A study by Paul (2000) suggests that, despite the enactment of various disability laws contributing to the rising educational enrolment of students with disabilities in higher education institutions, these students constantly face various barriers while pursuing higher education. There is a dearth of research which has examined the nature of these barriers (Baron et al, 1996). As discussed in the chapter on review of literature, in the West, a few studies have been undertaken to understand the experiences of students with disabilities in higher education (Hall and Tinklin, 1999; Brown, 1992; Schneid, 1992, Howell and Lazarus, 2003). The researcher could not find many studies from the Indian context. Listening to the educational experiences of these students had the advantage of letting the students express their ‘lived experience’ of being disabled students in higher education and enabled the researcher to understand the physical and hidden barriers that they encounter to be highlighted (Jayram and Scullion, 2000; Gaze, 2000).

In this section, the researcher attempted to find out from the students their reflections on their educational experiences and to understand what were the barriers affecting their educational advancement in their universities. The respondents’ narratives showed that many issues affected their active participation. The factors that emerged as themes from the interviews are categories into three broad categories. These are:

(i) Physical Barriers
(ii) Academic Barriers, and
(iii) Attitudinal Barriers

(i) Physical Barriers
One of the most important factors in successful attendance of students with physical impairments was physical access. Several environmental barriers have been found to
affect the participation of students with physical disabilities (Hammal, Jarvis, and Colver, 2004). The physical barriers experienced most often include: long distances; heavy doors; steep ramps, staircases, and rough surfaces, such as uncut curbs and thresholds (Hemmingsson and Borell, 2000). Natural spaces were also a challenge in areas with uneven terrain and unstable weather conditions. In the current study, physical barriers were faced by both visually impaired and orthopedically handicapped students. Majority of the students with physical impairment stated that their impairment did not affect their academic life, but they had problems with accessing computer centers, libraries and attending classes on the first or the second floor without the minimal physical support of lifts, elevators and transport facilities to and from classrooms, restrooms and hostels. All three institutions did not have good access and the distance between classrooms, library, restrooms, and academic and administration buildings, as well as hostels, was considerable even within the campus of the universities. They also didn’t have easy access to their classrooms, libraries, departments, and academic and administrative buildings.

Some of these students stopped going to the library for issue of books due to their physical and accessibility limitations. Issuing of books in library was not an easy task for them. Even if any of their friends agreed to help them, there were other issues such as selecting a book from the catalogue, or tracing out the book and also restrictions such as the card holder should be present at the time of issuing of the book. It was a big process and took lot of time for them. On the other hand, nearly seventy per cent of students with visual impairments also stated that they visited library hardly two or three times. The following narratives represent the response of the group of the respondents:

“Till now, I (student with visual impairment) didn’t go to my library because the way to the library was not accessible for me. In case the university management makes it an accessible environment with like proper foot paths, proper roads with special indicators and without major obstacles on the way/path, to reach important places including classrooms, library and other important places, it could help me a lot. So I can go alone
 wherever I need to go without any of my friends help. But the situation is entirely different; I have to depend on others wherever I need to go.”

“This is my fourth year here. I didn’t go to library till now. If I need any book from the library, I usually get it from my friends. If they have the book or material they usually get me the same. Sometimes teachers give me some books.”

“Being a wheel chair user, I could not access the library and computer terminals in my campus since computers in my department and the computer centre were situated on the second floor so it was not easy for me go there every day. I rarely go and work on the computers.”

Various aspects in natural and constructed educational environments are essential for a student’s active participation. All three university buildings were only partly accessible to students with physical disabilities. Some of them were concerned about the construction of the buildings and its accessibility. Accessibility in these institutions was poor, not only because the buildings or parts of the buildings were old and no modifications had been made to them to make them disabled friendly, but also the new buildings were inaccessible without lifts or elevators. Similarly, a study by Paul (1998) has indicated that students who use wheelchairs were struggling due to inaccessible classrooms or restrooms. Further, a study by West et al, (1993) also shows that barriers identified by these students were: inaccessible buildings and classrooms, and lack of other accommodations. It was apparent from the students narratives, that although inclusion of students with special needs in higher education has been advocated for years, the buildings had been constructed without taking into account the needs and problems of students with physical and sensory impairments.

