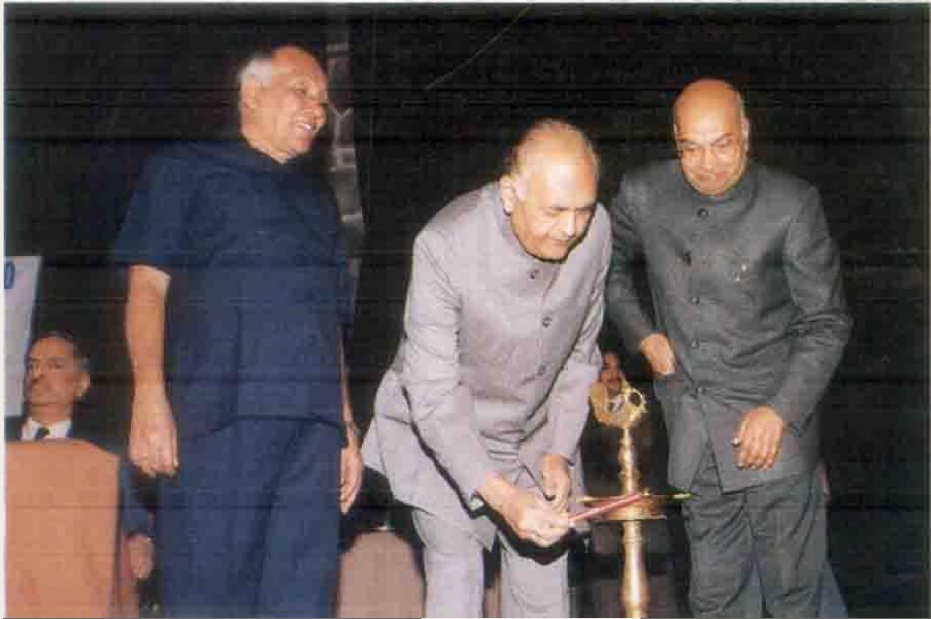


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE CONFERENCE
ON WORK FOR THE BLIND

February 23 - 24, 2000
India International Centre, New Delhi.

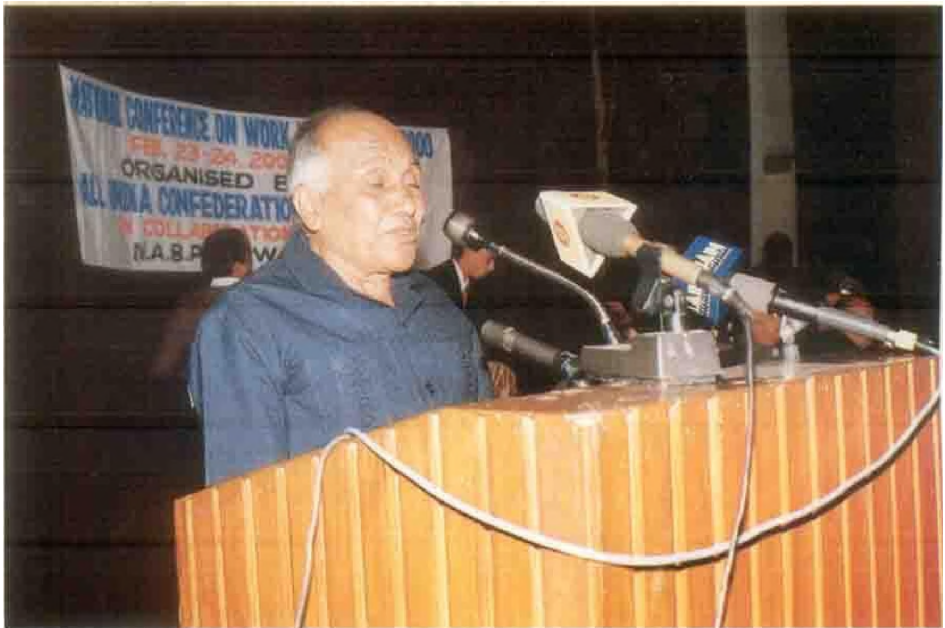


Mr. LC. Pant Demi°• Chairman, PlanningCUMMISSIVIS, India anti Chairmanof Prime Atinixter Task Force on infrastructure, inaugurating theConference.



Organised by
All India Confederation of the Blind
Braille Bhawan, Institutional Area,
Sector-V, Rohirti, Delhi-110085 (INDIA)
Phone 7054082 Fax : 7050915, 2941093 E-mail : aith&maileity.com

in collaboration with :
Norwegian Association of the Blind & Partially Sighted
Norway



Mr. A. Thiagrajan. President of the Confederation, welcoming the delegates,



Participating delegates.



I. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 Ever since its inception. All India Confederation of the Blind has been striving to continually address issues of urgent concern for blind and visually impaired children and adults — both male and female. It has been the Confederation's consistent policy and endeavour not only to enable blind and low vision persons in the country to recognize and develop their innate potential, but also focus Government and societal attention on providing systematic priorities to the needs of the blind population and initiate prompt action towards their fulfillment.
- 1.2 It is in this background that the Confederation has, during the last about two decades, been running need-based services for the blind and visually impaired population in both urban and rural settings and organizing various seminars, workshops and conferences to facilitate systematic sharing of views and experiences leading to the formulation of workable and meaningful plans of action. The endeavour has all along been to involve representatives of the user community, —the blind themselves — leading national and international organisations and prominent professionals in a constructive dialogue, so that the real and felt needs of the blind could be suitably identified and strategies evolved for meeting such needs.
- 1.3 As the Confederation completed 20 years of its existence, it was considered both [vie vent and timely to take stock of what has been done for the blind and visual ly impaired during the past so many years dating back to the onset of the country' s independence and what needs to be done on a priority and urgent basis. The advent of the new century — the new millennium, in fact provided further fillip to undertaking such a review and chalk out future course of action, in the background of the new challenges and opportunities being thrown up with the ushering in of the 21st century. It was this realization which paved the way for organizing a broad-based national conference on work for the blind in India.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- 2.1 The Conference was, thus, convened on February 23-24, 2000 at the India International Centre, 40 Maxmueller Marg. New Delhi. It had as its theme "**Work for the blind in India in retrospect and prospect — a critical look**".
- 2.2 The Conference was designed to facilitate a frank and fruitful exchange of views on common and pressing problems of the blind and the visually impaired, among all concerned—blind persons themselves, leading government officials, representatives of prominent National and State organisations of and for the blind and reputed experts in the field. Work done for the blind and the visually handicapped during the past about 50 years or so and the roles played by the Confederation during the last 20 years of its existence, formed the background for such discussions. Providing due recognition to the work-potential of blind persons as also appreciating invaluable contribution made by different international non-government organisations of and for the blind, for helping blind people through this Confederation, also constituted the basic rationale for calling this National Conference.
- 2.3 In the light of the above general considerations, the Confederation had the following major objectives in calling the Conference:
 - a) **To commemorate** the completion of 20 years of work with the blind by the Confederation.
 - b) To take note and appreciate the new challenges and exciting opportunities being thrown up for the blind and visually impaired with the advent of the new millennium and its corresponding technological and socio-economic innovations and developments;

- c) To formulate on the basis of a review of the past and possibilities for all-round development in the future, a meaningful and practical action plan to facilitate the desired consolidation and expansion of educational, training and rehabilitation services for the blind and the visually impaired and to ensure their much greater out-reach.
- d) To recognize at a national level the outstanding contributions made by some successful blind persons, both men and women, who have made a name for themselves in the organised and the unorganised sectors and could, thus, serve as examples for others and;
- e) To appreciate and commend the vital roles played by several international organisations of and for the blind by extending general support for blind and low vision people in India, through this Confederation.

3. PARTICIPANTS:

3.1 The Conference brought together a cross-section of persons representing different sectors and interests relating to work for the visually handicapped. It also had a galaxy of representatives from various international organisations.

3.2 About 230 delegates representing nearly 50 Organisations from 17 States of the country participated in the Conference. A special feature of participation at this Conference was that about 100 of its delegates were blind women, bearing testimony to the Confederation's efforts to promote gender-equality.

3.3 Besides, a number of specialists and experts from different sectors also participated in the Conference. Concerned officials from the **Union Ministries of Social Justice and Empowerment, Labour and Employment and Human Resource Development** also attended the deliberations of the Conference and made useful contributions.

