LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1. Dramatic activity (play-acting, acting a role etc.) provides an opportunity for non-disabled children from different backgrounds to interact with disabled children. All participants can benefit from the play-acting sessions that expand their horizons of understanding and communication.

Plate 2. Play-Acting helps develop physical, cognitive, emotional and social development between non-disabled and disabled children. Here, theatrical use of a mask catches the fancy of all participants in one of the play-acting sessions.

Plate 3. Play activity is structured to teach problem solving, planning and evaluation skills to the children. Here, the trainer engages in play-acting with a non-disabled child while the disabled child watches and learns.

Plate 4. Puppets are very effective in absorbing childish aggression during the play-acting sessions. The disabled children reach out to interact with puppets more readily and can deal better with them in situations and scenes enacted in a story session. Here, a disabled child is seen fully engaged in the company of a puppet during a play-acting session.

Plate 5. The opportunities for learning while enjoying play-acting through puppets, masks and group activity are unlimited. Play-acting can help children begin to learn how to take part in performances in which the teacher sometimes acts as a narrator telling the story, while sometimes pausing for actions and dialogue to be performed by the disabled child and his puppets. Puppets, masks, theatre-props and innovative space-arrangements (at home or at school) can make a big difference in attracting the joint participation of disabled and non-disabled children, and building better understanding and communication required for a harmonious society.

Plate 6. Children with disabilities often have fewer opportunities to interact with their peers and are often less accepted by them. Here, in a control-group situation, two disabled children are seen left-out of the games that non-disabled children are playing.
INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, 650 million people in the world are disabled. 80% of the disabled people live in developing countries. One in every ten children around the world copes with a disability, encounters the social, cultural, and economical imbalances.

The negative effect of disability, especially in traditional societies, has affected the lives of people immensely. The abilities of the disabled people are not being appreciated by the society which is resulting in their isolation and discard.

Lack of understanding about the issue of disability and about the requirements of the disabled persons causes us sometimes to act sympathetically and at other times unsympathetically towards them. As a result these disabled people cannot work in their villages or their cities. They cannot communicate with other members of the society freely without any complex. Similar ways and manners of behaviour could be seen, in broader sense, among children also. Children can be unsympathetic or sympathetic towards the child who is different from them. The unsympathetic side could include annoying, making fun, mimicking or even committing physical harm. The sympathetic behaviour includes leaving the disabled child alone, and keep him out from their games or activity. Rejecting or ignoring the child is also a part of this merciless behaviour. The main reason for the unsympathetic behaviour of the children is the fear of what they don’t understand. Children see the problem of the disabled child as some kind of abnormality and a vague situation. For the same reason they might not be able to communicate with them in a proper manner. If a normal child could understand the disabled child’s situation properly, both of them can become friends operating and communicating on equal grounds.

Preschool-age children are aware of similarities and differences between themselves and other children who are physically different (Diamond, 1994; Sigelman, Miller, & Whitworth, 1986). Young children typically have reported lower preferences for interacting with adults and other children with visible physical disabilities (Cohen, Nabors, & Pierce, 1994; Jones & Sisk, 1970; Sigelman et al., 1986).
recognition through perception, cerebration and ratiocination about human and human-relationships and by agreement can accept the persons that are different from him and respect them by establishing social relationship. Unfortunately, because of inadequate teaching aids in kindergarten and also because of separation of normal and disabled children in kindergarten, it becomes a cause for the normal children to reject the disabled. From the point of view of the normal children, disabled child is a strange creature that should be made fun of. Normal children have a tendency to reject or eliminate the disabled child from their group while playing activity and may show some violent behaviour towards him. Educating and making aware normal children through games, plays, story-telling sessions and discussions about the needs and characteristics of the disabled child can inculcate in them the basic social values of cooperation, mutual understanding and recognition of the other person’s individuality.

This recognition and respect for each other’s individuality, learnt at pre-school level, will go a long way in building a better social system that provides equal opportunities to normal as well as the disabled children.

Hence, we can expect that, one day, one of the disabled will be able to become a top level managers and will participate in all matters, big and small, for the good of the society, treating normal and the disabled as equal partners on the path of life.

The need of bringing the large population of the disabled persons into the mainstream of the societal flow, is being strongly felt all over the world and this study stems out of the researcher’s compassionate concern to see that all the citizens of the planet, enjoy equal rights and opportunities, irrespective of their bodily attributes. Therefore, it is important to promote positive attitudes towards these children and to be able to measure the effects of interventions designed to encourage attitude change.

One of the best methods of helping the normal child to appreciate the disability of the other child and learning new ways to be useful to each other is through child to child interaction. Involving disabled children in dramatic activities along with normal children will help in developing an intimate relationship which will broaden their base of mutual understanding. For example, the charm and variety of theater activity always encourages the participants to explore and open up physically as well as