For some respondents, the distance between classrooms and restrooms and its accessibility was considerable. Since universities have huge campus areas, hostels, academic buildings and the library were located in different parts of the campus; it was very problematic for these students to attend classes regularly without transport facility and accessibility. This finding concurs with those of Shevlin, Kenny, and Mcneela (2004)
which indicates that these students’ experiences with variable access within higher education, physical access remain a serious obstacle to full participation. The limited accessibility provision has let them down at crucial points—with the result that they could commence, but could not complete the journey to the required location or performance goal. On the other hand, the effects of student’s impairments, in the current study, were also striking, and participation in educational activities was complicated by excessive effort, fatigue, pain, and tiredness, occasionally leading to disengagement or withdrawal. The following narratives represent the feelings of a group of students:

“Recently my hostel was renovated and extended. I thought they will put ramp facility at least this time but they did not do that. Whenever I go to the dining hall, I have to leave my wheelchair and I have to take my crutches. Since it is big dining hall with so much of space, I could have easily gone and come if they had built ramps.”

“We did not have any lift facility in any of the academic and administration buildings including departments, library and computer centers.”

“I did not find that my disability affected my studies in any case. But, my department was situated on the second floor; I had to climb so many steps to attend class. After climbing all these steps I cannot immediately concentrate on class teaching due to fatigue. I also feel some discomfort to sit in class.”

“There was a ramp at the entrance of the department but we did not have any lift facilities inside the department. It was very tiring for me to climb steps without any proper accessible support.”

“When I am having morning and afternoon classes, I will not go to my hostel for lunch. It was very difficult for me to go there and again coming back. Being a person with mobility impaired (both legs affected with polio) I could not walk that much distance. Sometimes I take lunch at a canteen nearby my department.”

“I could not walk much. While reaching my destination, I get tired and sweat profusely.”

Majority of the students were concerned about the classroom arrangement and its accessibility. Two of the respondents informed their course teacher about their problems and requested him/her to change the classroom but the response was: ‘this is the only
classroom allotted for our department in this building, so we don’t have any other option. It’s better if you could talk with higher authorities’. The students had a choice of choosing their rooms in a hostel on the ground floor, but it was not possible for them to do the same thing while choosing classrooms which were convenient and accessible to them. Some of the students from Central and State University (a) stated that they were happy with the initiative taken by the university management. These students have special bus services within the campus to drop them from the hostel to the department and from the department to the hostel. This kind of support reduced their problems such as long distance walk, fatigue and pain. Some of the students from State University (b) stated that their university constructed disabled friendly hostel for students with physical impairments. Disabled friendly hostels include: easy access through ramps, a railing system, friendly bathrooms, wheel chair accessibility to hostel rooms, washing rooms, bathrooms, and also a terrace.

Overall, from the students’ narratives, it was found that all the three universities have taken some initiative to support these students in their universities by creating friendly accessibility, such as constructing ramps at the most of the buildings, disabled friendly hostel, providing hostel room in ground floor. Two of the universities (Central and State University (a)), which have a disability cell and a coordinator, went a little bit further and arranged special transport facility for these students on their campus. On the other hand, it was also obvious that these students have been facing physical barriers in order to access classrooms, computers, library and other administrative buildings in their universities. Despite focused support from the disability coordinator, the physical environment was inadequately adapted to ensure full inclusion. Guaranteeing easy access to classrooms and other academic spaces appeared to be beyond these institutions, and thus the prospects of developing the practice of universal access are extremely remote. These findings highlight the inherent limitations in the current piecemeal institutional arrangements for these students. A comprehensive access service is required that addresses the needs of all these students and becomes an integral part of the institution.
(ii) Academic Barriers

The educational experiences of students with visual impairments are entirely different than the students with orthopedic impairments. A study conducted by Moisey (2004) shows that students with visual impairments in higher education institutions have been facing academic barriers due to inappropriate learning resources, lack of teaching experience to teach students with special needs, lack of discussion with these students regarding their problems and needs. She has categorised academic support services into four areas: a) course accommodation (e.g., changes to the content, extended contract time), b) examination accommodations (e.g., Additional time and assistance at the time of examination, providing a special distraction-free room), c) external support service (e.g., note-takers, interpreters), and d) assistive technology (e.g., use of text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and screen reader software). Overall, students who received more services had more success and lesser barriers in pursuing higher education.

As we discussed severity of impairment in Chapter 4, there was only one student who had problem with both his hands. This student stated that his family members support him in each and every case and he refused to answer the questions related to academic barriers he faced in higher education. Therefore, in this section, the researcher enquired about different academic barriers encountered by students with visual impairments, including educational experiences with and without usage of assistive technology.

