

Hiring Differently Abled by the Hospitality Sector in India: Lemon Tree Hotels Limited - A Case Study in Policy Intentions and Operational Persistence (A Female Centric Approach)

Monika Narang, Mr. Rajesh Kumar, Ms. Vibhuti Verma, Mr. Gautam Ahlawat, Dr. Neeru Nagar

School of Humanities and Social Sciences (Sociology), Sharda University, Greater NOIDA, UP-201306.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.1210000227>

Received: 20 October 2025; Accepted: 28 October 2025; Published: 15 November 2025

ABSTRACT

In a life full of barriers, Person's with Disability (PwD) face numerous challenges from the day of their birth until their death. Many significant obstructions restrict the growth and empowerment of a person with a disability and their participation in the labour market. The major challenges include lack of education, limited financial resources, poor infrastructure, lacking a skill development programme, and more often than not it is simply the prejudice and discrimination of the society at large that continues to deprive PwDs dignity in life.

The “decent work for all” has been promoted through Sustainable Development Goal 8 for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Work or employment is essential in everyone's life, especially persons with disabilities (PwDs). It provides a sense of accomplishment as well as a source of income. It improves their quality of life, socially and economically, incorporates them into the mainstream, and ensures integrity and respect in the family and community. They are often isolated from ordinary life, only to remain stereotyped, vulnerable, and marginalised. PwDs are also primarily denied access to economic resources such as job opportunities, sustainable wages, and a chance for their 4% of seats reserved for the disabled in government jobs (Behera et al, 2022).

India's hospitality industry is labour intensive and employs millions, making it a potentially major driver for inclusive employment. About 21.9 million people in India are differently abled, with government estimates showing only around 36% of them are employed—this rate is even lower within hospitality. Nevertheless, the industry offers a wide range of roles, and some chains have created innovative workplaces that cater to the strengths of differently abled individuals, like Echoes Café and Mitti Café, which employ only such staff.

The vulnerability of women with disabilities is based on the naturalistic interpretation which perceives them as physically and mentally weaker sections of the community. This notion overlooks the social, cultural, and political aspects that put women with disabilities in a subordinate position. They face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination because of which they are side-lined from the mainstream approach and are caught up in a “catch-22” situation.

It is ironic that feminists involved with the issue of difference are interconnected in their challenges to empower the powerless and determined to transform societal disparities but have not focused on the adversities related to disability and impairment for women with disabilities (Ghai.2021).

All laws and reservation policies can be easily circumvented if there is a lack of intention and determination. This paper is based on literature review and direct interview with the senior Human Resources leadership team of Lemon Tree Hotels Limited (India). Mr. Rajesh Kumar (Co-author of this research paper, SVP HR of LTHL) and his team give the credit of their hiring success of PwDs to clear direction and simple process of their policy document along with sincere and determined implementation of this policy.

Keywords: Persons with disability, Employment, Women First, Private Sector, Reservation, RPwD Act 2016, Private Sector, Hospitality Sector, Policy, Hiring, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Social capital is the effective functioning of social groups through interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a collective understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and mutuality (Ghai.2021). There is an indication that social capital frameworks will be critical for disabled women. Generating justifiable communities requires the acceptance of diversity and difference. Persons (particularly women) with disabilities are seen as unproductive, thus excluded from liberal political states that were primarily based on values of mutual interest/advantage ensured by contractual relations (Ghai.2021). In India, ignorance of disability creates and maintains a status quo where the “disabled” is incorporated with the existing social patterns (as special), while judging the normative hegemony (Ghai.2021). An understanding of disability therefore is trapped in a concessional category.

Leading Inclusive Employers

Prominent hotel chains such as Lemon Tree Hotels, Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), and ITC have dedicated programs for hiring and integrating people with disabilities. For instance:

1. Lemon Tree Hotels employs over 600 differently abled people in various roles and runs sensitization training for all staff, including mandatory sign language training.
2. Mitti Café and Echoes Café are known for hiring and empowering staff who are deaf, mute, or otherwise disabled, often running entire operations with such teams.
3. La Gravata in Jamshedpur employs differently abled women athletes as staff.

Lemon Tree Hotels (LTHL) believes that the brand should stand for more than ‘just profit’ and therefore they deliberately are building the brand to become truly **Indian** and **Trusted**. In order to make these values a part of their DNA they have focused their efforts on creating a **socially inclusive** work environment which seeks to employ people of different backgrounds, abilities and ethnicities and offer them work as a unified team with a common goal.

