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Success & ABILITY - India's Cross Disability Online Magazine

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Shaping a Future of Equal Opportunities:
ProgressABILITY Legal Awareness Seminar 2025

“Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time. That one step must include everyone” : quoting Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Dr. Vinod Surana, Managing Partner, Surana & Surana International Attorneys, set the tone for ProgressABILITY 2025: Legal Awareness Seminar.

Organized by Ability Foundation, in collaboration with Surana & Surana International Attorneys, the Seminar brought together leaders in the disability sector from across the country, legal practitioners, academics, and stakeholders to spread awareness on recent High Court and Supreme Court rulings in favour of people with disabilities to explore the way forward towards rights based inclusive education and equal opportunity employment.

While the recent rulings are an important step forward, Jayshree Raveendran, Founder, Ability Foundation, was already driving discussions on rights and inclusion back in 1995 before laws even existed, let alone recognized. For three decades, her advocacy has shaped and guided Ability Foundation's as well as the nation's vision.

ProgressABILITY 2025 focused the discussion into two compelling panels - one on education and the other on employment - each exploring the progress so far and the progress necessary in times to come.

Education — The Greatest Equaliser

Moderated by Akhil Paul (Chief Mentor, Sense International India) , the Education panel highlighted the fact that laws and policies are only effective when schools adapt to the needs of every learner.

George Abraham (Founder, Score Foundation) pointed out that while frameworks like the Right to Education Act and the RPwD Act exist, execution is lacking.

Drawing from her experience in inclusive schooling, Sruti Mohapatra (Founder, Swabhiman) noted that systemic investment in teacher training and monitoring is still missing at schools.

Advocate Balaji Premkumar (Managing Partner, Tanvi & Balaji Associates) added that even officials responsible for disability inclusion often do not receive proper training, which further slows down implementation.

The panel's discussions emphasized that a powerful shift is necessary to bring about real change - inclusion must move beyond buildings, facilities and token access. It requires awareness, accountability and most importantly a change in attitude – a shift from doing away with the sympathy mode of thinking to recognizing that it is a right.

Employment - Creating Opportunities

The second panel, guided by Janaki Pillai (Trustee, Ability Foundation), turned the spotlight on workplaces - where inclusion is tested in real life. Here the discussion was focused on why systems and attitudes still prevent persons with disabilities from being recognised as equal professionals.

Shanti Raghavan (Founder, Enable India) shared examples where people with disabilities had succeeded when they were given the opportunity to shine.

Pointing out that the real barriers are not ability but perceptions, Sai Prasad Viswanathan (Founder & CEO, Saraswathy Academy) argued that recruitment processes and mindsets continued to exclude persons with disabilities.

Advocate Ramya Subramaniam (Partner, Astris Legal) emphasized that inclusion is not charity or CSR - it is anchored in law, governance, and workplace culture.

Prof. Amita Dhanda (Professor Emeritus, Nalsar University of Law) captured the essence of the panel's discussions - "reasonable accommodation" should not be seen as a special favour but as a basic principle of fairness for everyone. Inclusion is not about doing "something" for people with disabilities, but about building systems together, where every voice is heard equally.

The way forward

The discussion highlighted that in order to make a real difference, several key areas needed focused attention -

- Education: Inclusion must go beyond access, with proper training, monitoring, and accountability to make schools truly welcoming for every child.
- Employment: Workplaces must ensure equal opportunities, with systems designed to recognize abilities rather than resort to assumptions.
- Implementation: Progressive laws exist, but their value lies in effective execution, monitoring, and accountability.
- Responsibility: Inclusion is a shared responsibility of educators, employers, policymakers, and society at large.
- Recognizing potential: Persons with disabilities must be seen as contributors with rights, not as recipients of charity.

A Shared Responsibility

Across the panels, one message came through clearly: inclusion is not a favour but a right. Education and employment remain the pillars of equality, but their impact depends on how effectively the laws, policies and frameworks that are in place are translated to action.

ProgressABILITY – Legal Awareness Seminar 2025 affirmed that while the journey continues, the responsibility for change is a shared one - not just by policymakers but by educators, employers and society at large. Real progress

will come not by isolated and individual efforts but from systems built with participation, awareness and accountability where each step forward includes everyone.