3.4 In addition, senior representatives from international organisations such as **Amway India Enterprises, Christoffel Blindenmission, Help the Aged International** etc. also enriched the proceedings of the Conference through their presence and stimulating interventions. **ME Arne J. Husveg, International Director**; Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted was the Key-note speaker at the Conference. Ms. Elisabeth Oksum, Programme Director Asia, NABP also participated in the Conference.

4. OPENING SESSION:

4.1 INAUGURATION:

4.1.1 The Conference was inaugurated by **Mr K.C. Pant**, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, India and Chairman of Prime Minister's Task Force on Infrastructure. In his inaugural address, **ML Pant made an overview of services for the blind and the disabled in India during post-independence period and the role of the Government of India towards supporting and strengthening these services. He also observed that there had been a sizable increase in the financial allocations made by the Government for the disability sector during the ninth Five-Year Plan period. He expressed the hope that benefits of Government and voluntary programmes would reach out to an increasing number of the hitherto unattended segments of the disabled population in the country, especially, in rural areas. He appreciated, in this context the efforts made by the All India Confederation of the Blind towards empowering blind people at their own door-steps in various villages. The text of Mr Pant's address is reproduced at the end of this volume.**

4.1.2 Another significant feature of the inaugural session was the presentation by the Chief Guest, **Mr. Pant**, of awards and commendations to outstanding blind persons, the best affiliate of the Confederation and most supportive international organisations.



Mr K.C. Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission. India and Chairman of Prime Minister's Usk Foice on Infrastructure. addressing the delegates of the Conference.

4.1.3 Thus, four blind persons who have made outstanding contributions and achieved considerable success in their respective field of work in the organised and unorganised sectors, were presented "AICB Millennium Awards" consisting of an 18 carat gold medal and a citation each. These Awardees consisted of a University Professor, a Senior Executive of a Nationalised bank, a Play back Singer and a self employed Director of a coaching academy providing tutorial lessons to sighted persons appearing for Civil Services examinations. Besides, two of the Confederation's affiliates were selected as the most creative organisations in the AICB family. In addition four prominent International Agencies/organisations were especially honoured with a memento and a citation each, as a token of gratitude for the invaluable support extended by them to the cause of the blind and the visually impaired in India through this Confederation. Text of the citations presented to each one of these outstanding blind individuals and affiliates as well as most helpful NGOs, is presented at the end of this volume.

4.2 KEYNOTE SESSION:

4.2.1 **Ms Arne J. Husveg**, International Director, Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted delivered the Keynote address in the session immediately following the inauguration. **Mrs. Gauri Chatterjee**, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the nodal Government. Ministry in the disability sector presided.



Mr Arne J. Husveg, International Director NABR representing the Keynote Address.

4.2.2 In her introductory remarks, Mrs. Chatterjee while welcoming the Keynote speaker, observed that two new programmes were being launched by the Ministry for the development of disabled persons. These are: (1) adoption of 100 districts for ensuring all-round well-being of the entire disabled population in the concerned areas and (2) establishment of six new regional centres of the National Institutes run by the Ministry, with at least one in the North-Eastern region.

4.2.3 In his Address Mr Husveg stressed the vital need of providing quality services for the blind people,

especially in the rural areas and for strengthening self-help movements of the blind which could lead to the formation of "an army" of devoted workers and the creation of the required opportunities for the blind. Full text of Mr. Husveg's keynote address is re-produced elsewhere in this volume.

5. BUSINESS SESSIONS:

5.1 INTRODUCTORY:

- 5.1.1 The Conference examined in depth the theme set for its deliberations and facets related thereto, in three separate business sessions, commencing after the Keynote address and continuing till the next day, The distinguishing feature of each of these sessions was that these were, basically, discussion-oriented, with a panel of professionals examining related issues at first and then providing participants opportunities for their comments/suggestions. Long-winded/pedantic paper-presentation was deliberately avoided in order to facilitate more democratic and extensive participation by delegates,
- 5.1.2 Some important discussion-points/issues were identified in advance to facilitate smooth consideration of each aspect for every session. These points were circulated well in advance among the panelists and the delegates, so that they could have a little time to think over them and come prepared for discussion.
- 5.1.3 The first of these sessions was devoted to education and was divided, for ease of consideration and discussion, into three parts, spreading over about nearly 3 and a quarter hours on the first day.
- 5.1.4 The second business session dealt the vocational training and employment, especially, self-employment for the blind and was held in the pre-lunch period on the second day, lasting for about three hours. The third business session took place for about an hour and forty five minutes after lunch and was devoted exclusively to the Disability Act and the Proposed Amendments. This was followed by the concluding session, which consisted of the presentation of Conference-outcomes and reports on each of the above business sessions, including parts thereof. Detailed reports on these sessions are presented in the subsequent sections/sub-sections.

5.2 BUSINESS SESSION-I PART-I

- 5.2.1 This session was entitled **"Education for all visually handicapped children"** and its first part dealt with **"Various approaches—Residential Schools, Integrated Education, Inclusive Education and Non-formal Education."** This part of the session was chaired by Dr (Mrs.) Kusum Sharma, Professor, Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi and consisted of six other prominent experts as panelists.



Dr (Mrs.) Kusum Sharma , Professor N.C.E.R.T, addressing the first business session of the Conference.

5.2.2 The issues examined by the panelists and the delegates for this part of the business session were as follows:

- a) Present coverage and the magnitude of the task ahead;
- b) Contributions and future roles of residential schools, integrated education, non-formal education and, looking ahead: inclusive education;
- c) Special educational measures for the girl-child;
- d) Inclusion of education of the blind in ongoing schemes of education for non-handicapped children;
- e) Child-centered approach;
- f) Roles of Government, N.G.O.'s and self help organisations for extending coverage;
- g) Motivating parents and the community about the importance of the education of blind children including the girl-child;
- h) Strengthening existing educational institutions and programmes;
- i) Strengthening integrated education programmes, in particular.

5.2.3 The following members of the panel, besides the Chairperson, participated:

- a) Mr. A.K. Mittal, Principal, J.P.M. Senior Secondary School for the Blind, New Delhi.
- b) Dr. G. Jayaraman, President, Welfare Foundation of the Blind, Chennai.
- c) Miss Shubhangi Mishrikotekar, General Secretary, AICB National Forum of Blind Women, New Delhi.
- d) Dr. R.B.L. Soni, Sr. Lecturer, Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal.
- e) Mr. J.P. Singh, Secretary, Rehabilitation Council of India, New Delhi.
- f) Mr. George Kutty Kareparampil, General Secretary, Kerala Federation of the Blind., Kerala.
Dr.(Mrs.) S. Sanyal, Lecturer, Training Centre for the Teachers of the Visually Handicapped, New Delhi was the rapporteur for the Session.

5.2.4 The following is the gist of observations/suggestions, which emerged through interventions from the panelists and the floor:-

- a) It was imperative in the new century to substantially enhance the coverage of blind children from the present 5-6% to at least 20-25% during the next five years. For this purpose, the Dual Teacher plan should be promoted in rural areas, with suitable financial incentives to the general teacher in the village school.
- b) Residential schools and integrated education programmes must play complementary roles with the former preparing the blind/visually impaired child for elementary education and equipping him with the required readiness skills for placement in a regular school.
- c) Education whether in the residential system or the integrated setting, must enable the blind/visually impaired child to acquire skills as much as possible and become self-confident and self-dependent.
- d) In some cases, the possibility of integration within disability-groups should also be examined.
- e) The child's educational placement needs to be decided on the basis of his/her individual needs, abilities, visual condition, family environment, socio-economic conditions etc.
- f) Education of the visually handicapped girl-child should be made mandatory, with necessary changes, if required, in the Disability Act.
- g) Every school in the mainstream sector should be encouraged and helped to have at least one

general teacher with knowledge and insights about the educational requirements of children with special needs, including the blind and the visually impaired.