LTHL’s choice of words in their policy document is truly progressive and inspiring. Instead of using the word disability, their policy documents are targeted towards, “**Opportunity Deprived Indians (ODIs)**”, meaning those with physical, intellectual, social, economic or/and academic disabilities leading to an opportunity deprivation (LTHL’s ODI Policy). LTHL pledges to provide the same environment to ODI’s as others to realise their full potential and live their lives with dignity. LTHL is committed to creating a supportive enabling organization, which allows them to deliver their best. LTHL, through deliberate policy and their strict implementation operationally, are keen to play a part however small, in social inclusiveness, opportunity/livelihood creation and therefore nation building.

CURRENT LAWS ON PwD (Persons with Disability)

Disability is a multidimensional concept, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 defines it as a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment that, in interaction with barriers, hinders full and effective participation in society (GoI 2016, as quoted in Sen,2023). To address this challenge, the concept of “reasonable accommodation” was introduced to promote equality, enable positive rights, and prevent discrimination based on disabilities, health conditions, or personal beliefs (Sen,2023). Under the RPwD Act, 2016, reasonable accommodation is defined as necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments, without imposing a disproportionate burden, to ensure the enjoyment of rights equally with others, including provisions like additional time and scribes. (GoI 2016 as quoted in Sen,2023). While the

RPwD Act, 2016 represents a significant step towards recognising and prescribing reasonable accommodations for inclusive education, the reality is far from ideal. The TRRAIN HSBC Disability Employment Report 2019 (TRRAIN Trust 2019) revealed that 46% of persons with disability (PwD) in India are uneducated, underscoring the denial of quality education and equal opportunities for millions of students with disabilities in the country (Sen, 2023).

Further, there is simply no recognition in the official data, which fails to provide any disaggregated information around disability. The current redressal mechanism under the existing laws completely overlooks the special needs of women with disabilities, and the justice system continues to remain inaccessible to them (Sharma and Das, 2021).

Over the past two decades, significant advancements have been made regarding laws related to access to higher education for PwDs in India. This issue was initially tackled in the mid-1990s with the introduction of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (PwD), 1995. However, this act distinguished “disability” and “access” as separate categories. The focus on access primarily aimed to eliminate architectural barriers and ensure admission to higher education institutions (HEIs) by requiring seat reservations for disabled candidates in all government-funded HEIs (Palan 2021: 205 as quoted in Maurya, 2025). Subsequent regulations that followed the PwD Act adopted a more positive approach. For instance, the Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (Differently-abled Persons) scheme (HEPSN), which was implemented during the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002) and continued until the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–17), aimed to assist HEIs in making infrastructure accessible, providing assistive technology and learning aids, facilitating the admission of disabled students, and offering guidance and counselling to support their successful transition into employment after completing higher education (UGC 2012) (Maurya, 2025).

India has expanded access to higher education for students with disabilities (SwDs) through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. The act has increased the reservation of seats for PwDs from 3% to 5% and now includes a broader range of individuals, encompassing 21 health conditions. Although the act emphasises the importance of HEIs making “reasonable accommodations” for disabled students, there are concerns about its effectiveness as it does not compel HEIs to integrate them. Despite the government’s extensive efforts, educational participation and outcomes for disabled students, especially Women with Disabilities (WwD), remain inadequate in India (Maurya, 2025).

PwD Employment Reality in India

Sharma and Priya (2020) in their paper ‘Excluded in Rehabilitation Disability in the Neo-liberal Era’, study the experience of disability within the growing impact of neo-liberal globalisation utilising an ethnographic approach. Findings indicate how its implicit “commodifying” impact on persons with disabilities aggravates their physical and psychological wounds by amplifying their identity as the “unproductive” or “less productive” other (Sharma and Priya, 2020).

The disability experience for most persons with disabilities (PWDs) is that of being perceived as the “deficient,” “economically unproductive or less productive,” and “dependent or needy” other (Sharma and Priya, 2020). They often internalise these perceptions. Such perceptions have been sustained by the discourse of the medical model of health (where the standards of a healthy body or “ableism” makes bodily impairment a “deficiency”) and cultural discourses comprising norms or stereo types about having an impairment (Sharma and Priya, 2020). With poverty aggravating the condition of impairment, and PWDs frequently denied income-generation opportunities, especially in the global South, they find themselves trapped in this vicious cycle of poverty and disability (Dalal 2010; Ghai 2001 as quoted in Sharma and Priya, 2020).

Ignoring the needs and rights of people with disabilities places an unnecessary burden on India’s economy (McGowan, 2020). What you don’t count, you don’t plan for (McGowan, 2020). And, so, across the country,

persons with disabilities live with the twin reality of being neither counted nor planned for (McGowan,2020). As bad as it is for them, it's no good for the country either. While India's economy suffers from the lost opportunities which arise from children out of school and adults unemployed, it must also shoulder added, often unnecessary, burdens that the population of persons with disabilities impose (McGowan,2020).

