some discussion by Kanti Ganguly, b). New Policy and Principles for Disabled People by Muralidharan, c). Rehabilitation of Disabled People : A general discussion by Amartyalok Banerjee .

প্রতিস্পর্ধী বার্তা (Pratispardhi Barta), পশ্চিমবঙ্গ রাজ্য প্রতিবন্ধী সম্মিলনীর মুখপত্র, 2st Year, No-3, November-2014, a). Problem of Disabled people and Aact of Disability, 1995 by Sadhan Gupta,

b). Rights of Disabled People by Ajoy Das, c). Disability and discussion about their problems by Bubai Bag, d). Negative attitude of Government of West Bengal towards disabled people by Pabir Saha.

Review of Paper presented Seminar/ Workshop

Seminar on *Evaluation of the current Systems for Educating sightless children*, organized by Blind Persons' Association, August 19, 2006, encompassed various issues and problems of persons with disabilities such as importance of integrated education for the sightless students by Narayan Ganguly, Importance of special education at primary level for Blind Children by Dr. Pranab Chakraborty, Relevance of Braille System in the Age of High Technology by Dr. A. Gangatharen, The Social implication of Braille System by Amiya Biswas

Research Methodology

The nature and contexts of the research allow the researcher to go through the multifarious process of adopting and integrating different aspect to be undertaken. The study opts for both descriptive and explanatory methods to arrive at conclusion. The descriptive method has been used to demonstrate the descriptive nature of the study as it describes the major thematic perspectives so far as the problems of the visually challenged persons and the remedial measures to that end. The analytical aptitude of the research has made an attempt to analyses the nature and contains of the descriptions made in every chapters. Though most of the part of the research is field-visit oriented, the research would like to adopt survey methods through a common framework of making questionnaire of objective and subjective nature. It would also like to use both primary sources in the form of government documents, survey reports, interviews, the constitution, speeches of officials and secondary sources in the form of books, journals, and

articles as well as materials from internet, unpublished materials and papers presented in various national and international seminars that provide significant value to my study.

Chapter Analysis

This Dissertation contains four substantive chapters that enlighten "Social Security Concerns for Visually Challenged Persons: A Study of Select Districts of West Bengal-. The first chapter explains an Understanding of Social Security for Disabled people: A Theoretical Analysis in developed and developing countries. The second chapter elucidates Constitutional and Legal Provision of Social Security for Visually Challenged Persons in India with Reference to the State of West Bengal in particular. The third chapter explains numerous problems and challenges experienced by the visually challenged persons in the State of West Bengal. The final chapter illuminates the role and approaches of Non State Actors working in different part of West Bengal.

Chapter one, titled as *"Understanding of Social Security for Disabled people: A Theoretical Analysis"*, explores the nature and objective of social security by examining different definitions given by scholars and institutions in this field. The understanding of social security both in terms of organisational and individual dimensions highlights the socio-economic and political components of justice to them for their upliftment and empowerment. The need .based social security approach has emphasized the need for quality of life ensuring health care system and economic security. The second aspect of the chapter examines different models of disability after considering the different parameters of the concept of disability. Among the different model of disability, the chapter highlights the major thrusts of traditional model of disability, medical model of disability, and social model of disability. The third aspect of the chapter highlights the

perception of different theories towards the concept of disability. In this backdrop, this chapter examines the outlook of positivism, functionalism, post-modernism, marxism, human rights towards the noble cause of disability. Finally, the chapter has gone through different provisions of social security both in developed and developing countries. Here, emphasis has been given on the formal-institutional provisions for the enhancement of social security in both developed and developing countries.

Chapter two, titled as *"Constitutional and Legal Provision of Social Security for Visually Challenged Persons in India with Reference to the State of West Bengal"*, explains different constitutional and legal provisions meant for the disabled people. The chapter describes the constitutional provisions such as fundamental rights under different articles various provisions meant for them. Among the noted articles of the constitution 15(1), article 16, article 17, article 21, article 21(A), article 23, article 24, article 25, article 29 -30, article 45, article 47 are of paramount importance. Similarly, various legislative enactments for protection of the interest of the disabled people have been mentioned. The noted legislation enactments are the Mental Health Act, 1987, the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992, the Person with disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, Persons with Disability Rules, 1996, Multiple Disability Act, 1999, National Policy for Persons with Disability Act, 2005, Persons with Disability Act, 2011, Persons with Disability Act, 2016, adequately illustrate the nature of different types of disabilities and prescribe provisions and remedial measures for the protection of the rights of disabled people.

