

COUNTRY REPORT - (INDIA)

India is the second most populous and the seventh largest country in the world. It has a total land area of 1,260,000 sq. miles and a coast line of 3,535 miles. India's population is approximately 646,000,000. The country's immense population, accounting for a sixth of mankind and increasing by nearly a million every four weeks, makes it the largest democracy on earth and the biggest free society in human history. India's climate can be described as monsoon - tropical - in spite of some local variations like the winter rains in the north-west. Language is a monumental problem in India. There are 14 languages and no less than 544 dialects. Each major language has its ancient literature and is spoken by millions. Independent India has been pushing a "Socialist pattern of society" and certainly has a high degree of nationalised activity.

Many Indians, particularly in rural areas, live in joint families where grand parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and innumerable relations. Despite the great diversity of race, religion, language and occupation, the general schedule of a day's activities in one Indian home can be remarkably like that in another whether it is in the Punjab in the north, in Bengal in the East, or in Madras or Kerala in the deepest south. An Indian's day begins long before dawn. Just before dawn the places of worship are full. Most traditional Indians, particularly the peasants, have only two large meals in the day: one in the morning after ~~their~~ their prayers, and bath and one late in the afternoon. What they eat depends on where they live. The pattern of eating in the cities and amongst the urbanized Indians is different. A high proportion of Indians are strict vegetarians who will not eat meat, fish, eggs, or any food containing these things.

After their days work and the evening meal, middle-class who live in cities spend their leisure time much as modern urban-dwellers elsewhere. Villagers, like the mass of the urban poor, have few pastimes and amusements. When Indians greet each other, they do it with folded palms raised to the level of the chin and utter "Namastey" which stands for "Good morning", "Good evening", etc

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF MENTALLY RETARDED IN INDIA.

A child born in a happy family reared with all due care & love grows into a healthy man in the society. The rising rate of the population in India is adding about 13 million infants in a year. Majority of these children live in conditions that are adverse to survival. Out of every thousand babies 122 die in the first year of life. The death rate between 0-4 years accounts about 40% of total annual death rate of the country. Children in India face many health hazards, and many die young for lack of timely health care.

The joy, hope and future of every family is tied up with children. It is a great happiness if our children are healthy, happy and contented, developing both physically and mentally. The need for providing child welfare services as an essential pre-requisite for the development of a better and healthier nation is universally accepted. Realising this, our National Government has given priority to the total welfare of the child in their development plans. It is necessary to meet the basic needs of our children in health, education and nutrition. It is not education in a formal sense, that is needed, the habits formed in the early years of child hood and the way their minds have been conditioned then, will play an important part when they grow up.

Four major disabilities afflict a score of million children in our country. They are mental retardation, Blindness, physical handicap and deafness. Negative attitudes prevalent in the society towards mental and physical handicap increase the magnitude of the prevailing problem.

Mental handicap is a universal problem. It is prevalent in about 2% of general population in the urban as well as rural areas. This reflects the vast magnitude of the problem in our country with a population of nearly 685 million (1981 census). The needs of the mentally handicapped persons are multifaced which require attention from diverse disciplines such as medicine, psychology, education, rehabilitation and other Social Welfare agencies.

The problem of Mental Retardation in India is one of exceptional complexity, not only because widely different ethnic elements have entered into the population, but more so because of the caste system in perpetuation with the fixed hierarchical order in India. Besides all this, the most important thing is to bring about public awareness of the problem of mental retardation and that it is

possible to train and educate the majority of them so that they will not be a burden to society and their family members. Early detection some times can help to take remedial steps in time. Mental retardation is mainly a social educational problem rather than medical problem. Hence there is need for separate Institutions with advanced technology to provide necessary facilities to rehabilitate different groups of children.

Mrs. T. Revathy Bhasker

**THAKUR HARI PRASAD INSTITUTE OF REHABILITATION
FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN:**

Mentally handicapped children were neglected a lot prior to 1968, as there were no organised services in Andhra Pradesh. Realising the pathos and magnitude of the problem, Shri Thakur V. Hari Prasad opened the first Rehabilitation Institute for the mentally handicapped children in Andhra Pradesh, sponsored by the Andhra Pradesh State Council for Child Welfare. It was inaugurated by the then Education Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao. It was a rejoiceful moment and messages of appreciation were flooded from dignatories all over the globe. The Institution grew leaps and bounds within a short span of time.

SERVICES RENDERED BY THE INSTITUTE:

Qualified Clinical Psychologist of the Institute psychologically evaluates the children to know their intellectual ability, social maturity, aptitude and behavioural and emotional problems. Parents counselling is also offered.

Institute has a sound treated room, which is specially designed ~~for~~ for the audiometry to assess the hearing problems. Qualified Speech Therapist diagnoses the extent of retardation in the language development and offers speech therapy.

Special education is not limited to educational programme alone. It also extends to meet the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of a child. The Institute has a team of highly qualified and experienced Special Teachers to offer special education and to cater to above needs. Apart from this, behaviour modification and Home training programme will be undertaken by the staff.

Mentally handicapped children may have many motor disabilities which effects their social adjustment. Expertised services of Occupational Therapist of this Institute not only helps to overcome the above problems, but also helps the children to acquire vocational skills.

Music occupies an indispensable part of any special school. The Institute has an ideal music room of Shantiniketan cottage type, which has an array of musical instruments. Under the supervision of qualified Music Teacher children enjoy and learn music skills. To cater the recreational needs the Institute has a variety of outdoor and indoor play equipments.

The Institute has taken up research in rhythm by appointing a Mridangam master to train the children. The mentally handicapped children are also trained in Yoga. Horticulture and social forestry is taken up as a part of vocational training for the children. The children are also trained to take part in competitions in sports, painting and cultural performances. Two children who were the victims of Bhopal's Union Carbide gas leakage tragedy, deputed by the Government of Madhya Pradesh are under the special care of the Institute. The Prisons Department has also requested the Institute to admit some of the mentally handicapped children who are under their control, and the matter is in the process. A sheltered workshop to train the mentally handicapped children in candle making, chalk making, book binding etc., is being set up.

The cottage type accommodation with foster care mother is first time introduced in India in this rehabilitation Institute. Such an arrangement creates a homely environment and makes the child feel 'HOME AWAY FROM HOME'

Apart from the residential accommodation the Institution has provision for day scholars with its own transport facilities. With the above mentioned expertised services and facilities the Institute endeavours to help the mentally handicapped to become a useful citizen.

Mrs. T. Revathy Bhaskar