According to the National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, 66% of persons with disabilities in India are unemployed (McGowan,2020). Apart from poverty—which is the primary fallout of unemployment—depression, isolation, loneliness, and poor physical health are also common (McGowan,2020). Caregivers face these same problems, with the additional burden of physically demanding responsibilities and attendant burnout (McGowan,2020). Taken together, these two groups represent at least 20% of the population (McGowan,2020). According to the United Nations, persons with disabilities are the world's largest minority. It should go without saying, then, that they have the same rights to healthcare, education and employment as any other Indian and should be made an urgent national priority (McGowan,2020).

Vocational Rehabilitation Centres: The vocational rehabilitation of PWDs aims to enhance skill development for gainful employment among them. However, the work sector is based on ableist assumptions and the wider neo-liberal mindset that dominates the economic and social sectors (Sharma and Priya, 2020). Consequently, economic rehabilitation in the real sense is not possible as the job sector is predominantly profit-oriented and consumeristic (Sharma and Priya, 2020). Many of the PWDs seemed satisfied with the training programmes, yet their future was uncertain on the completion of the training. This calls for attention to the vast gap between (i) the aims of skill development and employment opportunities as promised, and (ii) the ground realities of such rehabilitation (Sharma and Priya, 2020).

The activities at most of the government-run institutions and programmes were marked by apathy towards and nonparticipation of the PWDs (Sharma and Priya, 2020). Often, the discourse of the PWDs being “needy” of receiving charity served the interests of the service-providers (enhancing their self-esteem). PWDs who reside in rural settings or urban slum settings with no access to resources and opportunities are the worst affected. Both the government and the rights-based organisations are directly or indirectly catering to the neo liberal agenda of favouring those who can pose a threat (by raising a voice against the rehabilitation system) to the smooth functioning of the economic system. Neoliberal globalisation has shaped the experience of disability by focusing on the inability of PWDs in a fast-growing economy where consumerist culture and profit rule.

Behera et al (2022) paper ‘Challenges of Persons with Severity of Disabilities: Evidence from the Indian Labour Market’ maps the status of employment opportunities for persons with severity of disability with an emphasis on their factors of labour force participation and the likelihood of employment in public or private enterprises. The paper employs the two comparable databases of the National Sample Survey on disability. The findings reveal that although the Indian Constitution and legislation have provisions for equal rights, disability remains an axis of social discrimination, inequality, and exclusion from employment opportunities (Behera, Mohanty and Sharma, 2022). The odds of employment in private enterprises are against the persons with disabilities (Behera et al, 2022).

The “decent work for all” has been promoted through Sustainable Development Goal 8 for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Work or employment is essential in everyone's life, especially persons with disabilities (PwDs). It provides a sense of accomplishment as well as a source of income. It improves their quality of life socially and economically, incorporates them into the mainstream, and ensures integrity and respect in the family and community. They are often isolated from ordinary life, only to remain stereotyped, vulnerable, and marginalised. PwDs are also primarily denied access to economic resources such as job opportunities, sustainable wages, and a chance for their 4% of seats reserved for the disabled in government jobs (Behera et al, 2022). Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognises “the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work

environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities” (United Nations 2006 as quoted in Behera et al, 2022). The disabled population constitutes 15% of the world population (WHO 2011). India has 2.68 crore PwDs, of which 1.5 crore are male, and 1.18 crore were female (MoSPI 2016).

Almost all jobs can be done by those with a disability, provided there is a proper working environment. However, many studies in both developed and developing countries show that the disabled workers have considerably lower rates of jobs and much higher unemployment rates than those without disabilities (WHO 2011 as quoted in Behera et al, 2022). Low employment rates are the result of many factors—including disability-related work limitations, lower levels of education and experience, discrimination by employers in hiring or provision of accommodations, difficulty in sustaining employment after the onset of a disability, and lack of access to necessary support services (Behera et al, 2022).

Lower labour force participation rates are one of the main mechanisms through which disability may lead to poverty. In 2006, labour market participation of the disabled population was 38.8% against 64% of the nondisabled population (Mitra and Sambamoorthi 2006 as quoted in Behera et al, 2022). In 2011, 26.8 million people were living with a disability in India: 20.3% of them had movement disabilities, 18.9% hearing impairments, 18.8% visual impairments, and 5.6% with a mental disability (MoSPI 2016).

