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“TOWARDS INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEMS: ENSURING ICT ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES”

AUTHORED BY - ABHISHEK KUMAR¹

“Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life.”
— Emma Thompson²

This paper examines the issue of digital accessibility for persons with disabilities, emphasizing the challenges they face in accessing information and communication technologies (ICTs) due to infrastructural, social, and policy-related barriers. The work is broken out into seven portions. In a technologically advanced society, the introduction emphasizes accessibility as a legal and moral need as well as the value of inclusive digital ecosystems. Examining the worldwide legal framework—especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)—and its emphasis on equality, non-discrimination, and ICT access, the second chapter looks at The third part examines the Indian legal scene with policies like the Accessible India Campaign and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Emphasizing problems including lack of universal design, unaffordable assistive devices, and inadequate digital literacy, the fourth segment explores the particular challenges experienced by persons with disabilities in negotiating digital environments. With lessons for India and other developing countries, the fifth segment assesses worldwide best practices and technology advances that advance digital inclusion. The sixth part offers a critical analysis of how government, business sector, and civil society could promote digital accessibility by awareness, capacity building, and inclusive design. Emphasizing the need of reframing digital growth via a rights-based perspective, the conclusion advocates complete involvement of people with disabilities in the digital economy and society. To create a really inclusive and fair digital economy, the report demands better legal enforcement, stakeholder cooperation, and policy reform and advocating for their full participation in society and equal access to informatin technology.

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² WECAPABLE available at <https://wecapable.com/disability-quotes-inspiring-words/> (last visited May 10, 2025).

I

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are absolutely essential in allowing access to education, healthcare, employment, and public services in the digital age of today. For persons with disabilities (PwDs), the digital revolution has not, however, resulted in equal access. Notwithstanding worldwide technological progress, there are still major obstacles in place that prevent PwDs from fully engaging in the digital world. These cover inaccessible websites, non-adaptive interfaces, absence of assistive technologies, and poor policy enforcement.³ Digital accessibility is the inclusive practice of reducing obstacles allowing those with disabilities to connect with, use websites, digital tools, and technologies.⁴ The World Health Organisation estimates that around 15% of the world's population—over a billion individuals—live with some kind of impairment; many of them are particularly impacted by digital exclusion. Under national and international frameworks as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.⁵ accessibility is not only a technological need but also a legal requirement.⁶ These legal requirements notwithstanding, the application of digital accessibility is still uneven. Inclusive digital development is hampered by developers' ignorance, low participation of stakeholders, and lack of enforced norms. Dealing with this disparity calls for a change in perspective—from seeing accessibility as a compliance need to realizing it is a basic human right.

The aim of this article is to investigate the difficulties and possibilities in guaranteeing PwDs' ICT accessibility. It addresses both domestic and international legal systems, assesses programs and policies, and provides suggestions for creating inclusive digital environments supporting equality and involvement for everyone.

³ WECAPABLE available at <https://wecapable.com/disability-quotes-inspiring-words/> lastly visited May 10 2025

⁴ Id.

⁵ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 49 of 2016, INDIA CODE (2016).

⁶ World Health Org., Disability and Health, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health> (last visited May 10, 2025).

II

Is There Any Fundamental Right to Ensuring ICT Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act) is a significant piece of legislation designed to safeguard and enhance the rights of individuals with disabilities in India. Implemented on April 19, 2017, this legislation corresponds with India's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and seeks to guarantee equality, dignity, and comprehensive involvement of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life. A significant focus of the RPWD Act is on ensuring digital accessibility. In the current landscape shaped by technology, the availability of digital content and services is essential. The Act acknowledges this need by incorporating specific measures aimed at making the digital ecosystem accessible for individuals with disabilities. The government is required by Section 40 of the Act to create regulations that guarantee accessibility in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Section 42 mandates that individuals with disabilities are entitled to equal access to digital resources, encompassing websites, applications, and media. Section 46 requires that all digital government services, documents, and communications be made accessible to individuals with disabilities.⁷

To bolster these legal requirements, IS-17802, named Accessibility for ICT Products and Services, was launched on May 10, 2023, in accordance with Rule 15 of the RPWD Rules.⁸ This standard is in accordance with international benchmarks like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) and EN 301 549, and it is mandatory for digital platforms in both the public and private sectors.