- h) Parents of blind children should be provided suitable orientation and the integrated/inclusive schools should be equipped with basic technologies to meet the needs of blind and low vision children.
- i) Teacher-preparation endeavours should be suitably enriched and augmented.
- j) Braille skills should be accorded due emphasis.
- k) The needs of blind children **with** additional handicaps should also receive due attention in our educational and teacher-training programmes.
- l) Non-formal programmes of education like the Open School system, should be given all possible support and encouragement.
- m) There should be close collaboration and cooperation between the Government and the NGOs with adequate financial inputs being made available by the form **et**
Education of blind children should be with the Department of Education and not Welfare, as at present.
- o) Reading material for teacher training programmes should be made available in Regional languages also, where it is, currently, not available at all.
- p) Adequate mobilisation of the media, especially the electronic media, is necessary to spread the message of education for blind and visually impaired children throughout remote towns and villages.
- q) Volunteers should be helped and supported to take more active part in supporting and facilitating education for blind and low vision children, as also increasing their enrollment.
- r) Some reliable screening system like a common examination, should be devised to determine whether the child is prepared enough to enter regular schools,
- s) AICB should prepare suitable and accessible publicity material to motivate parents to send their blind children to school.
- t) A movement/scheme like the Literacy mission should be devised for supporting and strengthening education of the blind in rural areas, in particular

5.3 BUSINESS SESSION—I,

5.3.1 The Conference met after lunch to consider "Education for all Visually Handicapped Children — Education of Blind/Visually Impaired Children with Special Needs."

The session was chaired by Mrs. **Anuradha** Mohit, Deputy Chief Commissioner (Disabilities) and had the following members on the panel:

- a) **Mr. Akhil** Paul, Director, Sense International (India), Ahmedabad.
- b) **DE M.V.** Shirti honka Director M.P. Drishtiheen Kalyan Sangh,



*Mrs. Anuradha Mohit, Deputy Chief Commissioner (Disabilities),
ad d sewing the session_*

Indore, M. P.

- c) Mr. Dipendra Manocha, Manager (Computer Unit), National Association for the Blind, New Delhi.
 - d) DE (Mrs.) S. Sanyal, Lecturer, Training Centre for the Teachers of the visually handicapped, New Delhi.
 - e) Dr (Mrs.) Sushma Sharma, Reader, Special Education, Kurukshetra University, Haryana.
- ME R.S. Chauhan, Lecturer, Special Education, National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehra Dun, acted as the rapporteur for the session.

5.3.2 The following issues were discussed:-

- a) Defining such children in the Indian context and related demographic information;
- b) Status of present programmes and facilities;
- c) Functional assessment of low vision;
- d) Low vision devices—already available and those being made available under a Government scheme (aspherical lenses);
- e) Deaf-blind children—status and prospects;
Blind children with intellectual or sensory disabilities —efforts initiated so far and what needs to be done urgently for their effective educational management;
- g) Organising suitable pre-vocational skill-training for children with multiple handicaps;
- h) Preparation and guidance for parents and other family members.

5.3.3. The following conclusions were reached:-

- a) The need for action-oriented work for meeting the goal of education for all, should be given high priority.
- b) All NGOs in the country should take up outreach programmes in villages, which should include educational inputs also and avoid all duplication.
- c) The use of the functional kit developed by WHO for the assessment of low vision should be given a place of importance in our educational programmes and teachers should be provided special training in its use.
- d) The team approach is essential for meeting the needs of children with sensory handicaps and information regarding available equipment and services for such children should be widely disseminated.
- e) Programmes for the identification and education of deaf-blind children need to be greatly increased and strengthened with suitable preparation of professionals in the field of communication with such children. Such programmes of education should be made integral parts of ongoing services and there should be greater networking among teachers and parents of these children.
- f) Proper and adequate early intervention and referral services were essential for striving towards education for all visually handicapped children.
- g) The use of proper attachments to computers was critical for encouraging education of deaf-blind children.
- h) Suitable bridge courses should be organised to orient special school and resource teachers into the educational and developmental needs of low vision and deaf-blind children as well as those with other additional handicaps.
- i) Suitable incentives should be provided to parents and blind children for education in regular/special schools.

5A BUSINESS SESSION-1 PART—III

- 5.4.1 The delegates reassembled after coffee to consider the final part of business session-1 entitled **"Education for all visually handicapped children—Comprehensive curriculum coverage."**

The Session was chaired by **Dr. S.R. Mittal**, Reader, Education, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi and he had the following panelists with him:-



*Dr S.R.Mittal, Reader Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi.
add lessing the session.*

- a) Mr. S.P. Murthy, J-Iony. Gen.Secy, Karnataka Welfare Association for the Blind, Bangalore.
 - b) Mrs. Swaran Abuja, Noted Educationist. Mumbai.
 - c) Dr. Sushma Veeramani, Research Associate, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai.
 - d) Mr. Roumesh Chandra, Lecturer, Central Institute of Education, Delhi University. Delhi.
 - e) Mr. George Abraham, President. World Blind Cricket Council.
- Ms. Pushpa R. Matani, NAB-CASBW, acted as the rapporteur.

- 5.4.2 The following' issues were discussed:-

- a) Review of educational programmes for the blind from the point of view of deficits in regard to curriculum-coverage.
- b) Compensatory teaching with a view to enabling the child to overcome the retarding effects of the handicap;
- c) Plus curriculum and how to organise such activities in different educational programmes for blind children;
- d) **Promoting** concept-development and enrichment:
- e) Mathematics. science and geography:
Diversifying the range of school-subjects/courses for blind children;
- g) Special curricular approaches and activities for the blind girl-child:
- h) Games, sports and other *activities*.

- 5.4.3 Interventions from the panel and the delegates led to the emergence of the Following conclusions:-

- a) All schools, whether residential or integrated, must provide training in orientation and mobility, yoga. meditation, communication skills, signature-writing and activities of daily living.
- b) Various forms of sensory training should also form an integral part of the curriculum. Due emphasis should also be laid on enabling blind children to have meaningful access to physical education, computer-operation, mathematics, science, basic human physiology etc.

Separate training packages may be developed For educated, less educated and uneducated newly blinded men and women.

- d) Blind persons may be allowed to answer their examination papers in braille or in audio form or on the typewriter: with the question-papers being made available to them in braille.
- e) The blind should be encouraged to assert their rights for getting banks to accept their signatures on cheques and for having new training courses opened to **them**.

5.5 BUSINESS SESSION-2, PART-I

5.5.1 The Conference met again on the second day at the same venue and commenced its deliberations at 9.30 a.m. with business Session-2, entitled "Vocational, training and employment for the blind in the changing economic scenario". The first part of the session lasted for about an hour and a half and examined, in particular, aspects relating to "Reorganising vocational training to meet new challenges".



Dr S.R. Shuichi, DireerorN.LVIL, addressing the session.

5.5.2 The session was chaired by

DE S.R. Shukla, Director, National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, **Dehradun**. Other members of the panel were:

- a) D r. E.M. Johnson, Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Training Centre for the Blind, Ludhiana.
- b) Mr. Suresh C. Ahuja, President, Action on Disability and Development India, Mumbai.
- c) Mr. **S.M.A. Jinnah, General Secretary**, Indian Association for the Blind, Madurai.
- d) Miss Manjula Gulati, Chairperson, **AICB** National Women's Forum, New Delhi.
- e) Ms. Ela **Mehta. Chairperson, NAB-CASBW, M**umbai.

Di: Ram Niwas, Lecturer; Department of **English, Kurukshetra** University. acted as the rapporteur.

5.5.3 The following issues were considered:

- a) Review of trends and features of vocational training programmes organised, so far;
- b) Identifying specific changes in economic activity and job-market environment necessitating modification in training programmes for the blind;
- c) Limited job-openings in the organised sector;
- d) Possible lessons in the background of the changed employment-situation;
- e) New and innovative job-Linked training activities;
- 0 Possible training avenues in the field of information technology:

- g) Entrepreneurship training;
 - h) Extensive training in skills of personnel management;
 - l) RR. skills and ability to mobilise existing community-resources.
- 5.5.4 The Conference came to the following conclusions on the basis of discussions during the session:
- a) The existing vocational training centres/programmes need to be suitably reorganised and equipped **to** meet the needs of the changing employment scenario and technological developments.
 - b) Training in electronics and computer-applications should be given due emphasis.
 - c) Suitably empowered committees of experts may be constituted in each state and important district headquarters, to oversee the functioning of existing vocational centres and advise on their further development and expansion. Similarly, existing advisory committees of the Government Vocational Rehabilitation Centres may also be suitably revamped and activated.
 - d) The instructors of the ongoing vocational training centres, may be provided appropriate refresher-training or even be re-trained in new areas, as per the changing requirements.
 - e) An increasing number of coaching centres may be established across the country to enable educated blind persons to receive intensive training for appearing at various Civil Services Examinations, Management Entrance tests and for other senior posts/ assignments.
 - o) The concerned Government departments/Ministries may organise, in consultation with leading NGOs of and for the blind, intensive publicity drives and campaigns to suitably publicize the work-potential of the blind and the visually impaired and educate the community, in general, and prospective employers, in particular regarding the real capabilities of trained visually handicapped persons.
 - g) The Ministries of Social **Justice** and Empowerment and Labour and Employment, along with leading organisations of and for the blind, may frame an extensive National Policy on training and employment for the blind and the Visually impaired, incorporating all facets of work-possibilities for different groups of visually handicapped persons—educated, semi-educated and uneducated.
 - h) The existing Training Centre for the Adult Blind at **NIVH, Dehra Dun** needs to be thoroughly restructured and updated to serve as a model for others and develop new modules of need-based vocational training.
 - i) A suitable Degree Course in Vocational Education in visual disability may be designed for the benefit of prospective trainees as well as trainers, preferably, at the Central Institute of Vocational Education, Bhopal.
 - j) An ongoing review of job-market may be undertaken by leading NGOs of and for the blind with assistance from the Technology Project in the Mission Mode of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, to identify new and evolving work-opportunities for the blind and the visually impaired in the organised and the unorganised sectors of the economy. Training for self-employment ventures may be accorded high priority.