Barriers to Employment: In a life full of barriers, PwDs face numerous challenges from the day of their birth until their death. Many significant obstructions restrict the growth and empowerment of the person with a disability and enter into the labour market. The major challenges include lack of education, limited financial resources, poor infrastructure, lacking a skill development programme, etc. (Behera et al, 2022). Most of the time, disable persons themselves do not apply for the jobs available in private and other such organisations, fearing social stigma, the co-workers’ unwelcome reaction, and indifferent as well as negative attitude from the society in general (Behera et al, 2022).

Other issues include lack of daily wage skills, self-esteem and confidence, which makes them isolated and restricts them from contacting their friend and families (Addlakha 2008 as quoted in Behera et al, 2022), poor knowledge of English, over protective parents, basic skills, and rural disconnect from the market. There is a lack of assistive devices in the Indian workplace setting that proves beneficial in creating opportunities, increasing efficiency, and enhancing the working potential of the population with disabilities.

Covid 19 -Women And Disability

COVID-19 and the resultant lockdowns have severely curtailed the mobility of persons with disabilities, restricted their ability to seek basic necessities, healthcare, and assistance (Chanda and Sekher, 2020). Uncertainty on the disbursement of financial protection schemes meant for persons with disabilities have exacerbated their existing financial precarity.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented public health crisis, and the attendant infections and fatality were concentrated in the lower strata of society in developing countries (Chanda and Sekher, 2020). Poor health and socio-economic conditions widen the spread and susceptibility of COVID-19 in India. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) was one of the segments of the population who faced compounded vulnerability to contagious diseases and lack of access to necessary facilities (Chanda and Sekher, 2020). In India, 26.8 million people have one or more forms of disability (GoI 2011). The difficulties faced by PWDs in India are multidimensional in nature and their poor socio-economic conditions increase the risk and vulnerability from the pandemic and prolonged lockdowns (Chanda and Sekher, 2020).

The outbreak of COVID-19 has led to an unprecedented rise in the cases of domestic violence. Women with disabilities are located at such a disadvantaged position in the current social matrix that they are more vulnerable to any form of violence than non-disabled women (Sharma and Das, 2021). Crisis perpetuates the existing inequalities in the society which has made women with disabilities even more vulnerable as they stand at a unique intersection of gender and disability (Sharma and Das, 2021).

Current sociological theories on disaster tell us that they disrupt the social system (Herring 2013 as quoted in Sharma and Das, 2021). However, this understanding is limited and often flawed as it is seen from a patriarchal lens. Thus, it becomes crucial to understand the implications of a disaster and the inequalities it perpetuates through a gender lens. This not only highlights the experience of women but also reviews how gender can be crucial in determining the vulnerability of a group during a disaster (Sharma and Das, 2021). However, the conflation of different identities into the word "woman" under-theorises their impact on different identities, and hence, it becomes important to focus on the various intersections within this social identity.

Disability is one such intersection that increases the vulnerability of women because of the already existing socially constructed roles assigned to gender and disability (Sharma and Das, 2021). Therefore, there is a need to examine this crisis from an intersectional perspective of gender and disability. Women with disabilities are "excluded within an exclusion" as the discrimination they face intersects on two vulnerabilities of gender and disability.

The vulnerability of women with disabilities is based on the naturalistic interpretation, which perceives them as physically and mentally weaker sections of the community. This notion overlooks the social, cultural, and political aspects that put women with disabilities in a subordinate position. They face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination because of which they are side-lined from the mainstream approach and are caught up in a "catch-22" situation (Mohanty 2005 as quoted in Sharma and Das, 2021).

Despite India having ratified both the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, laws on violence continue to overlook the specific needs of women with disabilities. Therefore, in an everyday situation where the law and order is not affected by a disaster or calamity, women with disabilities tend to undergo problems specific to their disabilities and are continuously failed by the system in addressing them. When the country faced an unprecedented crisis like COVID-19, women with disabilities were disproportionately affected. It is, therefore, important to approach such a crisis and its impact from an intersectional perspective as it gives a better analysis of the complex interaction a society has in a crisis. It can be crucial in adopting a new practice that is significant in reaching the most vulnerable first.

It's A Matter of True Commitment in Letter and Spirit from The Hospitality Sector - Lemon Tree Hotels Ltd

The hospitality sector in India has seen increasing but still limited progress in hiring differently abled individuals, especially in hotels and restaurants. Several leading hotel chains and food outlets have made notable efforts to empower people with disabilities through structured programs, sensitization, and targeted hiring, but sector-wide inclusion remains fragmented, often driven more by compliance than strategic human resource integration.