In February 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mandated that all banks ensure their digital banking platforms are accessible to users. As of August 2024, more than 140 entities, comprising both governmental ministries and private companies, were issued legal notices by the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) due to their failure to adhere to digital accessibility standards.⁹ In October 2024, the RBI unveiled official guidelines aimed at enhancing accessibility in digital banking, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in

⁷ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, §§ 40, 42, 46, No. 49, Acts of Parliament, 2016 (India).

⁸ Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Notification on Accessibility Standards, IS-17802, dated May 10, 2023.

⁹ Reserve Bank of India, Circular on Accessibility in Digital Banking Platforms, RBI/2023-24/105, Feb. 10, 2024.

financial services.¹⁰ The CCPD later imposed fines of ₹10,000 on 155 establishments for not ensuring their websites, apps, and digital portals were accessible.¹¹

The fines for failing to comply with the RPWD Act start at ₹10,000 and can escalate to ₹5,00,000 for multiple violations.¹² In addition to financial obligations, offenders encounter legal repercussions and harm to their reputation.

III

United Nations on Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations has been instrumental in acknowledging and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities (PwDs) via international legal instruments, policy frameworks, and worldwide advocacy efforts. The paramount milestone in this context is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), adopted on December 13, 2006, and enacted on May 3, 2008.¹³ This Convention represented a significant transformation by asserting that disability transcends medical or charitable considerations, positioning it as a human rights issue grounded in dignity, autonomy, and comprehensive societal engagement.

The UNCRPD underscores equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, and the freedom to engage in political, social, economic, and cultural activities.¹⁴ Article 9 delineates explicit rules regarding accessibility, mandating State Parties to implement suitable measures to provide access to the physical environment, transit, information, and communications, including ICTs.¹⁵ Moreover, Article 21 ensures the right to freedom of expression and access to information, highlighting the necessity of accessible formats and technology for individuals with impairments.¹⁶ The UN established entities like the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which oversees implementation and receives reports from states. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development incorporates disability rights within many targets, such as inclusive education, equitable employment, diminished inequities, and accessible urban

¹⁰ Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Legal Notices Issued to Public and Private Entities, Aug. 2024.

¹¹ Reserve Bank of India, Mandatory Accessibility Guidelines for Digital Banking, RBI/2024-25/37, Oct. 12, 2024.

¹² CCPD Compliance Report, Penalties on 155 Entities for Digital Non-Accessibility, Oct. 2024.

¹³ United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 13 December 2006, A/RES/61/106, entered into force 3 May 2008.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, art 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, art 21.

¹⁶ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *About the Committee*, United Nations, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd> (last visited 10 May 2025).

environments.¹⁷ India adopted the UNCRPD in 2007, agreeing to align its local legislation with international disability rights norms. Nonetheless, obstacles in enforcement, awareness, and technological infrastructure persist, hindering the complete actualization of these rights. Adopted on December 13, 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protects persons with disabilities' civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The Convention's Article 3 lists the overall ideas, which consist -

1. Respect of inherent dignity, personal autonomy including the ability to make one's own decisions, and personal independence;
2. Non-discriminatory
3. Complete and efficient involvement and inclusion within society;
4. Acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and mankind and respect of differences;
5. Equity of possibility;
6. Availability;
7. Equity between men and women;
8. Respect for the changing capacities of children with impairments as well as for their right to keep their identities.

In conclusion, the UN's programs have established a thorough framework for worldwide disability inclusion. The Convention serves as a potent instrument for advocacy and legal reform, affirming the rights of those with disabilities to live with dignity and engage equally in both digital and physical realms.

IV

Difficulties Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Accessing ICT Services.

