PREFACE

In the field of academics, particularly after the Second World War, a change has been witnessed. This was a change from compartmentalisation of the disciplines to interdisciplinary approach. This approach was more in practice in the international universities. Jawaharlal Nehru University, so far as India is concerned, is one of the pioneering academic institutions which have taken this approach but, in the issues like specially challenged, despite its maximum sensitisation, there uses to be a reluctance to entertain such issues for academics. I am perhaps amongst the first student who has been allowed to make this start for which I have no words to express my gratitude. This was a challenge not only for me but also for the Central Library of the University which is having variety of books but, as such topics were not in practice, there was a scarcity of books. So was the case with other universities in Delhi. However, with the help of the officials of the library, I could manage to borrow books from other libraries and could manage to do some justice with my topic. Moreover, the issues pertaining to the specially challenged used to be covered by the Department of Social Work of any university. But this endeavour made it possible to take this issue out of the fold of social work and make it an inseparable part of the general study. It is my strong feeling that if it is felt that there is a need of inclusion, it should be made in its real spirit and it was this feeling which made me to take up such an uphill task.

Working on specially challenged in general and visually challenged in particular had been one of my cherished desires if I got a chance. This became more suitable to me as I had been in the voluntary work since 1975 and, being one of the activists, I had seen all changes from agency work to self-help and the merger of these two waves in the name of the World Blind Union so far as the sphere of visually challenged is concerned. As I had the first hand experience with the bureaucrats and various leaders
of India, it was my sincere desire to know how far there is a difference between putting something in documentation and executing it. I did not wish to rely on just documents and it is my strong feeling that without knowing the opinion of the beneficiaries, there is no point to make such a research.

Policy-makers are also one of the actors whose attitude, understanding and preconceived notions play a vital role. One of such notion is a sympathy which has both negative and positive effects. These effects can be seen in the form of window dressing. This can provide a job without realising one's capacity and dignity. This was also one of the inquisitiveness's.

A question which uses to haunt my mind that if other job doing persons may become a human resource for any nation, why the same is not applied in the case of the physically challenged in general and the visually impaired in particular. Astonishingly, no rational step is being taken in this direction. Over this issue, it will be sufficient to state that even if one believes the data of the census of any country, why its policy-makers are not showing their concern to this chunk of society.

Why have I chosen visually impaired only for the research within the larger spectrum of specially challenged. It is felt that there is a necessity of an in-depth analysis of various categories of the specially challenged and one should not skip from realising its inherent contradictions and contrasts just under the pretext that it is such a diverse section as does not need such analysis. It may hamper the real zeal of social work.

There is a too much hue and cry over inclusion. It is my strong feeling that without providing minimum objective condition, this inclusion is a farce and it further marginalised the already marginalised section of the society.

Voluntary organisations, if active, may bring a lot of changes. So is the case with majority of the countries. In this regard, one may deem it fit to mention the role of the
organisations relating to the physically challenged in the United States of America under their disability rights movement. No doubt, it gives rise to the elites amongst the urban areas and, instead of bridging the gap, it widens it.

For the purpose of the sample of research, two countries have been chosen, namely, South Africa and India. These are two representative countries of two important continents, i.e., Africa and Asia. Majority of the countries of two continents fall in the category of developing nations. It is not necessary to repeat the points which become the viable reasons for the comparison as it has been described vividly in the section dealing with the introduction. However, it is sufficient to mention that both the countries are multi-lingual, multi-cultural and democratic. It is my strong feeling that analysing the perspectives of the policies for the visually impaired, may provide a probable policy for both Africa and Asia and also deals the aspect like proper perspective of the policy-maker, beneficiary and the voluntary organisations.