Paper after paper is published on failures of Governments and Private sector on making lives respectable for PwD. Women with disabilities face double discrimination in Indian society (Maurya,2025). Maurya (2025) in his paper 'Beyond Reservation Educational and Employment Opportunities for Women with Disabilities' concludes that despite constitutional provisions and recent legislation, disability continues to be a significant factor in perpetuating social discrimination, inequality, and exclusion of women.

As per LTHL, their ODI (Opportunity Deprived Individuals) Program can be defined as comprising of:

1. Employees with Disabilities (EWDs)
2. Employees from Economically and Socially deprived backgrounds (EcoSoc)

LTHL partners with NGOs and some government bodies in sourcing candidates for the above apart from internal references of employees who are already working with them. This endeavour is spearheaded at the

Corporate level by the Human Resources & the Sustainability teams and at the local level, all unit Hotel General Managers and HR personally lead this initiative.

Let's look at the categories for which LTHL hires the Employees with Disabilities (EWDs):

1. Speech and Hearing Impaired (SHI)
2. Locomotor Disability
3. Vision Impaired – Low Vision
4. Dwarfism
5. Acid Attack Survivors
6. Intellectually Disabled - Down syndrome
7. Intellectually Disabled – Autism
8. Intellectually Disabled – Slow Learner

Speech and Hearing Impaired (SHI):

LTH currently has a significant presence of SHI employees across its hotels in all functions, especially in Housekeeping, F&B Service and Kitchen.

While hiring SHI employees, they keep in mind the fit of the individual with the job he/she will perform (LTHL's ODI Policy)

Mr. Kumar (SVP-HR, LTHL) explained the process of Interview and Assessment as under:

There are some -prerequisites which need to be addressed: (mandatory)

- Ensure presence of an Interpreter.
- Ensure presence of a guardian and parent, if not available, then someone from the NGO who has referred the candidate.

During the interview process the following points may be included as part of the assessment:

- Education level of parents
- Logistics (i.e. how the candidate will commute, prefer people residing at close vicinity of the hotel)
- Explain the job role and dignity of the jobs available at hotels.
- Function and shift timings, job profile.

If we have an existing SHI employee currently working in the vertical where we are contemplating to hire this new candidate, then we ask somebody to take this candidate to go and see the nature of job and also leave the candidate with our SHI colleague so that they can together (without any intervention of other employees) have a free chat for some time.

The salary offered to any ODI employee, is equivalent to what is offer to an abled employee with similar background and experience. Other benefits apart from salary:

- Two-time meals during the duty hours
- Uniform, Insurance, and other welfare measures.
- The SHIs are required to carry the below mentioned on their person at all times while in office:
The EWD (SHI) card- To facilitate interaction with guests when necessitated.
- The pea-less (seedless) empty whistle- To use in case of emergency or fire to draw other's attention.

Once inducted, each SHI colleague and other new joiners are explained, the need and rationale of the abovementioned practices.

Locomotor Disability:

LTHL has truly pioneered the hiring of Orthopedically Handicapped (OH) candidates in Departments like Finance, Stores, Front Office, Housekeeping, F&B Service, and Food Production. Job levels mapping is done, right from entry level to management level positions. It can be safely concluded here that LTHL has gone beyond the call of Government mandate or minimum requirement prescribed through various laws, to work towards ensuring employment to OH candidates.

c. Acid Attack Survivors

The social stigma attached to acid attack survivors leaves a life-long trauma that often leads to depression and higher instances of suicide amongst this very vulnerable group. LTHL has done exemplary work in giving hope and dignity through employment to acid attack survivors. Their policy and implementation guidelines cover end to end process, beginning from sensitising to taking care post hiring. Some of the details ref. LTHL ODI Policy are as under:-

LTHL has a set of Pre-While-Post Hiring guidelines which it ensures before any Acid attack survivor joins.

Pre-Hiring Guidelines carry Some vital info about Acid Attack Survivors. This is a must read for all Hotel General Managers (HGMs), Head of Departments and Human Resources Managers. It describes the terms associated with Acid Attack.

Acid: Acid is a very strong chemical that is corrosive. It can cause severe burns and damage muscular and nerve cells when it comes into contact with the skin. It might go deeper to bones as well. A chemical burn is like a classified thermal burn and may cause extensive damage to the cells.

Trauma: Victims of attacks not only undergo severe physical pain and trauma but also mental trauma that changes the way they feel and think. Victims suffer many psychological symptoms and they feel depressed, ashamed, worried and lonely - all along their life.

Disfigurement: When the burns from an acid attack heal, they form thick scars which pull the skin very tight and can cause disfigurement. Physical consequences may spread on to skull, forehead, ears, eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth, chin, neck, chest and shoulder.