Even with advanced frameworks such as the National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility, 2013, and legal requirements under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, individuals with disabilities in India still encounter significant obstacles in accessing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services. The obstacles we face extend beyond mere technical issues; they encompass legal, economic, and institutional dimensions,

¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, 25 September 2015.

highlighting a fundamental breakdown in the integration of accessibility within the core of digital development. A significant hurdle lies in the difficulty of accessing websites, mobile applications, and digital platforms. A significant number of government and private sector websites fail to adhere to the globally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), rendering them ineffective for screen readers and assistive technologies.¹⁸ A study conducted by the Centre for Internet and Society found that among 7,800 Indian government websites, 5,815 exhibited considerable accessibility problems, and 1,985 were completely inaccessible.¹⁹ This hinders individuals with disabilities from obtaining crucial information, welfare programs, educational resources, employment applications, and banking services.

Furthermore, the unawareness among developers and policymakers about accessibility standards hinders the progress of inclusive design. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has put forth the Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW), yet the responsibility for their implementation frequently falls to outsourced vendors who may lack adequate training in universal design principles.²⁰ By 2022, merely 45 websites had achieved certification for accessibility, even though there were thousands of portals that qualified.²¹ Additionally, there exists a lack of available hardware and assistive technologies, especially in rural and semi-urban regions. A significant number of individuals with disabilities struggle to access screen readers, braille displays, or voice-controlled devices due to financial constraints. Furthermore, the ICT infrastructure in rural India remains significantly underdeveloped, rendering digital inclusion an elusive aspiration for numerous individuals with visual, auditory, or motor impairments.²² Fourth, the lack of cohesive policies and ineffective enforcement has resulted in diminished accountability. The National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility does not carry binding authority, and while the RPWD Act is enforceable, it falls short in providing strong grievance redressal mechanisms tailored to digital accessibility.²³ Regulatory bodies like the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) have sent notices to those in violation, yet the subsequent actions taken have been

¹⁸ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, WORLD WIDE WEB CONSORTIUM (June 5, 2018), <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>.

¹⁹ CENTRE FOR INTERNET & SOC'Y, Accessibility of Indian Government Websites: A Study (2021), <https://cis-india.org/internet-governance/accessibility-study>.

²⁰ Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW), Ministry of Elecs. & Info. Tech. (2019), <https://web.guidelines.gov.in/>.

²¹ Ministry of Elecs. & Info. Tech., Rajya Sabha Answer, Unstarred Question No. 1143 (Dec. 9, 2022).

²² National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), ICT Access in Rural India: Challenges for PwDs (2020).

²³ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 49 of 2016, §§ 42–46, INDIA CODE (2016).

limited.²⁴

Additionally, language and literacy obstacles further isolate individuals with disabilities from underrepresented communities. A multitude of digital platforms are crafted in English, neglecting the rich linguistic diversity of India. Individuals with disabilities who lack literacy skills encounter a dual barrier in the digital landscape.⁸ Ultimately, there is a scarcity of public information regarding compliance, along with the absence of a centralized monitoring system. This lack of transparency hinders civil society and disability rights organizations in their efforts to hold the government or private entities responsible for digital exclusion.

In summary, although there are legal and policy tools available, their effectiveness is undermined by inadequate implementation, insufficient awareness, infrastructural deficiencies, and weak enforcement mechanisms. To tackle these challenges, it is essential to establish a cohesive accessibility framework, implement legally binding standards, provide technical training, offer financial assistance for assistive technologies, and prioritize inclusive design that accommodates the varied needs of individuals with disabilities.

V

Digital Accessibility and the National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility, 2013: An Examination of Legal and Policy Aspects

The National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility, 2013, was introduced by the Government of India to tackle the increasing demand for inclusive access to electronics and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for individuals with disabilities. Crafted by the former Department of Electronics and Information Technology, now part of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, this Policy seeks to eradicate discrimination against individuals with disabilities by integrating accessibility principles into digital infrastructure and services.²⁵

The Policy recognizes the varied requirements of individuals with different disabilities and advocates for universal design, accessibility standards, and compliance with global best

²⁴ Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Annual Report 2023, <https://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/>.