5.6 BUSINESS SESSION – 2, PART – II

5.6.1 This session commenced at 11.30 a.m. following the coffee-break and was devoted to examining **the topic "Vocational Training and Employment for the Blind in the changing economic scenario — Self Employment in Rural and Urban Areas".**

5.6.2 The session was chaired by Dr Bhushan Punani, Executive Director; Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad and he had the following panelists with him:

- a) Mr. P.G. Michael. CBM Consultant for Asia, Tiruchirappalli.
- b) Mr. A.K. Dey, Sr. Manager, National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation, Faridabad.
- c) MzM.K.Rastogi, Superintendent, Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Physically Handicapped, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, New Delhi.
- d) Miss P. Vanaja, Gen.Secretary, Visually Impaired Women's Association, Chennai.
- e) Dc Naval Kishore Sharma, Gen.Secretary, Bihar Netraheen Parishad, Patna.
- f) Mr. C.V. Narayanan, Former Executive Secretary, Blind Relief Association, New Delhi.



Dr Bhushan Punani, Executive Director B.R.A.. addressing the session.

DE Ram Milan Vyas, Assistant Director;

Government. of India, New Delhi was the rapporteur

at the session.

5.6.3. The under-mentioned issues were discussed during the session:

- a) Existing efforts of Government agencies and NGOs for promoting self-employment—status and lessons, if any;
- b) Main drawbacks/impediments in blind persons taking up self-employment ventures;
- c) Promoting family-participation and support for self employment activities;
- d) Identifying appropriate agencies and infrastructure for support in terms of loans, availability of raw materials and work-space, training as per specific needs and retraining, if required, marketing;
- e) Entrepreneurship skills;
- lj CBR—disability-specific or cross-disability approach;
- g) Single activity or multi-activity approach with regard to employment in rural areas;
- h) Mobilising rural community resources and Government schemes in villages;
- i) Income-generation to be real and at par with sighted siblings and not just a matter of show-piece.

5.6.4 The following conclusions emerged:

- a) Manufacture of products for the handicapped may be covered under the scheme of assistance from the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation and interest-free loans be made available for the purpose.
- b) The existing Vocational Rehabilitation Centres for the Handicapped, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, may set up training centre s /p nagrammes in rural areas for training blind and low vision persons in self-employment activities.
- c) Loans may be made available by the N.H.F.D.C. for visually handicapped persons on greatly simplified terms and the involvement of intermediary agencies like the block and district administrations and the State Governments be reduced to the minimum.

- d) Existing training and employment programmes and schemes run by the Government for the benefit of persons with disabilities, may be publicized to the maximum extent through the electronic media, so that both the community at large, and the visually handicapped persons themselves get to know of them.
- c) Institutions/organisations of and for the blind could also play an important role in making the visually handicapped clients conscious of their work-abilities, especially, in rural areas.
Organisations like the Khadi Village Industries Commission may also be associated with endeavours to promote self-employment for the visually handicapped through their extension centres and marketing outlets for the benefit of the visually handicapped in the rural areas. The training syllabi of rural field workers for the visually handicapped may contain special emphasis on inputs relating to preparing the visually handicapped for self-employment.
- g) N.H.F.D.C. may provide loans on greatly reduced rates of interest to visually handicapped persons to enable them to set up various shops, agencies etc. Information about training and other facilities relating to self-employment for the visually handicapped, may be widely disseminated, for the benefit of both the users and the community, in general.
- h) Special emphasis may be laid on safeguarding the interests and rights of the blind and visually impaired women by promoting suitable programmes of self-employment and social security for them.

5.7 BUSINESS SESSION-3

5.7.1. After lunch break the conference met for the concluding business Session at 2.15 p.m. titled "**Disability Act and Proposed Amendments**", the session lasted for about an hour and 45 minutes.

5.7.2. The Session was chaired by **Ms Vikram Dutt**, a prominent disability-activist and media specialist and had the following panel:



Mr Vikram Dutt addressing the session.

- a) **Dr. Bhushan Punani**, Executive Director, **Blind People's Association**, Ahmedabad (Special invitee).
- b) **Mr B.V. Reddy**, Vice President. All India Confederation of the Blind, Hyderabad.
- c) Prof. (Dr) V. P. Varma, Department of Philosophy, Delhi University, Delhi.
- d) Dr. Anil Aneja, Sr. Lecturer. (English), School of Correspondence, Delhi University, Delhi.
- e) **Dr. S. Tarsem**. General Secretary, Punjab Welfare Association for the **Blind**, Malerkotla, Punjab.

Shri M.K. Rastogi, Superintendent, VRC, New Delhi, acted as a rapporteur for the Session.

5.7.3 The under-mentioned issues were considered:

- a) - Salient/special features of the Act insofar as the education, training and rehabilitation of the blind and person; with low vision are concerned—a critical and objective examination;

- b) Review of the extent to which the provisions of the Act have, in fact been implemented, to date, and impact, if any, of the same;
- c) Major drawbacks/problems in the implementation of the Act;
- d) Amendments—whether required, at all, at this stage;
- e) Factual background to the amendments being proposed;
- f) Some salient features of the amendments;
- g) The extent to which the amendments could ensure the desired results or whether they could prove counter-productive;
- h) The existing Act and amendments—what, how and when—a judicious balance.

5.7.4 After careful deliberations, the Conference arrived at the following conclusions on the topic discussed during the session:

- a) The Disability Act could have been a far superior piece of legislation, if the members of parliament could have had some time to debate its provisions in the two houses. However, the Act is still quite a useful document.
- b) Certain amendments to the Act have become necessary to further improve and enrich its contents and ensure adequate and timely implementation of its provisions for the benefit of persons with disabilities and the visually handicapped, in particular.
- c) The following points may be suitably incorporated in the amendments proposed for the Act:
 - i) Blind and low vision persons may be treated separately in the matter of job-reservations;
 - ii) There should be a specified time-frame with regard to identification of jobs for the visually handicapped;
 - iii) Dyslexia may be treated as a subject disability and be brought within the purview of the Act;
 - iv) The proposed section of the amendments allowing the Government to exempt employers from recruiting persons with disabilities in their organisations, may be deleted;
 - v) The existing Chapter of the Act, dealing with recognition of institutions for persons with disabilities, *need* not be deleted;
 - vi) Special provisions may be incorporated in the Act for safeguarding and promoting the rights and interests of women with disabilities, in particular
- d) The various enabling provisions of the Act need to be provided maximum publicity for the benefit of the Persons with Disabilities, especially, in the remote and rural areas and the society, in general.

6. CONCLUSION:

- 6.1 Each of the business sessions was marked by short and stimulating presentations by Chairpersons and Panelists as well as lively and thought-provoking interventions from the side of the other delegates.
- 6.2 The Final session of the Conference commenced at about 4.15 p.m. at which Rapporteurs of different sessions and sub-sessions presented their reports. These were carefully examined by the delegates and were finally adopted with a few amendments.
- 6.3 The delegates authorised the Chief Coordinator of the Conference and the Secretary-General of

All India Confederation of the Blind to formulate a short but succinct plan of action for the next five years, based on the reports adopted at the concluding session.