Law, Mindset, and the Road to Inclusion: A Conversation with Advocate Balaji Premkumar

Advocate Balaji Premkumar, Managing Partner, Tanvi & Balaji Associates, is a leading legal expert and passionate advocate for disability rights.

He draws from years of experience working at the intersection of law, accessibility, and social justice to emphasise the importance of truly understanding what disability means, not just in visible forms, but across a broad and often invisible spectrum.

We took him aside for a brief conversation when he participated in ProgressAbility: our Legal Awareness Seminar. He spoke about why strong laws alone are not enough, how attitudes still need to change and how, a truly inclusive society, is based not on compliance but on human understanding and connection.

We asked: : “In the course of your session as panelist at ProgressAbility”, you mentioned that decision-makers first need to truly understand what disability is. What do you think they often get wrong, and what should they be focusing on instead?”

Adv. Balaji: See, when we say & quot;disability,& quot; most people only think of visible, physical disabilities - things they can see. These are the more traditionally recognised forms. But there are many other types of disabilities that aren't visible. For example, blood disorders are now categorised as disabilities, but you can't see them. Similarly, mental illnesses carry a lot of social stigma, but again, these are not visible.

The truth is, disability exists on a spectrum. The majority of people with disabilities are very much capable of working and contributing meaningfully. Only a small percentage might require more support or accommodations. Unfortunately, many decision-makers and society at large are unaware of this spectrum.

That's why sensitisation is so important. The government is taking some steps toward this. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, newly appointed IAS officers now undergo a full day of disability awareness training as part of their induction. However, many other departments like commercial tax and others that don't directly interact with the public, still lack this awareness. So yes, we are taking baby steps, but there's still a long way to go.

“How much do you think the law can really open up education and jobs for people with disabilities, and where does it start to fall short?”

Adv. Balaji: The law definitely plays a crucial role in creating opportunities. For example, the law mandates certain reservations: 5% in education and 4% in public employment. These legal provisions are important enabling factors.

But in practice, we've found that the government is still the largest employer, not the private sector. So, while the law sets the stage, real change also depends on public perception. We're a law firm, and it took us nearly three and a half years of working in this space to finally hire a fully visually impaired lawyer. We had tried several times before but weren't successful. Over time, we learned more about the technology they use, their needs, and the pace at which they can learn. We started adapting gradually.

So, yes - the law is there, but mindset change is what really drives inclusion.

“When courts give progressive judgments, what kind of real changes do you actually see in schools, employers, or society?”

Adv. Balaji: See, whenever courts deliver progressive judgments, it might seem like the government is actively shaping policy, but there's no proper mechanism to measure how much of that actually reaches the people. For example, key legislations like the RPwD Act came into existence largely due to court rulings or international conventions like the UNCRPD.

Now, while government institutions, such as state departments and public colleges tend to follow these laws because they're bound by them, the private sector is a different story. Private universities and companies often don't comply, even when there are clear legal mandates like accessibility norms and the Harmonised Guidelines issued by the government. Compliance is still poor.

“We have strong laws on paper, but things often don't change on the ground. From your experience, why does this gap keep happening?”

Adv. Balaji: This gap exists not just in India, but globally. Whether it's laws for women's safety, disability rights, or other issues, there's often a significant difference between what's written in law and what actually happens on the ground.

In India, enforcement is a major challenge. For example, we have a severe shortage of enforcement personnel, imagine one effective police officer for every 2,000 people. How much can one officer realistically do? So, even with strong laws in place, without proper enforcement mechanisms and sufficient resources, implementation remains weak. That's the core issue.

“If you had to tell a school or a workplace one or two simple things that they can start with to support inclusive education, what would you say?”

Adv. Balaji: When it comes to inclusive education, I'd say the policies look great on paper. But in practice, a major shift needs to happen in people's

minds. Over the past 20 years, we've seen some progress with visible disabilities, like visual or hearing impairments and locomotor disabilities. Schools are now offering reasonable accommodations for these, such as accessible classrooms or assistive devices, often without even being told. That's a good sign.

However, when it comes to cognitive or invisible disabilities, like intellectual disabilities, autism, or learning difficulties, the progress is much slower. This is largely because these areas are still poorly understood, not just by educators but also by policymakers and institutions. There's a lack of training, awareness, and practical strategy.