²⁵ Nat'l Policy on Universal Elec. Accessibility, Ministry of Elecs. & Info. Tech. (Oct. 2013), [https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/national_eAccessibility_Policy\(1\).pdf](https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/national_eAccessibility_Policy(1).pdf).

practices.²⁶ This serves as an essential instrument in meeting India's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and enhances legislative requirements, particularly those outlined in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act).²⁷ On a worldwide scale, digital accessibility is influenced by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), released by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The WCAG is founded on four essential principles: content should be perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. Although WCAG does not hold legal authority in India, there has been a growing acknowledgment by courts of its significance in upholding the principles of equality, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation as outlined in Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution.²⁸ Even with progress in policy, the execution of digital accessibility continues to lag in India. A report from 2021 by the Centre for Internet and Society highlighted that among 7,800 Indian government websites assessed, 5,815 had accessibility issues, while 1,985 websites were unable to load. ⁶ Over fifty percent were missing essential navigation markup, and merely 52 sites offered customizable color options—falling short of even the fundamental WCAG Level A standards.²⁹

In the 258th Session of the Rajya Sabha, which took place on December 9, 2022, MeitY recognized that merely 95 Central Government websites were rendered accessible amid the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁰ Nevertheless, out of these, only 45 websites received certification in accordance with the Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW).³¹ The certification of the remaining portals faced delays, attributed to logistical challenges stemming from the pandemic.³²

In 2017, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) initiated a project aimed at enhancing the accessibility of 917 websites belonging to state and union territories, in collaboration with ERNET India.³³ By December 2022, merely 647 websites had achieved compliance.³⁴ This highlights the sluggish progress and disjointed strategy regarding

²⁶ Id.

²⁷ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 49 of 2016, INDIA CODE (2016).

²⁸ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, WORLD WIDE WEB CONSORTIUM (June 5, 2018), <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>.

²⁹ Nat'l Fed'n of the Blind v. Union Pub. Serv. Comm'n, (2013) 10 S.C.C. 772 (India).

³⁰ CENTRE FOR INTERNET & SOC'Y, Accessibility of Indian Government Websites: A Study (2021), <https://cis-india.org/internet-governance/accessibility-study>.

³¹ Id.

³² Rajya Sabha, 258th Session, Starred Q. No. 237, Dec. 9, 2022 (India), available at <https://rajyasabha.nic.in>.

³³ Id.

³⁴ Id.

digital inclusion.

CONCLUSION

The National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility, 2013 represents a significant and essential step towards establishing an inclusive digital environment in India. This demonstrates India's commitment to ensuring fair access to electronic and ICT services for individuals with disabilities, harmonizing its obligations under global agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with its own laws and policies, including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Nonetheless, the success of this policy is greatly undermined by poor execution, insufficient public knowledge, and the absence of a strong enforcement system. Although the policy supports the concepts of universal design, standardization, and reasonable accommodation, these goals frequently stay in the realm of aspiration because of systemic inefficiencies. Even though global accessibility guidelines like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) have been around for more than twenty years and are embraced in numerous regions, India has not yet made it compulsory for these standards to be implemented across all digital services. The fundamental principles of WCAG—perceivability, operability, understandability, and robustness—are essential for achieving genuine inclusivity in digital platforms. However, in India, adherence to these principles is primarily voluntary, leading to a patchy and uneven application across the board. The evidence is clear and compelling. Submissions from the government to the Rajya Sabha, along with findings from civil society organizations like the Centre for Internet and Society, highlight a troubling disconnect between the intentions of policy and the actual conditions on the ground. Among the multitude of government websites, merely a small percentage adhere to fundamental accessibility standards. The Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW) represent a positive initiative, yet they have not attained broad certification across the board. Disruptions caused by the pandemic and the slow pace of bureaucracy have continued to hinder progress. Furthermore, this disparity in digital inclusion transcends a mere policy oversight; it raises significant constitutional issues. Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution of India ensure the right to equality, non-discrimination, and a dignified life—principles that are compromised when digital platforms deny individuals with disabilities access to vital information, services, and opportunities. Judicial precedents like *National Federation of the Blind v. UPSC* have underscored the duty of public authorities to guarantee digital accessibility; however, there appears to be a lack of consistent enforcement across various sectors. An effective national accessibility framework should be integrated into enforceable

legal systems, supported by oversight and consequences for those who fail to comply. Accessibility should not merely be viewed as a social obligation; it must be acknowledged as a fundamental legal and constitutional right. It is essential to bring private sector stakeholders, especially in finance, education, healthcare, and e-governance, under enforceable norms. This can be achieved through amendments to the RPWD Act, sector-specific regulations, or new legislation that specifically focuses on digital inclusion.

