

The disabled deserve better

Various groups of disabled persons have been striving towards getting certain rights for themselves. The visually impaired have been fighting for their specific problems, the orthopedically handicapped have been struggling for theirs, and so on. With the result that each group has been successful in getting their individual needs met, but disability has never been tackled as a whole.

The Disabled Rights Group (DRG) is one such body which has people representing all disabilities. This group has been instrumental in getting the disabled

rights bill into Parliament this Monsoon session. Although Mr Sitaran Kesri had promised to introduce this bill in the first week of this session, this bill was

only presented in the Lok Sabha on the last day of this session. This has once again delayed the passing of the bill till the Winter session.

This is a comprehensive bill. Experts have covered all major issues relating to the rights of the disabled. This fact makes it essential for the bill to be passed without opposition. As most of the opposition is coming from those who have been working for the disabled but are not disabled themselves, they cannot fully comprehend the need for the bill in question.

The passing of the bill will be

a major step towards obtaining equal rights and opportunities for the disabled, but this will be the first step. Once there is a written law, disabled people themselves have to step forward and see that this law is implemented. One DRG will be of very little help. Groups like this will have to work at all levels. Self-advocacy is the only answer, and that too from the grassroots level. As the problems and solutions concerning disability are best understood by the disabled persons themselves, it is not true that society does not wish to see disabled



people live as productive co-citizens. The huge drawback is lack of awareness about the capabilities of the disabled people. It is the duty of us disabled persons to speak up.

Most organisations working in the field of disability are in some way supported by the Government. This means that none of the NGOs can voice their true opinions, as in doing so they may incidentally displease a bureaucrat or a minister, thus leaving most of the important issues untouched. I do not see any reason for conflict. We are only asking to let us become socially and economically independent.

Preeti Singh
M-33, Swati Apartments
12, Patparganj
Delhi: 110 092

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