

Discrimination of polio survivors in India

Recently India celebrated its three year anniversary of being a polio free nation. However it is important to not be ignorant about the sufferings of persons who have been affected by polio or polio survivors in India. Polio is often thought of as synonymous with paralysis and disability. It is also known as one of the leading causes of physical disability in India. Persons with disabilities are one of the most oppressed, marginalised and stigmatized groups in the Indian society. In the Indian context; cultural and religious beliefs are so deeply imbedded that they have an effect on the attitudes of the society at large. Disability is often viewed as a form of karma where one is paying for his/her misdeeds committed in the previous lives (Ghai, 2002). This leads to further societal prejudices which deny them of their basic rights and entitlements. Moreover the social and physical environment is often disabling which leads to lack of access to healthcare, education and livelihood. So far, majority of the studies have focused on the efforts of the polio eradication campaign while there are not many studies that highlight the status of the polio survivors. This paper aims to understand discrimination faced by polio survivors in the areas of education, livelihood, health and social inclusion with theories that underpin discrimination and stigma. This paper would also try to understand how different aspects of life such as gender, religion, caste and economic status have a further effect on the discrimination of polio survivors within the Indian context which leads to further ostracisation of the polio survivors. Also the current paper would aim to provide some suggestions on possible interventions that could be taken by the society at large to prevent discrimination of polio survivors.