In summary, the way ahead necessitates a comprehensive approach: enforcing WCAG compliance, speeding up the certification process for public websites under GIGW, enhancing training and technical assistance for digital service providers, and creating definitive accountability structures. By following these steps, India can close the digital gap and foster an inclusive digital society that respects the dignity, autonomy, and engagement of all its citizens, particularly those with disabilities.

VI

Digital accessibility plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive governance and promoting sustainable development. For individuals with disabilities, access to digital platforms is essential for education, employment, social engagement, and the exercise of legal rights. Nonetheless, a considerable segment of India's population remains marginalized within its digital ecosystem due to technologies that are not easily accessible. A united approach is essential, involving the government, the business community, and civil society to close this divide. These individuals can advance digital accessibility by focusing on three essential pillars: awareness, capacity building, and inclusive design.

1. Government's Function: Guiding and Oversight

The government holds a pivotal position by establishing policy directions, implementing legislation, and overseeing enforcement. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, along with the National Policy on Universal Electronic Accessibility, 2013, provides essential legal frameworks; however, the execution of these measures has not been consistent.³⁵ It is essential for the government to enhance awareness initiatives, particularly at the state and local levels, emphasizing the legal and ethical obligations surrounding accessibility. It is essential to

³⁵ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 49 of 2016, INDIA CODE (2016); Nat'l Policy on Universal Elec. Accessibility, Ministry of Elecs. & Info. Tech. (Oct. 2013), [https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/national_e-Accessibility_Policy\(1\).pdf](https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/national_e-Accessibility_Policy(1).pdf).

require compliance with international accessibility standards like WCAG 2.1 and GIGW, guaranteeing their integration in all public procurement and the development of digital services.³⁶ Moreover, enhancing the capabilities within government departments is crucial. It is essential for developers, IT personnel, and policymakers to receive specialized training in accessible ICT practices.³⁷ In the absence of these interventions, even the most forward-thinking policies will struggle to yield meaningful outcomes. Ultimately, it is essential to enhance monitoring and grievance redressal mechanisms through the implementation of real-time audits and corrective measures.

2. The Business Sector's Influence: Creativity and Accountability

The private sector plays a significant role as a key creator of content and a provider of digital services. However, accessibility frequently goes overlooked in product design, whether because of a lack of awareness or financial constraints. Businesses need to understand that embracing digital inclusion goes beyond just meeting compliance standards; it represents a significant market opportunity, allowing them to connect with over 2.68 crore persons with disabilities in India.³⁸ It is essential for businesses to weave inclusive design principles throughout the entire product lifecycle. This encompasses comprehensive usability assessments, compatibility with screen readers, the inclusion of closed captions, high-contrast visuals, and features for keyboard navigation.³⁹ Accessibility must be prioritized as a crucial metric in the assessment of UI/UX design. Leading technology companies such as Apple and Microsoft have integrated accessibility features to gain a competitive edge; Indian companies should adopt similar strategies. Enhancing awareness among developers, designers, and corporate leaders can be achieved through initiatives focused on social responsibility and collaborations with experts in accessibility.

3. The Function of Civil Society: Advocacy and Empowerment

Civil society, encompassing NGOs and organizations advocating for disability rights, acts as both a vigilant observer and a catalyst for action. Their contribution to raising awareness, advocating for legal rights, and providing training is essential.⁴⁰ Initiatives such as “Digital

³⁶ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, WORLD WIDE WEB CONSORTIUM (June 5, 2018), <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>; Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW), Ministry of Elecs. & Info. Tech. (2019), <https://web.guidelines.gov.in/>.

³⁷ Ministry of Elecs. & Info. Tech., Accessibility Capacity Building Guidelines (2022), <https://meity.gov.in/>.