If I had to suggest something, I'd say we need more research and documentation. Educational institutions, especially those focusing on inclusive practices, need to study what works, share those findings, and build a body of knowledge. Unfortunately, very few organisations are doing this systematically.

“Do legal changes really shift people's minds about disability, or do they just force compliance? Have you seen attitudes change because of the law?”

Adv. Balaji: Legal changes mostly drive compliance; they don't automatically shift people's mindsets. For example, corporate organisations are required to meet legal compliance standards. That's why you can now see accessible

features in public places like PVR cinemas, where 4 to 6 seats are reserved for persons with disabilities. Even if those seats are booked by others, the policy clearly states they must be vacated if a person with a disability needs them. This is a direct result of legal compliance.

Similarly, building accessibility norms are now being implemented more effectively because they fall under regulated compliance areas. In these cases, enforcement works like a local engineer reviewing building plans to ensure accessibility features are included. These technical compliance areas are easier to monitor and enforce.

However, when it comes to changing attitudes..like how an employer accommodates a person with a disability, the law alone isn't enough. You can mandate compliance on paper, but that doesn't guarantee genuine inclusion or understanding. In such areas, where social behaviour and mindset need to change, laws have limited impact unless supported by awareness, training, and cultural change.

“Looking at India over the years, what are some positive changes you've noticed in how we approach disability rights?”

Adv. Balaji: India has seen significant progress, especially because of two key legislations: the 1995 Act and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. These laws have laid the foundation for a more inclusive approach.

Now, the change isn't always visible or dramatic - it's gradual. But if you look closely, there are important shifts happening. A great example is the metro systems in major cities, which follow one of the most inclusive design models in the country. This kind of planning and thinking around accessibility simply didn't exist 30 or 40 years ago. Back then, the national priority was still focused on overcoming poverty and basic development.

So yes, while the progress might feel slow, and many persons with disabilities and activists will say it's not enough, which I agree with, it is still moving in the right direction.

“If you could bring policymakers, employers, and families into one room, what would you want each of them to do differently?”

Adv. Balaji: The first thing I'd want is for them to simply talk to each other and really understand the issues from all sides. Right now, whenever persons with disabilities or their families engage with policymakers, it usually happens in the form of grievance meetings. It's about complaints, not constructive conversations. So, if you put all these stakeholders in one room without changing the nature of the discussion, it will just repeat the same cycle.

If this awareness becomes part of the dialogue between policymakers, employers, and families, then decisions will be made with a much more inclusive and long-term perspective. That's the shift we need.

“Sir, if you had to leave society with just one message about inclusion, what would it be?”

Adv. Balaji: Inclusion isn't a one-time effort; it's a continuous journey. It's about constantly breaking barriers, challenging mindsets, and creating spaces where everyone can belong, regardless of their ability.

Advocate Balaji Premkumar, Managing Partner at Tanvi & Balaji Associates, is a public law expert working with government departments on reservation, accessibility, and disability rights. He helped draft Tamil Nadu's Scribe Guidelines and continues to advance inclusive policies and legal awareness

Inclusive Education and the Law: A Personal Reflection on India's Journey

By Dr. Sruti Mohapatra

I write as someone who has spent decades walking the thin line between law and life, between the promises written in statutes and the realities unfolding in classrooms. India today has one of the world's most progressive legal frameworks for persons with disabilities. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 firmly anchors inclusive education as a right, not a concession. It mandates that every child with disability should study in a neighborhood school, receive reasonable accommodation, and access learning without discrimination.

This vision aligns with India's commitment under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified in 2007. Yet, as I have seen from the field, from the schools of Bhubaneswar to the classrooms of Guwahati and Kolkata, laws can only ignite change if they are lived. The words of inclusion must find life in teachers, timetables, and textbooks.

From Law to Life

The RPwD Act in Section 16 mandates inclusive education and holds both governments and educational institutions accountable for creating accessible

infrastructure, training teachers, and providing individualized support. Complementing this, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions an inclusive system that ensures equitable quality education for all children, including those with disabilities.

