

# Education and Technology for the Blind

February 19, 2020

Source: *Yojana magazine*

## History of Blind Education

- **Miss Annie** Sharp, an Anglican was instrumental in launching a facility in Amritsar for the blind in the year 1887.
- It imparted basic training in beadwork, reed work and reading of religious scripture.
- Ms. Jane Askwith was an educationist herself, who desired to impart good education and training to visually impaired in order to make them self sufficient. That facility commenced in 1890
- Ms. Millard gathered some poor blind from some villages during drought and launched a facility for them at Bombay in 1900 for their care.
- The number of such institutions increased in undivided India by 1944
- The major features of this era were;
  1. Institutions were limited to primary level only
  2. Lack of an all India Braille code( Braille is a dot-based tactile system of reading and writing used by visually impaired
  3. Absence of Braille printing unit in the country
  4. Lack of production facility even for simple equipment needed by blind

## Important programmes and initiatives related to Blind education are:

- **1947-** A small unit for education and rehabilitation of visually impaired was established in the Ministry of Education(as per the recommendations contained in the

**Government of India Report on Blindness, 1944- Lt. Col. Sir Clutha Mackenzie played a major role in writing this report)**

- Government of India appointed Mr Clutha as an Officer on special duty (Blindness) in 1942 for the rehabilitation of the Indian War blinded during the ongoing world war.
- Finalization of principles drawing for braille codes in the world.
- 1951- India adopted the Uniform Braille codes for various languages in India in 1951.
- 1952- Establishment of first-ever Braille plant named Central Braille Plant at Dehradun
- The central Braille press was followed by the manufacturing of Braille appliances unit set up in 1954 to produce and provide simple equipment like Braille slate and stylus, Arithmetic Braille slate etc
- In addition to the NGOs, Government set up its first school called Model School for Blind Children in 1959 at Dehradun.
- The central scheme set up **four Regional Centres for the Teachers of the Blind commencing the programme in 1960.**
- That decade witnessed the establishment of such centres at Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras respectively.
- **A paradigm shift was witnessed in 1974 when India launched the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme** to be implemented through govt. schools.
- The IEDC Scheme was transferred to the MoE in 1982 and a cell was set up at NCERT, New Delhi which developed into a Department later.
- The IEDC Scheme attracted many more children following its modification in 1987 and 1992 along with some other measures.
- A combined force of PWD became conscious of their rights, their endeavour to organise themselves into pressure groups and willingness of India to accept and implement the United Nations (UN) resolutions in this sector, which generated momentum for faster progress.

Observance of International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDPs) 1981 as declared by the UN, the UN Decade for the Disabled 1983-92, Asian and Pacific Decade for the disabled declared by the ESCAP in its Beijing meeting in 1992, are a few examples.

- India enacted the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 to give effect to the decisions taken in the Beijing meeting in 1992.
- With a view to meet the stipulations of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Indian Parliament enacted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. The Act provides another category among the blind called "Low Vision".