In order to understand the educational experiences of visual impaired students with and without usage of assistive devices, the researcher asked whether respondents have their own assistive technology or devices. The following section represents the results of respondents those who had their own technical assistive devices.

(a) Having Own Assistive Technology/Devices

Assistive technologies in this study are those ones available to the students which would help them to maximise their ability to effectively complete the course requirements. Some of the adaptive resources and services include: adaptive computers, tape recorders,
sound amplification systems, television enlarges, voice synthesisers, calculators or keyboards with large buttons, switches and technology assessments and evaluations. The students with visual impairments have to depend on assistive devices such as computers, speech softwares or their friends or family members for their studies, whereas the students with orthopedic impairments have a problem with accessibility issues such as accessing the computer centre, library and classroom which we discussed in the section on physical barriers. Therefore, in this section, the researcher has analysed the educational experiences of students with visual impairments in higher education institutions.

Learning experience of students with visual impairments in higher education institutions mostly depend on the availability of learning resources and their utilisation. Taking advantages of technology to improve the academic outcome for these students in higher education is critically important since without the use of assistive technology, students with disabilities will be more disadvantaged than students without disabilities (Getzel and Thoma, 2008). Therefore, in this section, the researcher has analysed data, based on number of students with visual impairments who are having their own assistive technology.

The researcher found that more than 75 per cent of students with visual impairments did not have any kind of assistive devices including personal computers with speech softwares, scanners, and Braille. It was also understood that more than 96 per cent of them used recording devices such as tape recorders, walkman. On the other hand, those who reported as having a computer also informed that they also had scanners, and speech softwares. Students in Central University had more assistive devices compared to those in both the State universities (a and b). It was also found that respondents from the Central University got this speech software’s copy/dummy, from their own friend’s circle, since it is expensive to buy an original copy and some of them also got it from the university management. As against this, it is seen that neither students with visual
impairment from both the state universities (a & b) nor the university management itself had any special softwares / speech synthesisers.

Till now, it has been seen how many students with visual impairments have their own assistive devices in the respondent universities. It is worthwhile to look at usage of assistive devices and their educational experiences in this study.

(b) Usage of Assistive Technology
Exposing college students with visual impairments to assistive devices that can enable them to organise reading materials or the development of papers; text-to-speech software for reading, writing, and taking exams is critical for helping students meet the academic challenges of university education. Access to technology also leads to increased success in higher education and has the likelihood to improve career outcomes for them (Getzel, and Thoma, 2008). Table 5.1 discusses whether male and female visually impaired students from the three Universities used Assistive technology.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Having Personal</td>
<td>Know how to use</td>
<td>Know how to use</td>
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<td>(43)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>19 (100)</td>
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<td>State University (b)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>12 (67)</td>
<td>6 (33)</td>
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<td>6 (60)</td>
<td>10 (100)</td>
<td>3 (30)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>(80)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(60)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(30)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The figures in the parenthesis are percentage of students with visual impairments)
When students were asked about usage of assistive technology, only 29 per cent students (7 from Central University and 1 from State University (a)) had their own computers. Also 57 per cent students stated that they now to how to use computers. They could do minimum work such as working on M.S. Word, typing and reading with the help of softwares such as JAWS, Kurzweil 1000, whereas only 43 per cent students knew how to use the internet and also reported that they knew how to check mails, do surfing on the net, read online news and many more activities.

Further, when the usage of assistive technology was compared with type of the university, it was obvious that students from the Central University used more assistive technology, followed by State University (a) and State University (b) in regard to having personal computer, knowing how to use the computer, and using internet/browsing. Similarly, when the usage of assistive technology was looked at gender wise, it was observed that male students used more assistive technology than female students. Therefore, we can conclude that more number of students from Central University used assistive devices and most of them were male students. Although the advantages of assistive technology may have been even greater for them, they have very little access to it due to lack of sufficient funding to support these students at their universities, and also because of lack of proper resource person who can take care of their special needs at their university. It is interesting note that, as discussed in Table 4.7 of Chapter four, most of the students come from a low economic background. Most of them were not able to buy their assistive devices including computers, speech softwares, scanners, etc.

Further, the researcher sought to ascertain the type activities for which they are using internet/assistive technology at their universities.

