

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS- A REMARKABLE MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOCIAL INCLUSION

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### Abstract

In general, we relate rehabilitation as a consequence of certain conscious or unintentional action. We find this concept extensively used to recover from injuries, overcome unhealthy habits and practices. Hence, it is seen more as a therapeutic exercise to manage or heal from bad state to a better or normal state. What about the groups of people like you and me who are but sidelined or forced to live a life that is not even close to normal? People with special needs do not always get their due in most societies including the highly developed ones. The struggle they face in carrying out even the simple tasks of life is immense. The scenario in developing countries like India where the social pressure is extreme, the hardships faced by people with special needs are unimaginable. Let alone getting support, most are not even permitted to step out of their small and often confined living space. The social stigma is so high that the parents do not want to be seen with their special child or they just lock them up in a room or a corner to live in solitude. Right to grow naturally, play and enjoy the fun is not only natural but very critical and essential part of a child's growth and development. Even this basic function is denied in most cases for children with special needs. This essentially calls for rehabilitation of so-called normal people's mindset and habilitation of special children to promote an inclusive and a just society. Special Olympics International is a leading organization in pushing the inclusion agenda by providing year-round training and sports opportunities for the intellectually challenged athletes. Their data shows that about 1 to 3 percent of the world population are intellectually disabled which comes to about 200 million people. Certainly a lot more needs to be done to give these people what they deserve. This presentation comprises of the diligent initiatives taken by Special Olympics Bharat, Puducherry which is a constituent of Special Olympics Bharat. We have made an attempt to present what you and me as ordinary people can do to make a difference in ours as well as their lives. In a remarkable concept called unified sports, special athletes combine with non-special athletes as a team and compete as well as enjoy the game during training and competition. Through our presentation, we intend to motivate people to join this wonderful movement and stand up for an inclusive and a just society.

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