6.4 The Plan of Action thus prepared by the Confederation is presented after section seven of this report.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

7.1 The Confederation wishes to take this opportunity to acknowledge its gratitude to all those of its distinguished delegates who made it possible to attend the Conference from all over the country. The Sessions of the Conference on both days were very well attended and witnessed lively and stimulating contributions from a cross section of delegates, bearing rich testimony to the wide interest generated by the Conference and the keen concerns of delegates for safeguarding and promoting the interests of the blind and the visually impaired in different sectors.

7.2 The Confederation is also deeply grateful to all of the Chairpersons and panel members for guiding and facilitating the conduct of the proceedings of each of its business sessions in such a smooth and harmonious manner:

7.3 The Confederation's special gratitude is also due to all of the distinguished representatives of various international organisations who enriched the proceedings of the Conference by their participation. The Confederation is particularly grateful to the **Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP)** for their valued collaboration, **M s Arne J. Husveg, International Director**; **NABP** for presenting a most thought-provoking Keynote Address and **Ms. Elisabeth Oks um**, Programme Director; Asia for her welcome participation.

7.4 The Conference was widely covered by both the print and the electronic media, for which the Confederation is thankful to the concerned persons.

ACTION PLAN

1. EDUCATION:

- a) The coverage of blind children in educational programmes/institutions, needs to be substantially increased from the present 5-6 percent to at least 20-25 percent during next five years of the new century. For this purpose, educational placement would need to be child-centred with all existing plans and programmes like residential schools, integrated education and nonformal education playing complementary roles with far greater stress on reaching out to visually handicapped children in rural areas. The possibility of making the education of the visually handicapped girl-child mandatory, may also be examined with necessary changes, if required, in the Disability Act.
- b) Education of blind children should be with the Government Ministry/Department of Education at the Central and State levels and not with Social Welfare.
- c) Every residential school/other educational programmes for the blind must ensure adequate and timely supply of textbooks and other educational reading material in Braille and on cassettes as also basic assistive devices, free of cost, as required under the provisions of the Disability Act.
- d) Every school in the mainstream sector should be encouraged and helped to have at least one general teacher with knowledge and insights about the educational requirements of children with special

needs. including the blind and the visually impaired. There should also be adequate material prepared in various forms for motivating parents of blind children to send their wards to school, especially in rural areas,

- e) The needs of children with low vision, deaf-blindness and blind children with additional handicaps like retardation should receive due attention in our educational and teacher-training programmes.

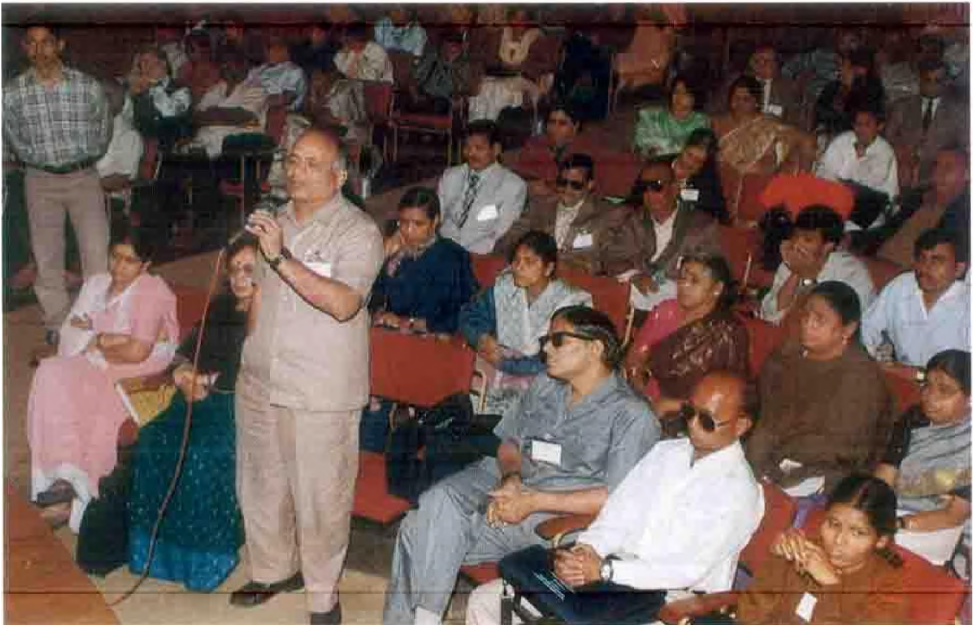
There should be adequate provision by way of teachers and required technologies, for teaching subjects/activities like science, mathematics, geography, yoga, physical education, daily living skills, communication skills etc. in all schools/programmes of education for blind/visually handicapped children.

II. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT ESPECIALLY, SELF-EMPLOYMENT:

- a) Suitably empowered committees of experts and competent blind persons, may be constituted in each State and important District headquarters, to oversee the functioning of existing vocational centres, **enhance and widen their training inputs and advise on their further development and expansion.** Similarly, existing advisory committees of the Government's Vocational Rehabilitation Centres, may also be suitably revamped and activated.
- b) The instructors of existing vocational training centres may be provided all possible opportunities for refresher training as well as retraining in new areas.
- c) AICB may consider setting up coaching centres region-wise to prepare educated blind persons for Civil Services and Management Examinations as well as other senior posts/assignments.
- d) The concerned Government Ministries may, in consultation with AICB and other leading national organisations working with the blind, may frame an extensive National Policy on Training & Employment for the visually **handicapped** and other persons with disabilities, incorporating all facets of work-possibilities for different groups of visually handicapped persons and proposing intensive campaigns of public and employer education about the innate work **potential of** disabled persons, including the visually handicapped.
- e) An on-going review of the job-market may be undertaken by leading NGOs like AICB with the assistance from the Technology Project in the Mission Mode of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to identify new and evolving job-opportunities for the blind and the visually impaired in the organised and the unorganised sectors.
- f) The existing Training Centre for the Adult Blind at N.I.V.H.. Dehra Dun, needs to be thoroughly restructured and updated to serve as a model for others and develop new modules of need-based vocational courses for the visually handicapped.
- g) Loans may be made available by the National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation to visually handicapped persons on greatly simplified terms, with the financial sealing under the Micro-Finance Loan Scheme to be raised to at least Rs.50,000.00 and the requirement of a voluntary organisation providing guarantees to be waived.
- ll) A target of covering at least 25 percent visually handicapped persons in rural areas under self-employment programmes may be set for the next five years. For this purpose. CBR Programmes may be greatly augmented across the country and the extension Centres of Government-run Vocational Rehabilitation Centres and outlets of agencies like the Khadi Village Industries Commission may be extensively utilised.

III. DISABILITY ACT:

- 1 The following points may be suitably incorporated in the amendments proposed for the act:
 - a) Blind and low vision persons may be treated separately in the matter of job-reservations;
 - b) There should be a specified time-frame with regard to identification of jobs for the visually handicapped;
 - c) The proposed section of the amendments allowing the Government to exempt employers from recruiting persons with disabilities in their organisations, may be deleted;
 - d) Special provisions may be incorporated in the Act for safeguarding and promoting the rights and interests of women with disabilities, in particular
2. The various enabling provisions of the Act need to be provided maximum publicity for the benefit of the **Persons with Disabilities, especially**, in the remote and rural areas and the society, in general.



The delegates were totally involved in the deliberations.

ANNEXURE — I

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY MR. K.C. PANT

I am glad to be with you today at the Inauguration of the **National Conference commemorating 20 years of dedicated service of the All India Confederation of the Blind**. I understand that the Confederation is organizing many important activities for the Visually Impaired, like — managing one of the largest Braille Printing Presses in the country; training hundreds of computer operators and stenographers; extending Crisis Intervention Services; running a few Special Schools for the Blind etc. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Confederation and all those who have given of **their time and energy** to this very worthy cause.

The number of disabled persons, in absolute terms, is quite large. The **Visually Impaired number** 3.63 million as per the NSSO Survey of 1991. I may mention here that this survey estimated that roughly 1.9% of country's total population was suffering from various disabilities viz., visual, hearing, speech etc.

The pattern of diseases causing blindness has shown considerable changes in the recent past. While Smallpox has been eradicated, blindness due to Vitamin A deficiency has declined considerably. As a result of **this, the number of blind children in** the country has reportedly declined. Yet, the total number of visually impaired has still shown a slight increase, as per the NSSO data, from 3.47 million persons in 1981 to 3.63 million in 1991, because of the diseases associated with longevity, causing blindness **in the middle and late adulthood**.