(c) Internet activities

In this part of the study the researcher categorised usage of internet activities into two categories based on students responses: 1) academic activities, and 2) information seeking activities. Table 5.2 depicts the respondents’ usage of internet.
### Table 5.2 Internet Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Frequency (N=12)</th>
<th>% of students with visual impairment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic activities</strong></td>
<td>Reading / writing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email checking</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignments and research oriented</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Seeking activities</strong></td>
<td>Scholarship updates/financial information</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current affairs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening music</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that students with visual impairments have been using internet for diverse activities. In academic activities, 100 per cent of the respondents use internet for basic activities such as reading and writing, followed by 75 per cent for email checking and 42 per cent for research oriented and assignments respectively. On other hand, students have also been using the internet for listening to music (75 per cent), current affairs (42 per cent) and obtaining information about scholarships and other financial and job opportunities.

The data indicates that less number of students (12) with visual impairments have been using the internet. It can be seen that the usage of internet for diverse activities of students significantly influence the availability of learning resources and its usage.

**d) Learning Experiences of Students with Visual Impairments with and without Usage of Assistive Technology**

Learning experience of students with disabilities in higher education institutions mostly depend on the availability of learning resources, and its accessibility and utilisation. Assistive technology is one of the ways to help students with visual impairments compensate for their difficulties and support them in a variety of academic areas. The provision of assistive technology changes the educational experiences of these students in higher education (Anderson-Inman, 1999; Burgstahler, 2002; Goldberg and O’Neil, 2000). Assistive technology helps them in various aspects including reading, writing,
note-taking, assignments, or writing tests, scanning and saving material. In this current study, it was found that students from both the state universities stated that, since neither university nor students with visual impairments have assistive technology or devices, they cannot scan or read the material, so issuing books to them is hardly of any use. Some of the students, who did not use assistive devices, stated that their educational success depends on the mercy of their friends and other peer group members. These students had to approach their classmates during the exams. They felt that every time requesting or troubling their friends for help actually made them to feel bad but they did not have any other source or choice. It was apparent from the students’ comments that they had faced problems including limited opportunities to study other than course syllabus, and rejection from friends. They also stated that some of their friends stopped talking or greeting them for fear that they would be asked for help. The following narratives represent the group of the respondents:

“I have to depend on others for recording and have even failed in my schools. My parents are also not educated to support me. It is a big problem for me.”

“Since I am dependent on others for recording material, I don’t have any opportunity to read any other books other than those related to the course.”

“Other than exams time, I am not able to study at any time. In fact, that also discussions only. My friends discuss with me whatever they are reading at the time of exams.”

“While in school, I studied with the help of my parents and friends. Now too, I am taking help from many friends but at the university, everyone will be assigned different work. So it is not necessary that my friends may also do or read the same work what I do. It is not fair to ask them every time to read or record all material related to my assignment or do work for me other than their work.”

“If I read for long, my eyes begin to get watery. Sometimes I get a headache, so I have to stop for some time and put some drops of medicine in my eyes (as prescribed by doctors). Sometimes I cannot read and work. Especially I have to face many problems during the exams time. This is a really bad condition for me. This is mainly because of my visual impairment.”
"Not only education (reading and writing) but everything is a problem for me, if I need to go to some place, I need someone’s help as an escort. For that, I need to ask my friends who are ready to help me for this particular task. If I get someone the day I will finish my work but nobody is ready to come or is busy with his/her own work, I have to postpone my work for the next day or to a later day."

"Some of my friends even stopped talking to me for the fear that I will seek their help for reading or writing or recording or other academic or administrative works."

"I (student with visual impairment) have asked my friends help several times to go to the library but they used to suggest that there is no use of a book after getting it issued, any way as they read only for me. They have books issued whenever they would get time and then read for me. So there is no need of going to library at this moment."

"Till now, I have not been to the library because even if I have books issued who will read to me? If I had a computer along with scanner and other assistive devices I would have had books issued and scanned by this time. But I did not have any assistive devices."

The researcher also enquired about the learning experiences of students with visual impairments, and those who had assistive devices in the learning centre which was specifically arranged with all type of assistive technology including scanners, printers, and speech softwares, other than in the library. From the data gathered it was clear that 90 percent of participants who used assistive technology were from the Central University. The participants’ narratives show that provision of assistive devices and its usage affected the participation of these students at their universities. For these students who shared their experiences, assistive devices support facilitated better educational experiences, including: (a) increasing one’s opportunities; (b) to become independent; and (c) gain greater career and life flexibility, freedom and autonomy. They noted that the end result was their academic success. Some of the students stated that they had good learning experience at their universities since they were getting good and sufficient support. They believed that support from family members, friends and university management helped them to cope with their problems in higher education institutions. Having a good number
of friends or network also helped them to manage their studies more easily. Similarly, the availability of technology helped them to balance their studies and reach their targets. The following narratives represent those from respondents:

“I am always looking for some alternatives and that makes it easy for my studies. I have more friends. If one says that one is busy or avoids me I go and talk to other friends. Due to my good friend circle or network, I can face any problem.

