STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND HYPOTHESES
It may be said that bringing up of children is an art which can be learnt by observing and by receiving the training within the family environment. Few couples are prepared for the realities of parenthood, whereas few do not accept it. So, the parent role is considered as a difficult and complicated one because, the parents take a significant role in the proper personality development of children. Poor quality of parental care and stimulation and an unhealthy environment makes the intellectually normal children to lose their potentialities. The same phenomena holds good even for the children with any type of physical handicap.

The parents as soon as they learn about their child's handicapped condition definitely come across the following stages as described by Ross (1972) 1. shock, 2. denial, 3. anger, 4. bargaining, 5. depression, 6. acceptance or rejection. Many parents might call this time a "mourning period", because the feeling of sadness is very acute. Unfortunately these pains cannot be lessened. This is a period of many ups and downs. Many parents talk about their feelings of anger, sadness during this period. And at times, the parent will show his/her negative emotions on the spouse for no reason. In such situations a question as to 'what can we do to make ourselves feel better?' naturally will arise. However, erratic, however unpredictable these feelings are, the parents try to understand that feelings change from one minute to the next.

For a few parents, the presence of the handicapped child may affect their marital life also. The strain of new and uncertain
responsibilities may take time and energy of the parents, thus making them to be away from the marital relationship. Generally speaking, for all parents rearing a handicapped child may change their lives forever. As a result the parents doubt their abilities and question the rightness of their actions. At times, the feeling of responsibility in rearing, managing the handicapped child can be totally overwhelming, thus making the parent to question himself as 'Am I being a good parent?'. This anxiety may be even greater if the impairment is of a severe one.

**Impact of a handicapped child on the family**

Many research findings clearly indicate that the handicapped child affects the family, especially the parents and their attitudes toward their child may vary widely, depending on the child's handicapping condition. This is a general notion of the universe and is accepted by all. A critical factor in the formation of attitudes in the parents is due to the reactions exhibited by them during the initial stage. However, there has been some systematic efforts to understand the individual differences in the attitudes of the parents. Cross cultural studies on the nature of perceiving the reactions are considered as a great value in the area of special education and parent education programmes.

India is very noted for its strong culture, spiritual, religious traditional beliefs and values which are carried through for centuries. Above all, the affectionate links and bonds between the members of the family may loosen to some extent but not completely
delinked. Though the parents of the handicapped children encounter many problems, their behaviour with such children generally should not be cruel. Many negative reactions are traced. But, due to this painful reaction and due to other important factors like socio-economic status, number of children and the type of family, the parents' attitudes might be varied. Few evidences indicate that the parents blame themselves and view the birth of a handicapped child as their fate. There are still others who believe that having a handicapped child is a curse.

From all these stated facts, it is understood that the rearing practices of the handicapped children need to follow a similar pattern to that of rearing the normal children. Denying, showing negative attitudes and overprotecting the children would deepen in the child's feeling of inadequacy, incapacity and helplessness, finally forcing him to live a parasitic life. Persuading and training the child to perform the activities according to their capacities will make the child to live an independent life. So, the parents need to be very particular in not overdoing things for their child. If the child is motivated and stimulated to lead an independent life, ultimately he would not show inferior complex and is sure to perceive himself in a positive manner.

To be recognised as a worthwhile individual is one of the most universal desires of mankind. Whatever be the age, station or condition, an individual seeks approval from others. Because society has placed a premium on physical beauty, strength and ability, it is easy for a handicapped child to devaluate himself because he does not have
these qualities. But the child needs help in realizing that while he lacks these qualities he has others which also are of value. The handicapped child may need more than usual assurance, in word or deed, that the child is loved for himself as a unique individual.

The child often needs help and guidance in integrating a physical disability viz visual impairment, hearing impairment and orthopaedic conditions, into a healthy self-perception. This could be rendered only by the parents. So, it could be said that the attitudes framed and expressed by the parents not only give us an idea as to whether the child is loved, protected and cared for, but also it helps the child to build up an independent life.

Furthermore, the attitudes, whether negative or positive or ambivalent may arise as a result of practical and psychological problems in the upbringing and care of their children. This may lead them to neglect the child's emotional needs. So, there is a need to help parents to accept their children. They also need to be encouraged with the knowledge that through rehabilitation services, their handicapped children can be helped to attain economic independence and social acceptance.

Existing literature in the Indian context is not exhaustive enough to give a comprehensive account of the problems of the parents of all the three types of physically handicapped children (Visually Handicapped, Hearing Handicapped and Orthopaedically Handicapped) and the resulting parental attitudes in one globular pattern.
With this justification the present investigation was planned to examine the attitudes of the parents toward their physically handicapped children. Also, as already mentioned, the demographic variables such as sex, age of the child and socio-economic status etc., in a way influence the attitudes. So the attitudes about the children in relation to these variables are also to be examined.

The attitudes of the parents toward the handicapped children in our country has often been non-chalant or mixed with pity and compassion but not negative attitudes always.

In this context, the present study aimed to bring out the overall attitudes and particularly to examine in depth whether fathers and mothers of three various types of handicapped children differ in exhibiting their attitudes. Apart from this the knowledge opinions and ideas of the parents pertaining to the parent child relationship, awareness of the handicap, management of the child with a particular impairment are also viewed as a very valuable information. Such information would help the educators, and other professionals to conduct programmes with the parents. Hence, this type of attitudinal assessment is currently one of the most prolific research enterprises in the area of special education.

After reading many relevant materials, the behaviour of the parents at lose could be stated in a nut shell. When good things happen the parents feel good about themselves. At the same time, when bad
things happen - having a handicapped child - they may tend to feel badly about themselves, because any parent may feel that the child is an extension of himself. During such time, it is helpful for the parents to find people with whom they can talk, with friends, hospital social workers, counsellors and other parents of handicapped children and national agencies can all provide support and assistance. Such studies will not only help the parents to come out of their hidden place but also the handicapped children to be accepted by their parents.

Research Questions

A study comparing the attitudinal pattern of the parents, both fathers and mothers of the visually handicapped, hearing handicapped and orthopaedically handicapped is to be studied.

The specific questions posed by the investigator are:

* Is the parental attitude expressed by the fathers are different from that of the mothers?
* Do the parents show a healthy attitude?
* What are the factors which influence the attitudes of the parents?
* Are the parents aware of the handicap and how to manage the children?
* What are the daily activities performed independently by the handicapped children, irrespective of the degree of impairment?
* Do the handicapped children perceive themselves in a positive manner?
* How do the children view about their parents perceiving about them (the children)?