The courts have played a crucial role in translating these obligations into enforceable rights. In *Rajneesh Kumar Pandey v. Union of India* (2021), the Supreme Court emphasized that inclusive education means more than physical integration. It demands curriculum adaptation, teacher preparedness, and peer sensitization. The Court made it clear that denying these accommodations constitutes discrimination under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. In February 2025, the Supreme Court reaffirmed this principle while ruling that denying a student with disability a scribe or compensatory time during examinations violates the right to equality. This judgment resonates across India, where many students still face barriers not from incapacity but from rigid systems unwilling to adapt.

The Delhi High Court (2023) ordered a private school to reinstate an autistic child expelled due to behavioral difficulties, ruling that administrative convenience cannot override statutory obligations. Likewise, the Madras High Court (2023) reminded institutions that inclusion must be proactive, it is not optional charity but a constitutional duty.

The Indian Picture

Despite strong legal foundations, the road to inclusion across India remains uneven. The UDISE+ 2022–23 data reveals that over 20 lakh children with disabilities are enrolled in schools, yet many remain out of the system, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

The gap between policy and practice widens where teacher training and infrastructure are inadequate. In eastern India, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and West Bengal, the shortage of trained special educators is severe. Odisha's government records show thousands of children with disabilities enrolled under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, yet only a fraction of the required special educators are in position. The situation mirrors national trends, where vacancies remain unfilled and teacher preparation for inclusive education is minimal.

I have witnessed this gap in everyday life: a visually impaired child unable to take exams because there was no Braille material; a teacher in rural Mayurbhanj improvising tactile maps with sand and thread; a mother in Cuttack pleading for transport support so her son with cerebral palsy could reach school. The law promises equality, but the system too often delivers exclusion by neglect.

Courts, Civil Society, and Change

Litigation has become a catalyst for reform. Across India, courts have directed education departments to recruit special educators, ensure accessible infrastructure, and provide learning materials in alternative formats. In *Avni Prakash v. National Testing Agency* (2021), the Supreme Court ruled that denying a visually impaired candidate appropriate assistance in exams violated her right to equality and dignity. The Karnataka High Court (2022) directed the state to appoint over 4,500 special educators within six months under the RPwD Act. The Delhi High Court (2023) mandated that all schools affiliated to the CBSE must provide scribes and extra time to students with disabilities, declaring these as “non-negotiable educational rights.” The Tripura High Court (2022) went further, holding that absence of ramps and accessible toilets in government schools constituted systemic discrimination under Article 21A.

Civil society has been the bridge between courtroom victories and classroom realities. Swabhiman continues to monitor school accessibility and train resource teachers through community-based rehabilitation programmes. The Spastics Society of India’s 2018 petition in the Bombay High Court led to the Maharashtra government’s directive mandating inclusive teacher training in all DIETs (District Institutes of Education and Training). Ummeed Child Development Centre, Mumbai, partnered with Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in 2020 to launch

inclusive early learning centers, serving over 1,200 children with developmental disabilities. In eastern India, Asha Bhavan Centre, West Bengal, successfully advocated for accessible transport for children with cerebral palsy through a 2019 order by the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.

Challenges that Persist

Three fundamental challenges continue to obstruct inclusive education in India. Despite progressive laws and inspiring local innovations, the journey from policy to practice remains uneven.

1. **Human Resources:** The shortage of special educators and trained teachers is one of the gravest challenges. The Rehabilitation Council of India's Annual Report (2024) estimates that India needs more than three lakh qualified special educators, yet less than one-third of sanctioned posts are filled nationwide. The UNESCO State of the Education Report for India: No Teacher, No Class (2021) revealed that only 12% of teachers have received any form of training in inclusive education. In many eastern states, including Odisha, Jharkhand, and Bihar, special educators are often shared across multiple schools, diluting individual attention and continuity of support.

2. Infrastructure and Accessibility: Physical and digital barriers persist across thousands of schools. According to UDISE+ 2022–23, only 27% of government schools in India have ramps with handrails, and less than 18% have accessible toilets. The UNICEF–Samagra Shiksha 2023 Review Report highlights that digital education platforms rolled out during the pandemic were largely inaccessible to children with visual or hearing impairments, due to absence of captions, screen-reader compatibility, and sign language interpretation. Many rural schools in eastern India still lack adapted transport, denying children with mobility impairments the basic right to attend school.