“There is no problem due to good assistive technical support from my university.”

“Till my graduation, I had so many problems regarding my studies. But at present, due to technical development and its availability in my campus, I don’t have major problems regarding my studies.”

“Though a person with disability I don’t have any problems regarding my studies and academic activities. My strength is my computer.”

“Till I came here, I used the Braille machine and normal paper for my studies. But due to the amount of text and the things I have to write, this machine is not use of much or help. It consumes much time and energy. But after coming here, I started using a computer with speech softwares which has enabled me to reach my targets in studies. It is very easy to write, scan and organise material with computer technology.”

“It makes my life more independent.”

It was apparent from the students’ comments that many them with visual impairments wanted to be independent as far as possible. Students who were using assistive technology did not have sufficient time to spend with their friends or to involve themselves in other activities other than their studies because they have had to spend good amount of time collecting course material, scanning, editing or organising text. It was apparent that they had strong motivation not to depend on other for small things. Even though they wanted to be self sufficient in their work and had a strong determination, their impairments had eventually affected a few students in their studies. Due to their physical limitations these students faced problems such as pain in the eyes, headache, and watering in the eyes. As we shall see in the next section, some of these
students didn’t have a choice of choosing subjects of their interests, whereas some of them were more concerned about the completion of the course.

The researcher also got the learning experiences of students with visual impairments in Central University towards the condition of computer terminals provided to them in their university, specifically in the library and the computer centre. It was apparent that the condition of computer terminals or systems which they were provided was not good and most of the time the computers didn’t work. For some of them, their physical limitations and impairments were considered as barriers to access the learning resources which were available in their university. Similarly a few of the respondents also reported that library management was not taking responsibility for providing proper technical assistance, when systems were not in working state, to students with visual impairments. Most of the students were not taking cassettes from the library since the library was not issuing those of proper quality. The following narratives represent the views of group of the respondents.

“There is only one computer system in the library with all kinds of assistive devices including scanners, a printer, and speech softwares. Most of the time, it is attached with the notice board which says that it is under repair. Since most of the students (students with visual impairments) are not using the computer systems in library, and, at the same time, there is no demand from student's side, nobody is taking the responsibility to repair it.”

Since the learning experiences of students with visual impairments with and without usage of assistive devices were understood, it is worthwhile to know what are the facilitating and hindering factors affecting students with visual impairments with regard to usage of assistive technology.
(e) Facilitating and Hindering Factors that Affected Students with Visual Impairments with regard to Usage of Assistive Technology

During the course of each interview, respondents were asked to identify the factors which influenced the utilisation of assistive technology by students with visual impairments. The researcher found that the respondents gave much more elaborate descriptions of the challenging situations than the positive factors. The respondents were also much more inclined to identify hindrances, rather than the facilitating ones for usage of assistive technology. Some of the respondents who did not know how to use a computer and the internet for study indicated that they did not have access to computers and the internet in their school, college and also at their universities. It was also observed that some of the respondents didn’t get chance to use the computer due to their course specialisation. Some of the students noted:

“I don’t know how to use a computer and the internet. In my campus we did not have any technical or computer assistance. We do not even have single computer facility. If I had an access to computer, I would have learned basic computer skills.”

“Till now, I didn’t use the computer, although my roommate has one. I felt the shape of the computer by touching it with my hands. I am doing Ph.D. in the Telugu Department and since we do not get much material, we do not have any work with computers. Till now, my course has not been so demanding that I have to use a computer.”

Some of the respondents indicated that financial constraint was the main reason that hindered them from using a computer and assistive devices. They were also concerned with the design of the web which was not accessible to all. Some of the respondents noted:

“We do not have computer access in my campus. Although I want to buy a computer, but its cost is high. My parents can’t afford to buy one for me. They have given me money which is sufficient to buy only a walkman (recording device), and a tape-recorder for studies.”
The researcher also observed similar cases with those who had a computer. For example; “I have a computer, but that is not sufficient to work on for my studies. If I want to learn and use the internet I need some special softwares along with some trainer’s or friend’s help. For that, I need to buy speech softwares like JAWS, Kurzeweil 1000, Kurzweil 3000. Like this, we need other technical assistance or assistive devices to use the internet or to be independent but all these things are linked with finance. Since my family can’t afford that much money, I didn’t have any other alternative except adjusting with a walkman or a tape-recorder.”