The second part of the chapter addresses the components of legislative framework for the protection of the rights of the persons with disabilities with protection reference to the state of West Bengal. The chapter briefly states out the state's initiative and institutional measures both

promote and protection of the rights of the disabled people. The nature of the moral obligation of the state has been reflected in terms of the socio-economic and political measures through different institutional apparatus and dynamism of good governance.

Chapter third, titled as *"The Nature and Problems of Visually Challenged persons in the Districts of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas, West Bengal,"* an attempt has been made to find out the composition of visually challenged persons along with the problems faced by them in West Bengal. In this backdrop, the survey method has been adopted on visually challenged persons of selected case study on unit of analysis which has been depicted in the form of diagram and tables. Among many challenges and problems, the problems of accessibility, attainment of basic education, employment, social security, honour and dignity, justice, social acceptability and empowering them are very significant. In this chapter, unit of analysis has been made through the technique of interview with both stated and on stated questionnaire. It has been formed that the challenges and problem of the visually challenged persons of selected case study are of similar in nature. The extent of such problems and challenges are varies from case study to case study, but the nature and character of problems and challenges are of similar in its outlook. They are struggling with the problems related to survival with dignity and integrity within the bound of legal structure and societal norms and values.

Chapter Four, titled as *"Approaches of Non-State Actors Working for the Cause of Visually Challenged Persons in the Districts of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas "*, encompasses the objectives and orientations of different Non- Governmental Organisation actively involved with such noble activities. The NGOs working for the cause of the visually challenged persons in different districts of West Bengal have been taken case study to illustrate the nature and scope of their organisational activities in promoting the welfare measure for the visually challenged

persons, The various NGOs such as Nimtouri Tamluk Unnayan Samity (Purba Medinipur), Bikramnagar Udayan Sangha (Purba Medinipur), Teparpara Pratibandi Kalyankami Kendra (Purba Medinipur), Blind Persons Association (South 24 Parganas), Welfare Society for the Blind Geeta Basu Training Centre (South 24 Parganas), Premasree A Free Residential Home for Visually Impaired Children (South 24 Parganas), Deepanita Braille Institute (South 24 Parganas), Rubi and Srecma Society for Disabled and Blind Rehabilitation Centre (South 24 Parganas), Nimpith Handicapped Welfare Society (South 24 Parganas), Mathurapur Nivedita Mahila Samity (South 24 Parganas), New Age Society For All (South 24 Parganas), Bamanagar Welfare Society (South 24 Parganas), Netra Women and Child Welfare Society (South 24 Parganas), Srinjini Society for People with Disabilities (South 24 Parganas), Sundarban Social Development Centre (South 24 Parganas) and many NGOs are working for the cause of visually challenged persons. All the components of the field study method have been applied with a view to demonstrate both the aspects of the nature of the working of such NGOs and the initiatives that have been taken in different platforms and programmes. The success stories of the NGOs in responses to the menace of the visually challenged persons are examined.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The visually challenged persons in West Bengal with reference to the district of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas have been suffering from multifarious challenges and problems. Though the nature and character of their problems may be similar in nature, but the magnitude of their problems varies from region to region depending on the economic factors, political awareness and socio-cultural practices of the regions. The reasons for the menace have been more or less similar along with the constitutional provision to eradicate such menace. The

state specific legislative enactment and development provision to that end are similar in nature. The present study reveals that in spite of plethora of constitutional provision and development policy to root out the menace, the overall situation and their socio-economic-political conditions are not up to the standard. There is no doubt about the fact that incremental changes to their socio-economic and political conditions has been due to the handiwork of the constitutional provision and legislative enactment along with development policies to that end. The study also reveals that the state's approach to solve the menace is more passive and slow than the approaches of the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs). The NGOs working in this field are very much accessive and assertive to their day to day common problems of the visually challenged people, but the NGOs are very much handicapped with regard to the availability of finance and decision-making capacity to that end. The study also reveals that the main causes of the disability in both the district of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas are the economic backwardness and inadequate health care facilities. Political apathy to the menace is one of the reasons responsible for the continuing precarious problems affecting them physically and mentally. Further, societal norms, values, and practices are also responsible for the growing problems of the visually challenged persons in both the district of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas. Both political and societal awareness to the problems is highly necessary along with special measures to be taken by the state through its development policies and planning to visualise a healthy and harmonious society and social order.