3. Attitudinal Barriers: This remains the hardest and most invisible challenge. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Survey on Inclusive Education, 2022, found that over 40% of teachers felt “unprepared” to teach children with disabilities in regular classrooms. Parents of non-disabled children often fear inclusion may slow academic progress, while families of children with disabilities still encounter stigma and isolation. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2023 noted that such attitudinal barriers are among the primary reasons for dropout among children with disabilities in South Asia. Real inclusion requires empathy, not just policy. The UNICEF India 2022 Position Paper on Inclusive Education calls for transforming teacher mindsets through continuous professional development, school-based mentoring, and peer learning communities. Laws may provide the framework, but only

compassion, awareness, and accountability can transform the Indian classroom into a truly inclusive space.

The Way Forward

The law gives both vision and teeth, but the real drive must come from coordinated, sustained action. Every state must adopt a three-tier strategy rooted in evidence and practice.

1. **Recruitment and Training:** Filling vacant special educator posts must be a national mission. The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan 2023–24 progress review showed that only 71,000 of India’s sanctioned 150,000 special educator posts are filled. States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have shown that change is possible: Kerala’s Inclusive Education Cell under Samagra Shiksha has deployed trained itinerant resource teachers to every block, while Tamil Nadu introduced Bridge Courses on Inclusive Education for all B.Ed. trainees in 2022. Globally, Finland and New Zealand provide valuable models, where every pre-service teacher is trained in differentiated instruction and inclusive assessment, ensuring that “special education” is not a parallel track but a shared competency.

2. Reasonable Accommodation: Standardizing examination accommodations and accessible learning materials is central to equality. Following the Supreme Court judgment of February 2025, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) issued revised circulars ensuring uniform scribe policies and extra-time provisions across India. In higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) now mandates that universities establish Disability Support Centres to assist with Braille materials, screen-readers, and note-taking support. Internationally, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2023) cites Chile's Inclusive School Reform and South Africa's Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) as examples where standardized accommodations have reduced dropout rates among students with disabilities.

3. Community Engagement: Inclusion cannot thrive without the involvement of parents, peers, and communities. In Odisha, the Swabhiman-led Anjali Festival has become a living classroom for inclusion, where thousands of children with and without disabilities learn together through art, music, and storytelling. This model has inspired similar inclusive education weeks in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The UNICEF–Maharashtra Project on Community Mobilization (2021–23) demonstrated how parent support groups and local disability committees can significantly improve school retention rates among children with developmental disabilities. Globally, the UNICEF Philippines “Schools of Hope” initiative and the Colombian Inclusive

Education Network both show that when parents and teachers co-create learning environments, inclusion deepens and sustains itself.

India must also develop inclusive monitoring systems, not merely counting children with disabilities but tracking participation, learning outcomes, and transitions into higher education and employment. The NIEPMD and NIEPVD have pioneered regional resource centers for data collection and teacher training, but these need to scale nationally with stable funding. The World Bank's 2024 "Learning for All" report recommends exactly such data-driven accountability to close equity gaps.

If India can combine legal commitment with practical collaboration, between government, teachers, parents, and children, it can move from inclusive rhetoric to inclusive reality. The foundation has been laid; what remains is the will to build.

Living the Law

I often return to a classroom I once visited in Puri, Odisha. A group of children, some using wheelchairs, some with hearing aids, and others without visible disabilities, were rehearsing a play for Children's Day. Their teacher, untrained in special education, told me softly, "At first I was scared. But when they learn together, I learn too."

That, to me, is the essence of inclusive education, a process where learning transforms everyone involved. The law, the judgments, and the policies give us the scaffold. But then real work lies in our schools, our communities, and our hearts.

Inclusion is not a policy to be implemented. It is a culture to be lived.

Dr Shruti Mohapatra is a leading disability rights activist and inclusion advocate. She founded Swabhiman, a pioneering organization empowering persons with disabilities, and has been at the forefront of campaigns for inclusive laws and education.

Her work has earned her national honours, including the Nari Shakti Puraskar from the President of India.