Some of the respondents, who know how to use a computer and the internet, stated that they did a training course which helped them a lot in learning computer skills and using the internet. Some of the respondents stated that they have learnt from friends or peer group. They believed that studying in their particular university helped them to access all types of assistive devices. Some of them noted:

“I did a training course in computers. They taught us basic computer skills and helped us to be independent. Today, I am using different kinds of softwares just because I learnt basic operating systems in computer at the training centre.”

“I am good at using both computers and the internet. I have a good number of friends (especially students with visual impairments) on this campus. When I joined here, I didn’t even know how to operate a computer but today I use the internet for receiving, sending mails, and also using it for research purpose.”

“Last year onwards, I have learnt a little and I can do reading, scanning, editing text after scanning. I also do assignments with the help of a computer but still I need some more training on the computer, especially on how to use the internet. If I can learn that part, I will be the happiest and most independent from the academic point of view.”

(iii) Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudes play an important role in the success or failure of students with disabilities in higher education institutions. Lucas (1999) defined attitude as ‘is a favourable or
unfavorable evaluative reaction towards something or someone, exhibited in one’s beliefs, feelings, or intended behaviour’. The review of research studies shows that attitudes of teachers, peer groups, non-teaching staff, and administration, as well as student services coordinator, can all have a profound effect on the social and educational experiences of students with disabilities in higher education institutions (Nathanson, 1979). These findings also indicate that most of these students, like other minority groups, desire to achieve acceptance and integration in society. Here, the researcher attempted to understand the perceptions’ of students with disabilities about other people’s attitudes towards them and their experiences of interacting with them. The narratives from the student’s interviews show that these students also often faced attitudinal barriers from their peer groups, and family members.

Nearly half the respondents indicated that they had encountered different attitudes. While some believed that they face sympathetic attitudes towards them in their day-to-day life wherever they go, others especially, students with both legs affected and totally visually impaired students have encountered attitudinal issues. Respondents encountered this problem not only with their friends or peer group but also with their family members, neighbours’, and even with the non-teaching staff in their universities. They believed that their family members had low expectations and they used to be over protected. They also expressed their concerns about those who are helping them in their studies and day-to-day activities. They further elaborated that even though the intention of students, teachers were to help them, but their attitudes made them feel guilty. Respondents were also concerned with the usage of terminology, unnecessary questions on their way of living and day-to-day activities. The following quotes represent their experiences:

“Actually, after completion of degree, I wanted to do masters but for that I had to go out of my district and would have to stay in a hostel. But that was not acceptable for my parents. They said that you cannot go out and do your further studies. Due to their over-protection and low expectations on me, I wasted one year of my precious time. Finally, I convinced them and joined this campus.”
“They used to ask me questions such as how would I be able to manage all my works including basic things without any one’s help. It has always been a big problem to me. Even though I know that they don’t have any wrong intention other than to know how I would be able to manage, but for me giving answer to every one’s concerns actually makes me feel guilty”.

“People used to say that this is because of the deeds of my last birth; in fact I become upset with their words.”

“I am wearing shoes as they used to look at my legs and my way of walking.”

“People used to crack jokes on my eye sight. Even though I know that they were joking, it still hurts.”

“People think that I am here just because of the reservation policy and getting help from teachers.”

“People were very sympathetic towards me because I used to crawl”

“I used to feel very bad because due to my visual impairment, directly or indirectly, I used to bump into so many things on the way to reach my place. I don’t know what other people thought after seeing me.”

Some of the respondents stated that they didn’t think of all these things. A few of them also stated that the negative attitudes of other people towards them at the universities were comparatively less than in school life. They noted:

“In the college life, I didn’t face any problem with my friends. They treated me just like their other friends.”

“I didn’t find any difference with my friends because they are very friendly.”

“Till the school level, the attitude of others was different because the environment was also different. So I had many problems with my friends during the school days.”

From the above narratives, it is obvious that students with disabilities encountered various types of attitudinal barriers, from parents and peer group, including low expectations from parents, usage of terminology, sympathy and unnecessary questions regarding their day-to-day activities, at their universities. It is also found that these
students had less attitudinal barriers in higher education institutions as compared with what they had faced at the school level. Interestingly, none of the students expressed any negative attitudes of teachers towards them. This is perhaps due to the fact that in higher education institutions, the teachers have less interaction and responsibility of taking care of the needs of these students, as compared with teachers in schools.