

FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT

Look the world right in the eye

By PREETI BROWN

The writer, a young mother of two, who also handles three jobs, is visually impaired

My parents found they had a visually impaired daughter about 30 years ago. Shock and despair numbed them. I'm able to write this today because they never let their despair touch me.

I was brought up as if was no different from anyone else. My special needs were attended to without any fuss. Yes, I've had my ups and downs in life. But is there any human being who's never had a problem? Mine haven't stopped me from trying to make a success of my life. Try hard enough and somewhere, someone, some thing, comes along to give you that helping hand. It's true for everybody.

I'm an aerobic instructor. I run my own aerobic class in Patparganj. I'm also working fulltime for the computer section of the National Association for the Blind (NAB). The NAB has voice synthesizers for computers, so it's now possible for the blind, to do this work. I'm involved in their computer training programmes for the blind.

I'm also working with visually impaired children at NAB, guiding them in their programme of physical exercise. Such an exercise is extremely important for the sightless: it gives them self-confidence, and self-control and takes away the hesitation of movement that nearly all blind people suffer from.

I'm also a proud mother of two beautiful children, and trying out my hand at marketing a new brand of pickles, in the tough market of consumer non-durables. So far, so good. I'm doing quite well.

If I can do so much, why should someone with a physical disability just have to sit around? Given opportunities and resources, any disabled person can become a useful member of society. More and more people with disabilities, are working successfully in various professions like teaching, law and administration.

Advances in technology are creating new openings for us. The computer is one such friend. With speech synthesizers now manufactured in India, it is now possible for a blind person to overcome the reading and writing handicap almost completely.

If only public transport and public places like office buildings, shops, restaurants, public toilets, pavements and educational institutions would be accessible to wheelchair users, it would make life much easier for them.

If you're suddenly faced with a disability problem, or someone around you has one, don't despair. It takes courage to accept that you'll have to live with this impairment, but you aren't the only one and you should know there are people to help find the right things for you to live a reasonably satisfying life. You have to make the effort I assure you, it will be rewarded.

There are people who'll be happy to help you find help and guidance for your own problem. I'll give you telephone numbers of two such association. One is the National Association for the Blind, (602944) and the other is the Family of the Disabled, (5597328).

One can do a lot with what one has even after misfortune comes your way. So, walk tall, walk straight and look the world right in the eye!