When the Law Speaks but the Nation Doesn't Listen

By Sai Dharshini

Kabir Paharia wanted what every young dreamer wants: a fair chance. A bright medical aspirant, he had worked tirelessly to crack NEET-UG, scoring well enough to chase his dream of becoming a doctor. But when he arrived for his medical board assessment, he was told his disability, a locomotor impairment, made him “unfit.”

The rejection came not because he didn't have the ability to study and practice medicine, but because the National Medical Commission's rules of admission relied on “percentage of impairment” - a number that labels candidates as “fit” or “unfit,” with little reflection of their true ability.

It took the Supreme Court's intervention to correct something that should never have required correction. It directed the National Medical Commission to rewrite its admission guidelines to emphasize functional assessment rather than assessment of extent of disability. It said, in no uncertain terms, that ability is not a number and dignity is not a privilege.

Kabir's story is not isolated. His struggle reflects a deeper truth - India has laws in place to ensure equality and access for persons with disabilities, but these laws often exist more on paper than in practice. Time and again, the courts have had to step in, not to create new rights, but to remind the system to uphold ones that already exist.

Multiple Supreme Court rulings in 2024 and 2025 have criticized the dismal state of enforcement of the RPwD act, forcing accountability from governmental bodies. Calling the government's inaction a "gross default," the Court demanded immediate corrective steps and warned that these orders were "one-time reliefs to undo years of neglect." Ministries, departments, banks, transport systems, and even courts themselves were forced to confront longstanding gaps in accessibility.

Against this backdrop, the past year saw several important rulings strengthening the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act. In March 2025, the Delhi High Court found 207 accessibility issues in the Rapido app and ordered the company to fix them within a set timeline under government supervision. It also directed the creation of national standards so that no app can launch without built-in accessibility. For millions excluded from digital life, this was not just about one app but it was about being included and seen.

Around the same time, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) took a decisive step beyond court directives. In September 2025, it mandated digital accessibility compliance for all regulated entities, including stock exchanges, mutual funds, and brokers. This was a landmark moment. Not just a judgment, but a policy shift that brought accessibility into the financial mainstream. For the first time, regulators were required to ensure that every investor could access online trading and disclosure systems on equal terms.

In recent proceedings, the Delhi High Court directed the Reserve Bank of India and the Government of India to ensure that accessibility features, including tactile marks, are included in the next series of currency notes. RBI was also instructed to monitor all banks by collecting reports every six months to ensure their digital platforms and services are compliant with accessibility norms.

The irony was not lost when the judiciary had to confront its own failings. In a recent case, the Supreme Court emphasized that online public services, from court portals to government forms, must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Denying such access, the Court held, effectively excludes citizens from governance itself. The Patna High Court ordered funds for accessible toilets in every court building. The Supreme Court itself reminded states that denying access to toilets and ramps in court complexes violates Article 21, the right to life with dignity.

Spurred by public pressure and court nudges, The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued sweeping guidelines requiring cinema halls to provide audio description, same-language subtitles, and sign language interpretation. The courts extended this to OTT platforms.

India's digital accessibility framework, from the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, to the Information Technology Rules, now requires both government and private websites to follow WCAG standards. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), are international rules that make websites and apps easy

to see, use, understand, and access for everyone, including people with disabilities.

Behind every ruling is a person who has waited too long for fairness. Petitioners against Rapido described losing jobs and independence because an app shut them out. Students like Kabir lost years waiting for fairness. Lawyers still argue in courtrooms without ramps, and restrooms remain inaccessible.

The courts have done their part. They have documented failure, prescribed remedies, and warned of consequences. But without budgets, audits, penalties, and timelines, justice remains theoretical. Accessibility cannot be reactive. It must be built in, from blueprints to budgets, from apps to institutions.

What the law now insists on is clear:

- Accessibility must be proactive, not symbolic.
- Assessment must be based on ability, not stigma.
- Technology must include all, from the start.
- Public spaces must serve all bodies, not just some.
- Compliance must be enforced, not encouraged.

Civil society and the media must keep the pressure alive. Every inaccessible app, every unfriendly classroom, every unwelcoming building must be called out loudly because silence is complicity.

The courts have spoken. Now it is our turn to listen. And to act.

Sai Dharshini A

Senior Program Officer

Ability Foundation