There is no doubt about the fact that the civil society and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) are playing significant role for the cause of the visually challenged people in both the districts, but their contributions in this domain are restricted to certain level. In the matter associated with imparting education to the visually challenged children, the NGOs and civil

society are somehow able to manage the requirements at the primary level of providing education to them, but in case of the provision to imparting education at the higher level, the NGOs and civil society are handicapped by financial resources and the institutional arrangement. Further, the contribution of NGOs and civil society in the field of providing them job opportunities in the formal/ governmental sector are also very negligible. Mostly their contributions remain with the informal sector and unorganized sector. The visually challenged persons are mostly engaged in the informal sector including the hotels, restaurants, factories, agricultural productivity, etc. Again, even if their engagement in the informal sector, they are playing very negligible role restricted to manual labour. The role of the decision-making and leadership in the informal sector also are not meant for them. In fact, both at the level of formal sector and informal sector the leadership role of decision- making are not endowed with them.

The study reveals that, there is no adequate data at the governmental level depicting the classification of employment of the visually challenged persons provided to them by the Government. We have data on their employment at the preliminary education level or school education level. We do not have sufficient and adequate data representing their employment at the level of higher education, especially in the colleges and universities. In fact, their employments in the college and university level in both teaching and non-teaching categories are not satisfactory. The visually challenged students and research scholars have been confronted with numerous problems associated with infrastructural and teaching learning facilities. At the higher stage of their education, the educational institutions are not modeled with their requirements. They are enrolled with the general version of educational institutions which are not conducive to their physical and mental development. Library facilities, including the availability of study materials to their needs and requirement are some of the basic issues of worrisome

concerns. Similarly, the infrastructural facilities of the educational institutions including their physical communication to the institutions are not modeled with their needs. Further, lack of trained teachers versed with skill to teach the blind students in academic institutions are also major impediment to their learning process. Books and journals are of general character, not designed with their needs and requirements. Along with that, the social security measures provided by the State Government through various initiatives and programmes are very insufficient in nature. The reservation of seats for the visually challenged children at the school level and the reservation of seats at the college and university level should be more meaningful and more accessive. In the employment scenario, the reservation policy the State Government is undertaken are not sufficient and adequate. There has not been sufficient provision made by the State Government for them at the old-age-period. The study also reveals that, there are two major factors responsible for their miserable conditions in the society. First, there has been lake of political will and motive at the decision-making level to address their grievance, Secondly, the societal factor also responsible for their misery in the form of the negative and inhuman attitude of the society towards them and their causes.

The above mentioned analysis of the problems and challenges of the visually challenged persons in West Bengal, with reference to the district of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas needs attentions from the decision-making and societal perspective to rebuilt a new social order based on political and socio-economic justice to the vulnerable sections of the society, especially the visually challenged persons. In this context, as a researcher it is my obligation and responsibility to draw the attention of the state leadership at the decision-making level to looking into some of the perspectives for the all-round development of the visually challenged persons in West Bengal, with reference to the districts of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas.

1. The provisions of social security for the visually challenged persons in West Bengal are not satisfactory enough to cover of all the economic necessity needed for their survivals. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the extension of social security provisions based on their economic needs and necessity.
2. The infrastructural facilities to access the educational institution along with the availability of study materials at the higher level of education should be catered according to their needs and necessity. To that end, the government should provide more equipped instruments and trained teachers based no their needs.
3. The State should take bold steps to introduce special school and class rooms for the visually challenged students.
4. The State should instruct the private agencies to provide reservation for the visually challenged persons in different capacities that can be possible through public private partnership.
5. The State should provide more stringent law to deal with violation against the visually challenged persons.
6. The State should facilitate with more dynamic provision regarding the issues of accessibility to public places, transport systems, barrier free environment and better health care facilities.

Countersigned by the Supervisor

Signature of the candidate

Date:

Date:

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