However research studies in the recent past have established that a large number of visual disabilities are preventable, if attended to on time. For example, immunization against communicable diseases, supplementation of micro-nutrients and regular health check-ups of pregnant women, including screening can help prevent various disabilities including blindness. We are seeking to converge the activities of various departments at the grassroots level to minimise the incidence of such disabilities.

The government's concern for this section of our population has been manifested since the First Five Year Plan, when a national level apex body, the Central Social Welfare Board was set up in 1953 to take care of the welfare and rehabilitative needs of the vulnerable groups including the handicapped, children and women. A Training Centre for the Adult Blind was set up at Dehra Dun in 1950. The National Programme for Trachoma Control in 1963 was directed towards tackling the problem of blindness. This was later merged with the National Programme for Control of Blindness in 1977. Yet another National Institute was set up for the Visually Handicapped at Dehra Dun in 1979 to extend a wide range of services for the education, research and vocational training, besides training of the personnel to work for the blind.

You are, perhaps, aware of the special initiatives taken during the International Year of the Disabled Persons in 1981 which gave a big fillip to the already existing services for the disabled throughout the country. A number of special concessions were extended both by the Central and State Governments in the matters of education, employment, travel, etc.

A comprehensive legislation, viz. The Persons with Disabilities Act was enacted in 1995, which aims to empower the disabled with a right to demand 'protection of rights, equal opportunities and full participation' in all developmental activities of the country. Enforcement of this legislation in 1996, in fact, marks the beginning of a new era in the lives of the Disabled.

The Ninth Five Year Plan re-affirms the commitment of 'making as many disabled as possible active, self-reliant and productive contributors' to the national economy. Also, realising the fact that the

governmental efforts could cover only 5% of the disabled and the rural disabled being the most neglected, the Ninth Plan adopted a major strategy of 'Reaching the Umeached'. Systematic attempts are being made to converge the existing services available under various welfare-related sectors of health, nutrition, education, labour; rural development, urban development, science & technology, women & child development, information & broadcasting etc.

Special efforts are being made to extend both welfare and rehabilitation services right upto the district level through a comprehensive programme of 'National Rehabilitation Programme for the Disabled' being launched as a State sector programme during the current year. Simultaneous efforts are also being made to strengthen the existing infra-structure by setting up of 6 Regional Composite Resource Centres in various parts of the country to cater to the needs of all categories of the Disabled. The Government is extending 3% reservation for the disabled in the Group A, 13, C and D posts both in the Government and in the Public Sector Undertakings to ensure employment opportunities. Similar efforts are also being made to reserve 3% benefits under various poverty alleviation programmes including DWCRA—exclusively for disabled women. Organising Viklang Bandhus is another innovative effort to train the disabled as Self-Help Volunteers to contribute their mite to help others also to help themselves.

The Plan outlay has increased from Rs.47 crores in the Seventh Plan to Rs.214 crores in the Eighth Plan and to Rs.954 crores in the Ninth Plan to meet the emerging needs of the disabled. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is monitoring not only the impact of various policies and programmes in terms of improving the status of the disabled, but also the progress of implementation of the PD Act, at regular intervals.

I am informed that the nodal Ministry, at the instance of the Planning Commission, is soon bringing out a 'National Plan of Action for Empowering the Persons with Disabilities'.

The Government has been actively involving the NGO sector as their partners all along, in view of their credible achievements in reaching the unreached and extending the most needed human touch, while serving these sensitive target groups. I am told that the nodal Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been closely collaborating with a country-wide networking of more than 1500 NGOs working for the visually impaired through their grants-in-aid programme.

While the Government is working with a commitment to improve the status of the Disabled through various action programmes, the NGO sector, especially agencies like your Confederation should work towards creating an enabling environment wherein the disabled can prove their capacities and capabilities.

No doubt, there is a growing awareness in the community of potential of visually impaired persons to become more and more productive and contribute to the society, but unfortunately old prejudices die hard. We should, therefore, concentrate our efforts, especially those of the NGO sector to change the mind-set of the people, besides eradicating the negative attitudes towards the blind. The ultimate objective in all these efforts is only to make people realise that the 'Blind' are not really 'Disabled' but they are only 'Differently Able' and they can also prove their worth as good as the 'Able', if not better; only if equal opportunities are given to them. In this context, I would like to suggest that this Conference should consider incorporating some strong strategies of Awareness Generation and Sensitization through effective mass media and information technology, in the proposed Decadal Plan of Action along with other action programmes for the Confederation to put into action.

I am happy to find that the Conference aims to formulate a plan of action for increasing the access of a much larger number of needy visually **impaired both in the rural** and urban areas to services of education, training, and rehabilitation. I am hopeful that the deliberations of the conference would also enable us to introspect on the efficacy of our policy initiatives in this field. The fact that more than 200 visually impaired delegates are participating in this conference provides an opportunity to gain useful insights into their felt needs and the manner in which they would like those needs to be addressed.

I wish the Conference all success.

ANNEXURE - II

CITATIONS

1. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award - I.

It is a matter of divine benevolence that our cherished motherland, India, became a Republic fifty years ago and that beloved friend and colleague Jagdish Luthra is also fifty years old, as we enter the new millennium. Jagdish shares something else with our motherland- the distinction of vibrancy. The ability to rise above worldly dilemmas and to infuse into action a dynamism that inspires...

Jagdish was born blind. He turned it into an asset. Not only did he take it philosophically, but went on to do his Masters in Philosophy. Further, he excelled at the King of Mind Sports-Chess—while at college.



*Simi Jagdish Luthra. =xwing AKII Milleardwri
Award from the Chief Gnew.*

In 1975, he founded the Rosemary Institute, a coaching establishment for the Indian Civil Services and other competitive examinations, at Begum Bagh in Meerut. In the last quarter century, his students have not only risen to becoming successful administrators and officers, but have indeed, become the ambassadors for promoting integration in society.

Jagdish has distinguished himself in his career and through such achievement, he has contributed to changing societal perceptions and understanding of those who see only with the third eye.

*It is a privilege to bestow this Award on
Shri Jagdish Luthra
for being an Outstanding Employed Person
on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD*

2. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

Music is the messenger of peace; bringing comfort during disquietude; inducing tranquility amidst anxiety and spreading harmony in a world of discord. The beautiful white bird, the dove, is universally recognised as such an emissary of serenity. In S. Vijaya Lakshmi, we have a human revelation of such joy and grace.

Her sweet voice lulls away the cares of millions of her devoted listeners. Whether singing for heroines in South Indian movies, or bhajans in praise of the Lord, she retains her own inimitable style. Her simplicity, charm and charisma have won her admirers in every corner of the world.

In the glamorous, yet difficult world of films, she has created a special niche for herself. She has sung alongside the most famous, and under the baton of the most distinguished composers. Veritably, the day is upon us when others have started talking of the privilege of singing with the distinguished, remarkable and accomplished Lady of Melody, S. Vijaya Lakshmi.

It is a privilege to bestow this Award on Shrimati S. Vijaya Lakshmi for being an Outstanding Self-Employed Person on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD



*San% S. Vijay,' Lakaiont. receiving AICB Millennium Award
fmm the Chief Guest.*

3. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

When the going gets tough, the tough get going is a phrase that could accurately sum up the life, career and inner vision of K. Ramakrishna. Though he did not receive initial encouragement to pursue his studies, his firmness of mind and boldness of purpose made believers of those who did not previously believe in him.

In spite of a late start—not untypical of the blind—his alert mind leaped across vast domains of knowledge and absorbed it all with the glee of a questing intellect. Armed with a management degree, he decided to break into the corporate world and challenge the limits of his own abilities.

Which he has accomplished to a marvellous extent; rising to a senior corporate management position in the Industrial Development Bank of India, headquartered at Mumbai. What is the most remarkable, is the acknowledgment of his third eye — he is Deputy General Manager of the Market Research Division —guiding the vision of business into areas of investment.

One such area is the understanding to invest in the potential of those with disabilities. With himself as a benchmark for excellence.

It is a privilege to bestow this Award on Shri K. Ramkrishna for being an Outstanding Employed Person on this, the 23rd day of February MOD AD



*Shri, h. Marti kr sh na receiving AICB Millennium Award
Item the Chief Guest.*

Often-times distressing situations set in during mid-life, derailing existence. The courage and fortitude that is displayed in coping with such situations become milestones that communicate firmness of behaviour. Such persons become mentors to others and teachers for the world.