³⁸ Census of India 2011, Office of the Registrar Gen. & Census Comm’r, India, <https://censusindia.gov.in/>.

³⁹ Apple Accessibility Features, APPLE INC. (2024), <https://www.apple.com/accessibility/>.

⁴⁰ Disability Rights India, Campaigns & Interventions (2023), <https://ncpedp.org/>.

India for All” and appeals to the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) have compelled institutions to take action. Civil society should focus on equipping persons with disabilities with digital literacy skills to guarantee that access translates into effective use. Furthermore, audits involving community participation carried out by civil society can ensure accountability from both public and private sectors.

Constitutional Foundation

The RPWD Act promotes the essential rights outlined in Part III and the guiding principles found in Part IV of the Constitution. Article 14 ensures that all individuals are treated equally under the law and receive equal protection, whereas Article 15(1) explicitly forbids discrimination based on various factors, including disability. Article 21, broadly interpreted by the courts, safeguards the right to a dignified life, encompassing the right to accessibility and engagement in public life.⁴¹

Article 41 of the Directive Principles requires the State to ensure effective measures for guaranteeing the right to work, education, and public assistance for individuals with disabilities.⁴² The constitutional directives emphasize the obligation of the State to guarantee complete participation and inclusion of PwDs, particularly in the digital sphere.

Major Observations made by the Supreme Court on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities under the Indian Constitution.

The Supreme Court, in the case of **Deaf Employees Welfare Ass’n v. Union of India**, underscored the importance of reasonable accommodation and equality in employment for persons with disabilities, affirming that affirmative action is constitutionally permissible.⁴³

In the case of **National Federation of the Blind v. Union Public Service Commission**, the Court mandated that the UPSC must offer accessible formats and facilities for visually impaired candidates, reinforcing that equal access is integral to the rights enshrined in Articles 14 and 21.⁴⁴

⁴¹ INDIA CONST. art. 14, 15(1), 21.

⁴² INDIA CONST. art. 41

⁴³ Deaf Employees Welfare Ass’n v. Union of India, (2013) 12 SCC 246.

⁴⁴ Nat’l Fed’n of the Blind v. Union Pub. Serv. Comm’n, (2013) 10 SCC 772.

The Delhi High Court, in the case of **Javed Abidi v. Union of India**, mandated that Indian Railways must provide accessible travel for individuals with disabilities, emphasizing that a lack of accessibility infringes upon Article 21.⁴⁵

VII

CONCLUSION

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 signifies a transformative change in India's perspective on disability rights, transitioning from a welfare-oriented model to one grounded in rights. The focus on digital accessibility highlights the understanding that technology plays a crucial role in fostering equality and inclusion in today's society. The growing digitization of government services, banking, education, healthcare, and public communication has transformed accessible digital infrastructure into an essential requirement for individuals with disabilities, rather than a mere privilege. The RPWD Act ensures comprehensive inclusion by incorporating specific provisions on ICT access, including Sections 40, 42, and 46, which address both physical and virtual dimensions. The introduction of IS-17802 enhances this legal framework by establishing technical standards that are in harmony with internationally recognized accessibility norms such as WCAG 2.1 and EN 301 549. These standards act as essential instruments to steer both governmental entities and private organizations toward adherence. Recent enforcement actions by entities such as the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) demonstrate a significant effort by Indian authorities to convert legal mandates into real-world impact. The issuance of penalties and formal notices conveys a definitive message—non-compliance will not be ignored or accepted any longer. For organizations, ensuring digital accessibility transcends mere legal obligation; it serves as a pivotal strategic asset. Inclusive platforms can reach a broader audience, elevate user satisfaction, and strengthen brand reputation. Above all, it embodies a dedication to social justice, equality, and the inherent worth of every individual. Essentially, digital accessibility as outlined in the RPWD Act represents a fundamental duty, both ethical and legal. As India embraces digitalization, it is essential to prioritize inclusivity for individuals with disabilities in every aspect of technological progress and policy development. Noncompliance not only leads to legal consequences but also deprives countless individuals of their essential right to engage equally in society.

⁴⁵ Javed Abidi v. Union of India, 1999 SCC OnLine Del 42.