



Social Justice and Visually Impaired in Kerala: A Study on Kerala Federation of the Blind

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ABSTRACT

Social justice means that there should be no discrimination towards any individual on social grounds. Social justice refers to the concept of a society in which justice is achieved in every layer of it. Social justice implies a society in which every individual and group of people get impartial share of the benefits in the society. It realizes a society, which considers all people on equal status especially the marginalized groups such as visually impaired people. In Kerala a number of non-governmental organizations have been working for the protection and empowerment of visually impaired people in the state. According to the notion of social justice, society should ensure that individuals including the visually impaired have access to primary goods and resources such as privileges, opportunities, self-respect and all essential conditions that would make them capable to take autonomous decisions in life. Ableism is a major issue faced by the visually impaired in Kerala. It is the belief that being able-bodied is the norm, and anything outside of that is an exception. Ableism shapes how society dictates its priorities and measures worth. Ableism results in the neglect of disabled persons . It stifles accessibility and almost entirely erases visibility of impaired in the society. There are still barriers deprive mobility of visually impaired in public places in the state. This study is focused on the visually impaired people in the state of Kerala. The study investigates the denial of social justice to visually impaired in the state. The study probes role of Kerala federation of the blind A non-



governmental organization in ensuring social justice to visually impaired by taking measures to ensure employment, education, accessibility and healthcare to the visually impaired in the state. The Kerala Federation of the Blind (KFB) is a non-governmental organization in Kerala, that works for ensuring justice, empowerment, and rights of persons with visual impairment. It focuses on promoting equal opportunities to the visually impaired people in the state.

INTRODUCTION

Social justice implies a society in which every individual and group of people get impartial share of the benefits in the society. It realizes a society, which considers all people on equal footing especially the marginalized sections such as visually impaired people. Hence the concept of social justice ensures an egalitarian society devoid of all sorts of discriminations.

Social justice can be regarded as a movement to construct a socially just society all over the world. According to John Rawls, "each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of the society as a whole cannot override" (Rawls, 1971). Social justice deals with the distribution of benefits and burdens all over the society.

The just society should ensure that impaired people have access to primary goods and resources such as privileges, opportunities, self-respect in society. It is essential to ensure accessible environment that would make impaired people capable to take independent decisions in their life. The state has the obligation to oversee that impaired people have equal opportunity and accessibility in society.

Impaired people can be seen across the world. This study is focused on the visually impaired people in the state of Kerala and the role of Kerala federation of the blind (KFB) a prominent non-governmental organization working on behalf of visually impaired in the state.

Social justice implies the creation of a society where every individual enjoys equal status, privileges and dignity regardless of physical, social, or economic differences. For persons with visual impairment, achieving social justice requires more than sympathy it requires structural support, inclusive policies and sustained advocacy. In Kerala state, the Kerala Federation of the Blind (KFB) has emerged as an important non-governmental organization working towards the empowerment and social justice of the visually impaired community. Several significant measures are taken by KFB such as education,



employment support, advocacy, and awareness programs. KFB plays a vital role in integrating visually impaired individuals into mainstream society.

The Kerala Federation of the Blind was established as a non-governmental organization led by visually impaired persons themselves in 1967. Its primary objective is to protect the rights of the blind and ensure their full participation in public life. It wanted to ensure social, economic and cultural development of visually impaired in the state. By adopting a rights-based approach, KFB emphasizes self-reliance, dignity, and equality.

Education is a cornerstone of social justice and KFB has made significant contributions in this realm. The organization supports visually impaired students by providing access to Braille study materials, audiobooks and assistive products such as computers, mobile phones and screen readers. KFB runs libraries and resource centers for the visually impaired, these institutions are specifically designed according to the needs of blind learners.

Kerala federation of the blind advocates for inclusive education policies, ensuring that visually impaired students are accommodated in mainstream educational institutions. KFB ensures that visually impaired students got reservation in accordance with PWD Act in educational institutions. KFB provides Scholarships, hostels, and coaching programs to visually impaired students this helped them to overcome barriers caused by social prejudice and lack of accessibility. These initiatives enable visually impaired students to pursue education and professional courses on an equal footing with others.

Unemployment is one of the major obstacle faced by visually impaired persons in Kerala. KFB addresses this issue by organizing vocational training programs that develop job-oriented skills such as computer applications, call-center training and traditional crafts. These programs enhance employability and reduce economic dependence. KFB actively engages with government departments and private employers to promote reservation policies in accordance with PWD Act (2016), fair recruitment practices and workplace accommodations in consistent with PWD Act. By advocating for implementation of PWD Act (2016) and other disability laws, the KFB ensures that visually impaired individuals receive equal opportunities in public and private sector employment. Economic empowerment through public private participation under KFB and self-employment schemes further strengthens their social standing.

An important role of KFB in ensuring social justice to blind people lies in its advocacy efforts. The organization acts as a pressure group that represents the interest of the visually impaired community in the state. It campaigns for the effective implementation of laws such as the Rights of Persons with



Disabilities Act, (2016) and demands accessible public infrastructure, transport facilities, and accessible online platforms. Accessibility in websites is essential to gather informations.

KFB conducts legal awareness programs to educate visually impaired persons about their rights and entitlements. This knowledge enables them to challenge discrimination, claim benefits, and participate confidently in public life. By bridging the gap between policy and practice, KFB ensures that legal provisions translate into real-world justice.

Social attitudes often pose greater barriers than physical limitations this led to denial of social justice. KFB works extensively to change societal perceptions about blindness. The federation organizes seminars, cultural programs, media engagement and public outreach. The organization promotes idea that visual impairment is not an inability but a different way of experiencing the world.

KFB channelises visually impaired community's participation in sports, arts, and leadership roles. Such initiatives of KFB foster social inclusion

. Capability approach of social justice developed by Amartya Sen intended to enhance the capability of the least advantaged in the society through social action. In Sen's views material resources should be extended to weaker sections such as handicapped people, orphans and destitute in the society so as to attain social integration by means of an efficient social network. Kerala federation of the blind helps visually impaired individuals to enhance their capabilities. and reduce stigma, paving the way for a more empathetic and inclusive society.

Conclusion

The Kerala federation of the blind plays a vital role in ensuring social justice for the visually impaired in the state of Kerala, by addressing educational, vocational , legal, and social aspects of exclusion. Its prioritize a justice oriented approach over a welfare based framework. It has empowered visually impaired individuals to claim equality, dignity and self-respect. The political theorist John Rawls considers that the existing social structure is an obstacle to the full realization of a liberal principle of fair opportunity for each person in the society. According to Rawls chances to hold office and opportunities should be ensured to all in the society, In this sense the visually impaired individuals should not disadvantaged with regard to their inherent starting position in their life. The just society should ensure that all individuals including the visually impaired people have access to primary goods and resources such as privileges, opportunities, self-respect and an accessible environment which is suitable for making them capable to take autonomous decisions in life.



The KFB raises awareness about the abilities and potential of visually impaired people, organization encourages self-reliance, and collaborates with government and non-government agencies to improve social security, rehabilitation services, and overall quality of life for the blind community in Kerala.

In a society like Kerala striving for inclusive development, organizations like KFB serve as catalysts for change, reminding us that social justice is meaningful only when it includes the most marginalized people like visually impaired into the main stream of the society.

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