Such a teacher is Dr. Tarsem, who became blind when he was thirty. His literary works coupled with his essays and lectures make him a remarkable illustration of what the mind can achieve by constantly exploring the world a round.



Dr. S. Tarsem, receiving AICB Millennium Award from the Chief Guest.

As a senior lecturer for 19 years in the Punjab University and earlier as a teacher for 18 years in schools, Dr. Tarsem has participated in the most selfless of tasks—shaping and influencing young minds. To such a task is his added labour of love—working towards improving the lives of the disadvantaged and especially of the blind and visually handicapped.

Into his leadership of the socially disadvantaged he has integrated the scholarship of his profession, evolving an unusual combination of expertise that benefits all that fall under its aura.

It is a privilege to bestow this Award on
Dr. S. Tarsem
for being an Outstanding Employed Person
on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD

5_ All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

The imagination of the far-sighted looks into the future with a perception that is exceptional. So too the founders of the Indian Association for the Blind Higher Secondary School & Rehabilitation Centre, Madurai.

Whose vision was not only to begin services for the blind and visually handicapped, but to do so with a focus on the ladies. It is a tribute to their energy and dynamism that the societal perception of the gentler gender in their area has undergone a remarkable change.

Ladies constitute a majority of the office bearers and management staff today. Additionally, and importantly, a significant majority of the Council Members are themselves Visually Handicapped. Their participation has added a flavour of completeness to the Institute.

In the 15 years since their establishment in 1985, the Institute has become a beacon of hope for all, both the visually handicapped and the sighted.

The empowerment has been complete.

It is a privilege to bestow this Best Affiliate Award-2000 to

Indian Association for the Blind Higher Secondary School & Rehabilitation Cenuc Madurai.

on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD



Mr S.M.A. Iiana & Gen. Secretary of the Indian Association for the Blind receiving AICB Best Affiliate Award -2000.

6. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

Lord Jesus Christ preached compassion, love, warmth and affection. He also preached that all people were equal recipients of his fondness. Christoffel-Blindenmission, universally known by their acronym, CBM, has become the modern missionary spreading the message of His Gospel.

Their involvement with the socially disadvantaged, not only in India, but worldwide, has earned them sobriquets ranging from 'Messengers of Hope' to 'Angels.'

Like God enters into every heart and home, CBM has entered into the soul of the blind in India, through their support of various services. Most significantly, they have pioneered eye health care activities in India.

In CBM, the people of India have a true friend. Who breathes the air of this ancient land and adds to it the compassion and vision of its own.

It is to honour such a commitment to fellowship that we are privileged to present
AICB Millennium
Outstanding Service Award-2000
to

Christoffel-Blindenmission

on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD



Mr Arun Rao, CBM (SARO) (I am n: p msentati ve, receiving AICB Millennium Outstanding Service Award -2000.

7. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

In the beginning is the word, which communicates knowledge. Then is the book to record the word. Next, the need to read the book.

And the entry of Amway India Enterprises... Who have added a new dimension to Braille Books Production in India, with their support. Their leadership and help has made the vision of a book for every blind child, a reality in India.

The graciousness of Amway has illuminated the lives of all those who can today read the dotted word.

With apologies to Shakespeare, who too helped spread awareness of the written word, 'The quality of Amway's leadership is thrice blessed. It blessed' those that receive — the children, those who organise—us: and those that give...'

It is to honour such a commitment to fellowship that we are privileged to present



Sudershan Banerjee, Managing Director Am way India Enterprises, receiving AICB Millennium Outstanding Service Award -2000.

AICB Millennium
Outstanding Service Award-2000
to
Amway India Enterprises
on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD

8. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

From the chill of a Norwegian winter emerges the warmth of an abiding concern for those inadequately protected from the cold of being disadvantaged. And the birth of Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP).

Creation of warm environments is an abiding concern in the Scandinavian countries. NABP thus took up the mission of creating such warmth among the lesser privileged. With a wonderful insight into development, they began supporting the exchange of ideas, to fertilise the most precious of commodities —human thought. NABP sponsored several successful workshops, where such exchanges took place. They also initiated work with Low Vision in India.

Most importantly, they sponsored the creation of a department for production of Braille books at the All India Confederation of the Blind. Through this, the lives of the visually handicapped are undergoing tremendous changes in India.

It is to honour such a commitment to fellowship that we are privileged to present

AICB Millennium
Outstanding Service Award-2000
to
**Norwegian Association
of the Blind and Partially Sighted**
on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 A D



*Mr Amcl. Husveg, international DizeetorNABR
receiving AICB Millennium Outstanding Service Award-2000,*

9. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

With birth is enjoined eternal life, when one goes back to the Creator. In between is the excitement of learning, also eternal Somewhere, though, is the process of Aging.

Helpage International and their Indian associate, Helpage India, have made graying gracious in a world increasingly divided between the sharp monochromatic blacks and whites, Helpage has brought in the certainty of grey.

In collaboration with the All India Confederation of the Blind. Helpage has pioneered services for the elderly blind in India. Their beautiful style of associating the community and school children in their projects has helped spread sensitivity and understanding about the issues of aging in general and those of the elderly blind in particular.

Helpage has contributed towards making India a nicer place to grey in...

It is to honour such a commitment to fellowship that we are privileged to present

AXE Millennium
Outstanding Service Award — 2000
to
Helpage International — Helpage India
on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD.

10. All India Confederation of the Blind Millennium Award

The determination of some translates into good fortune for many. The development of The Karnataka Welfare Association for the Blind (KWAB) at Bangalore has given a sense of belonging to the visually handicapped of the region.

Established in 1967, the KWAB offers a range of services from Mobility Training and Special Education to Vocational Training and Self-Employment. The Association has been able to anticipate and respond to the needs of the target audience it seeks to serve.

It is such an ability that has enabled KWAB to establish a Women's Forum which is carrying out pioneering and stellar work. Their forethought has seen the development of Community Based Rehabilitation activities as a natural outgrowth of their rural programmes. The Leadership Training Programmes has led to a consequential increase in mainstreaming in society.

Their low key, behind the scene work has won the KWAB many admirers across the country.

It is a privilege to bestow this
Special Certificate
for being an Outstanding Affiliate Organisation
to

The Karnataka Welfare Association for the Blind
on this, the 23rd day of February 2000 AD



*Mr S.P. Moorthy, Gen. Secretary KWAB, receiving
Special Certificate for being Outstanding Affiliate Organisation.*

ANNEXURE-III

Keynote speech given at
the National Conference on Work for the Blind 2000,
February 23rd, 2000
Education of the blind a right, an obligation and a challenge.
by
Mt Ame I. Husveg
Director of International Affairs,
the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted

All of you, taking part in this Conference, are individuals with different views on religion and politics, with personal likes and dislikes and individual approaches to life in general. The one thing you have in common is that you play a part in the education of blind and partially sighted people.

The question then begs to be asked: How important is this common denominator? Is it a shared interest like chess or archaeology or is it a common desire to enrich and go on developing your treasure of knowledge? I would say both, but, I would add a dimension of overriding importance: You are here because you have adopted a common cause, an ideal which makes politics useful only when it can be used as a tool to promote that common cause. To put it bluntly: I have been a soldier in the liberation army of the blind since I was 16 years old. I want you, whether you are blind or sighted, to accept a similar place in that same army, and, to do so, with an open heart, and a conscious mind. It should not be enough for you to know that you are gathering knowledge and experience and doing a good job. You should realise the need to fill that secret room at the back of all human thought and feeling, the room which demands to be filled with ideals and dedication. What I am trying to say is that, in addition to knowledge, experience, ambition and a sense of duty, you need ideology, that special ingredient, which makes you look for challenges rather than just meeting them and makes you bubble inside with enthusiasm and fulfillment at each little goal that is reached on the long road to equality and full participation in society for visually handicapped people.

Valentin Haüy, the great pioneer in the field of education of the blind, will hardly have formulated such thoughts clearly in his mind when he had his ideological awakening in 1784. The son of a poor weaver, he had himself had to struggle hard to get a decent education. He saw the blind beggars of Paris and felt pity and, perhaps even shame, but it took the cynical pranks of a ruthless coffee-house owner to make feelings break out into action.