Stigma: Acid burn victims face a lifetime of discrimination from society, and they often become lonely. They feel embarrassed as they think people may stare or laugh at them and may hesitate to leave their homes fearing adverse reactions from the outside world.

Rehabilitation: The victims become physically handicapped and lose their strength and potential. These persons with disabilities are normally dependent on the family members. However, many can work and can become self-reliant provided they are given the opportunity.

Hiring Process:

Step by step Hiring Process – acid attack survivors

Step 1: LTHL shares a short bio template in advance with the NGO/Institution from where they are sourcing the acid survivors. Alternatively, when the candidate arrives at the hotel for interview this short bio can be filled. Before the first round of personal interview is conducted, a one-on-one chat with the survivor in a designated room and that this chat is recorded. It is ensured that a lady employee is present at the time of interacting with a lady survivor.

Step 2: It is mandatory to have one senior lady employee from the hotel on the interview panel.

Step 3: It is mandatory for the panel members to read the recorded one-on-one chat before interviewing the survivor.

Step 4: Points to take care while interviewing:

1. **Don't talk about the incident:** Never ask question like “What had happened”, “who did this” and “how it happened”.
2. **Explain the job role:** Have a hotel tour and show them the nature of job in various functions at entry level. Do an aspiration mapping.
3. **Assess the severity of disfigurement (face):** If this will have a notable effect in guest's contact, then suggest the roles other than guest contact areas (i.e. any job role at Back of the House).
4. **Ask the survivor whether she is allergic to anything:** especially when you contemplate to place candidate in HK and KST.

Post Hiring the below points to be noted when the Acid Survivor (AS) comes on board:

1. Invite an expert/mentor from the NGO/Institution/Foundation to conduct a sensitization session for all stakeholders within a week.
2. Help the AS colleague to get an accommodation closer to the hotel.
3. If the candidate would like to avail shared company accommodation, please explain the shared cost breakup to her. A special sensitization session for the hostel-mates is to be conducted.
4. Induction – LTH Golden Rules and Code of Conduct is part of our induction document. Please explain them that we follow “zero tolerance” on any violation of these ethics/values. People found guilty are subject to severe disciplinary action.
5. During the first fortnight do not invite/involve AS colleague in any common employee forum or gathering, etc. Give them space and time to settle down, it would take some time for them to come out of shyness.
6. Regular engagement by HOD & HRM will help them to settle faster.
7. Have a documented review with AS colleague at the end of first quarter to make sure she has settled in her job.

The approach and process are simple and easy to implement. The intention is giving dignity of life to all and not an approach of ‘charity’ or ‘help’.

d. Intellectually disabled - Down Syndrome, Autism, and Slow Learner

LTHL has identified a few roles where people with Down Syndrome (DS) can participate and be a part of the team. Currently the approach is to get them on board for a six-month traineeship first and then consider for full time employment, based on their performance assessment.

Some of the key innovative steps involved to ensure success of DS are as under:

1. LTHL takes initiative to seek out candidates with DS through references or NGOs.
2. The potential DS candidate and their parents visit their hotels on familiarisation visit to see their operations and where the candidate will be working.
3. Experts from the NGO then do a sensitisation session (half day) for the hotel team who will be interacting with these candidates on a regular basis.
4. The NGOs do an extensive counselling session on their premises for candidates who are interested in working with LTH.
5. Post a simple interview, the DS candidates come on board as trainees for 6 months. This is considered as an institutional training facility extended to the NGO/Foundation
6. During the training period, LTH identifies and deputes a Manager/Executive to take care of the DS candidate in all respects, including mentoring, training, monitoring their behaviour with others, shift timings, logistics, etc.
7. During this period LTH trains, them on how to do most tasks (NOT all) for a particular role. DS/Slow learner candidates will be asked to do these tasks repeatedly, to ensure learning and perfect execution.
8. Towards the end of the training, all trainees are assessed and a few of them are identified by the mentor for full time employment.

Each DS employee carries a 'Pocket book' with him. This book contains a list of tasks to be done along with timelines- during the 8-hour shift. They keep this book with them as it acts as a reminder through the day.

B. Economically, and Socially Marginalised Segment (EcoSoc)

LTHL has gone above the mandate of the government to seek out individuals who are largely shunned by the society at large. People who belong to marginalized sections of society i.e. who are from economically or socially weaker segments (EcoSoc) are given opportunity at life and dignity and a safe meritorious environment to grow and flourish.