The coffee-house owners of Paris were competing for customers and presenting all kinds of shows to attract people to their establishments. One coffee-house owner had a particularly original idea. He hung a huge stuffed peacock from the ceiling and made a blind beggar dressed up as a clown, mount it. He put a conductor's staff into the beggar's hand and asked him to conduct a band of shabbily dressed blind musicians. The music notes were put upside-down on the stands and the musicians were told to hold their instruments in strange and unnatural positions. It was a hilarious show and the customers laughed their heads off. But for Valentin Haüy it was a wake-up call. He decided there and then to start educating the blind, in fact, he decided to start the first school for the blind in the world. This happened in 1784, 5 years before the French Revolution, and although, in practical terms, the Revolution tended to slow down the implementation of Valentin Haüy's ideas, the message of freedom, equality and brotherhood must have made an impact on Mr Haüy and his surroundings. In any case, the first key to the door of liberation of the blind had been delivered. The door was ajar.

The second key came 41 years later in 1825 when a 16-year-old pupil at the blind school in Paris

invented the system of writing which now bears his name. What Louis Braille has meant for the education and liberation of the blind can not be expressed in words, at least not by this speaker I will content myself with a personal statement in all humility: Without Braille I would have learnt less, experienced less, achieved less in all respects and been of less use to my family, friends and fellow blind people. In fact, the quality of my life would have been a shadow of what it has turned out to be.

So, what do I mean by ideology as a factor of overriding importance in the liberation struggle of the visually handicapped? I think the UN Declaration of 1981 sums it up neatly: **At want equality and full participation in society. In fact, we want the same rights as sighted people together with the same duties. But**, the rights must be in real terms. We already have the right to buy a book in ordinary print in a bookshop, but that right is not in real terms for us because we can not read ordinary print. That right only becomes real when we can buy that same book at the same price in Braille.

In the same way, the right to education only becomes real when educational facilities are readily accessible of high quality and adapted to the special needs created by blindness or reduced eyesight.

But, I hear you say, if someone has a right, someone else must have a duty. To provide blind people with proper education will cost extra money. The same applies to books in Braille and **all other** measures which are necessary to establish equality and full participation by blind people in society.

True, indeed, and that duty lies with the state and through the state with the community as a whole. There are many reasons why this duty should be accepted as a matter of course. A community which takes care of **all its citizens is a much better place to live in for everybody, including the rich and strong. Secondly, nothing gives a better return for society than** investment in people. And thirdly, no one has a guarantee to keep his eyesight for the rest of his life. When you pay the insurance premium on your house, you do not do so because you know that your house **will bum down**. You do so because you know that a fire may **occur**. No one knows who will need educational facilities for the blind or Braille books tomorrow. Creating equal opportunities for blind people means paying an insurance premium for everybody.

So, blind people have rights and the community has the duty to make those rights real. This puts the financial responsibility squarely with the community but who should undertake the practical work involved?

In my opinion, everybody is best served by a pragmatic attitude to this question. In some cases, it would be natural for the authorities to establish facilities for blind people or make existing facilities for sighted people accessible to blind people through technical arrangements and extra manpower. In other cases, it may prove a good solution to establish co-operation between the authorities and voluntary organisations in the field of blindness. It must, however, be a prerequisite that blind people have a real say in such organisations. In my experience, such arrangements will often give better results both in quality and financially. The involvement of the blind in matters relating to the blind will benefit both society and **the blind as a group**. On the other hand, it goes without saying that authorities which provide the financial resources must have the right of full insight into the running and financial dispositions of the institution or facility concerned.

This Conference covers all levels of education of the visually handicapped. In this short speech, I will confine myself to one of the areas to be considered by the Conference.

Many of you will know Mr. **John Heilbrunn, the Director of International Affairs of the Danish Association of the Blind. Together we have written a paper called "Community Based Rehabilitation for Visually Handicapped People A Second-rate Solution or the Real Way to Independence". I would like to share with you some of the conclusions in this paper mainly because they represent an honest attempt at bringing CBR for the blind in line with our basic ideological demand of equal rights.**

I remember when CBR was launched by DE Helander I am sum he did it in good faith. He thought far too little was achieved for handicapped people with the insufficient economic resources at hand. In his opinion, rather than using these resources on a few, they should be spread out more thinly so that everybody got something. This was my first meeting with cross-disability projects. Reading the manual and what it said about blind people, I was close to weeping.

My most serious objection to CBR when it was introduced was that it might perpetuate blind people in developing countries as second-rate citizens, only with access to less than rudimentary education. Apart from military expenses, governments tend to grasp at any possibility of saving money, and the education of handicapped people will, in any case, come far down on the list of priorities.

Some may feel that my fears were exaggerated, but it is a fact that cross-disability CBR projects have sprung up all over the developing world. They may differ in name and shape, but the basic idea is the same, and they do not take proper account of the special needs of blind people. John Heibrunn and I accept that CBR has come to stay, but we entirely reject the idea of cross-disability CBR. 80% of all impressions from the outside are transmitted through the eyes. That leaves 20% to the remaining senses. It goes without saying that a person without eyesight will need a number of special arrangements in the form of equipment and instruction in order to reach a reasonable level of functional ability.

Our main demands regarding CBR are therefore:

- Properly qualified fieldworkers reporting to supervisors.
- Qualified Braille instructors.
- Access to material for learning Braille at different levels and for different age groups.
- Instructors with a thorough knowledge of mobility and guiding techniques.
- Individually adapted instructions in Daily Living Skills.
- Central or Regional Resource Centres with experts to instruct fieldworkers and supervisors, assist in courses for instructors and support teachers in normal schools where there are blind pupils.
- The close involvement of a blind organisation in the running and follow-up of projects.

Colleagues and friends, education must be an inalienable right, not a charitable gift. Last year the Norwegian Parliament passed a bill giving the blind the legal right to instruction in Braille. This means that any blind person wanting Braille instruction and not getting it, can sue the state for financial compensation. I said initially that you are not only experts and workers in an important field. You are not only colleagues sharing interests. You are soldiers in an army fighting for a common cause. To accept this third dimension you must accept the ideology of the blind as your guiding light and motive power. Equal rights in real terms is something worth fighting for both for yourself and others. This ideology will serve as a good compass to steer by, and the enthusiasm created by the knowledge that you are fighting for a just cause will give you added strength and staying power. The struggle will go on for a long time, but the final victory is certain. How quickly we succeed depends on the fighting spirit of the soldiers in the liberation army of the blind. It depends on us.

[wish you an exciting and fruitful Conference.

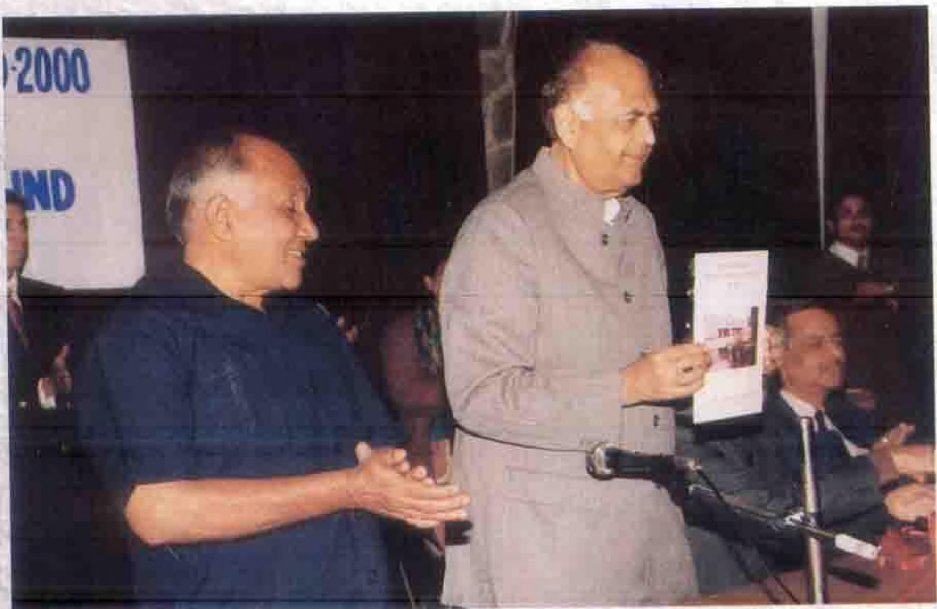


Awardees with the Chief Gitest.



Afittol, Chief Co-ordinator of the Conference, presenting the Plan of Action.





The Chief Guest, releasing the brochure titled " Milestones of an Eventful Journey" on the occasion of JICCI'.



A. M. J. Hanerjee, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, delivering presidential remarks in the Keynote Session.