LTHL policy document defines and identifies people who belong to marginalized sections of society i.e. **Economically or Socially weaker segments (EcoSoc) as under:**

For someone to qualify as an EcoSoc, he/she must be a school drop-out, having studies up to class nine or below along with any of the below criterion:

1. Below Poverty Line (BPL) individuals
2. Widowed or abandoned/battered/destitute, who need to make a living to survive (themselves and their children)

3. Divorced women who need to make a living to survive (themselves and their children) (education qualification not a deterrent here)
4. Orphans (education qualification not a deterrent here)
5. Poor and underprivileged - domestic workers (female).
6. Individuals from economically weak families
7. Transgender (transwomen & transmen)

a. Hiring Orphans, abandoned/lost child, LTHL's strategy is:

Identify a reliable NGO/Government Home.

Take 17+ year girls/boys as Apprentice/interns for training for a term varying from 3 months to 9 months (in line with the guidelines of NAPS).

Place them in four major operation functions – Housekeeping), Kitchen Stewarding (KST), Front Office & F&B Service.

Teams undergo a sensitization session conducted by experts.

Provide accommodation in existing staff guest house without charge, where required.

Post training/assessment absorb as FTC on merit basis. (Once they are 18 years of age)

During training the NGO/Government Home coordinates with hotel and extend support till such time these kids get accustomed to work and LTH work culture.

Continue working to raise the academic level to undergraduate/Graduate for these kids, as some are good in academics.

LTHL pointed out some Challenge & solution: All these girls & boys are vulnerable to outside world. First 2 to 3 months are crucial. A buddy (at workplace and beyond) is advisable. This is because of the fact, that they all were less fortunate of having proper support and real parental guidance during their childhood. And few might have suffered abused by the society as well. Hence it would be better to have someone who can mentor and develop self-confidence.

Formality to hire: All abandoned/lost child enrolled at NGOs/ Government Homes are registered under Child Welfare Board under Department of Women and Child Development of respective state government. These kids generally have their ID (Aadhar card). Consent letter from CWB is essential as part of pre-joining formalities. LOI addressed to individual c/o NGO needs to have a mention on accommodation at staff guest house; where required (Mr. Kumar explained that all precautions are necessary to ensure legal compliance).

b. Transgender

A third gender with or without academic qualification can be provided an opportunity to work with Lemon Tree Hotels. .

General guidelines:

1. LTHL hiring focus is on Transgender, Male converted to Female and vice-versa.

2. Being Trans or to become a third gender is a natural phenomenon to be. Hence, avoid asking questions why, when, how, etc.
3. Transwoman be considered and addressed as “She” and Transman be considered and addressed as “He”. In case of any ambiguity arises, leave the option to the person concerned and ask about the “Personal Gender Pronoun” they would prefer.

Hiring is done through registered NGOs. The whole hotel team (including security) is sensitized prior to hiring process. An exclusive session for lady employees, in case of hiring Transwoman be conducted with an expert; and vice-versa for Transman. Transwoman to use all facilities locker, cloak room, uniform, etc. as issued to a lady employee and Transman to use those as assigned to male colleagues. Assessment is done based on the professional/academic qualification and/or past experience if any, and accordingly department and core job-role is assigned. For a fresher, we prefer an entry level position or as apprentices (as the case may be) that goes with their inclination towards any particular department. To begin with, place them at backend operative positions, where personal contact with the guest is limited or nil. This wouldn't apply to non-operative back-end functions.

Assign a senior colleague from the department as a buddy to train on the responsibilities. Post which assign an Executive as a Mentor for couple of months.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While progressive legislation such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 exists, true inclusion is hampered by fragmented practices and attitudinal barriers. The INCLUDE Framework, recently proposed for hospitality HR, emphasizes seven pillars of inclusion—from recruitment and training to performance, grievance redressal, and policy integration. Recruitment channels typically include private employment exchanges and NGOs, while government exchanges contribute very little.

Disability is not merely absent from legal recognition but is actively constructed as a site of deficit, dependency, and exclusion. The Constitution enshrines ableist assumptions by equating disability with incompetence and by framing rights as conditional or deferrable (Thakur, 2025). This logic is extended through multiple statutory frameworks, which embed control within the language of care, and erode autonomy through caveats, exceptions, and guardianship regimes (Thakur, 2025). Disability remains jurisprudentially peripheral—seen as an object of welfare rather than a constitutional identity (Thakur, 2025).

For most of history, persons with disabilities have not just been marginalised, they have been written out of the law itself. Excluded from schools, denied jobs, and erased from public life, they have lived in the shadows of legal silence (Thakur, 2025).

There are various discrepancies in the employment of PwDs in the labour market. Despite a large population of disabled people in India, their employment opportunities are largely constrained by the “normal” people's attitudes, which make these impaired people disabled. A multifaceted approach is required to address economic, social, medical, and legal aspects of barriers to participation in the labour market (Behera et al, 2022). Lemon Tree Hotels Limited present a shining example of success in recognizing potential of PwD, training, employing and retaining PwD and constructively contributing towards a life of ‘Dignity’ for all.

Creating an accessible environment is a must. The creation of an inclusive work environment and the shedding of stigmatised beliefs is also crucial at increasing the chances of employment for them. PwDs should be made aware of the available schemes and policies that guarantee them employment. The central and state governments must establish necessary accessible infrastructure as per the disability policies and international commitments (Behera et al, 2022).

The identification of work for each type of disability may be the stepping stone for creating gainful employment for this marginalised section of the population (Behera et al, 2022). With special training, persons with mild intellectual disabilities can be employed in unskilled and manual jobs. Using information and communications technology tools with technical/vocational training, they can perform a wide range of jobs in more productive and creative ways (Behera et al, 2022).

Self-help groups (SHGs) should also be promoted to assimilate a higher number of PwDs without discrimination. The private sector must work beyond the mandatory reservations and Laws and display honest intentions and sincerity towards hiring PwD, especially women.

REFERENCE:

1. Behera, M., Mohanty, C.P., Sharma, K.K. (2022) 'Challenges of Persons with Severity of Disabilities: Evidence from the Indian Labour Market', EPW Economic & Political Weekly, October 29 & November 5, 2022, 57(44 & 45), pp 58-64
2. Chanda, S., Sekher, T.V. (2020) 'Disability during COVID-19 Increasing Vulnerability and Neglect', EPW Economic & Political Weekly, September 26, 2020, 55(39), pp 30-33
3. Ghai, A. (2021) 'A Rendering of Disability and Gender in the COVID-19 Era', Economic and Political Weekly (Engage), 13 March 2021, 56(11)
4. Article URL: [/engage/article/rendering-disability-and-gender-covid-19-era](#)
5. Jain, N. (2022) 'Braille, Empowerment of Visually Challenged, and the Contemporary Discourse', Economic & Political Weekly EPW, October 1, 2022, 57(40), pp 17-20.
6. Mahalakshmi, S., Ranganathan, S. (2024) 'Treating Chronic Pain as Invisible Disability', Economic & Political Weekly EPW, June 1, 2024, 59(22), pp 19-21.
7. Maurya, A.T. (2025) 'Beyond Reservation Educational and Employment Opportunities for Women with Disabilities', Economic & Political Weekly EPW, May 10, 2025, 60(19), pp 61-68
8. Maurya, A.T. (2024) 'Disability Sports and the Quest for True Inclusivity: A Critical Analysis', Economic and Political Weekly (Engage), Vol. 59(29), 20 July 2024.
9. Article URL: [/engage/article/disability-sports-and-quest-true-inclusivity](#)
10. McGowan, J.C. (2020) 'Why India Can't Afford to Ignore the Economics of Disability', Economic & Political Weekly, March 21, 2020, 55(12), pp 61-62.
11. Rath, B.M. (2021) 'Philosophical Reflections on Rendering of Disability and Gender in COVID-19 Era', Economic and Political Weekly (Engage), Vol. 56(11, 13) March 2021. Article URL: [/engage/article/philosophical-reflections-rendering-disability-and](#)
12. Sen, S. (2023) 'Scrutinizing Reasonable Accommodation under the RPwD Act, 2016', EPW Economic & Political Weekly, October 21, 2023, 57(42), pp 18-21.
13. Sharma, D., Priya, KR. (2020) 'Excluded in Rehabilitation Disability in the Neo-liberal Era', EPW Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 54(13), March 28, 2020, pp 12-15.
14. Sharma, M., Das, N. (2021) " 'Invisible Victims' of Violence: A Gender and Disability Perspective of Coronavirus in India", Economic and Political Weekly (Engage), Vol. 56 (16, 17) Apr, 2021.
15. Article URL: [/engage/article/invisible-victims-violence-gender-and-disability](#)
16. Sinha, P. (2020) 'Margarita with a Straw: Female Sexuality, Same Sex Love, and Disability in India', Economic and Political Weekly (Engage), Vol. 55 (14), 04 Apr, 2020.
17. Article URL: [/engage/article/margarita-straw-unpacking-portrayal-female](#)
18. Thakur, A. (2025) 'Mapping Ableism in Indian Legal Structures', Economic & Political Weekly EPW, July 26, 2025, 60(30), pp 17-20