Mr. President, Chairperson, Chairperson and members of the Awards Committee, judges, distinguished invitees, learned colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

I am fully aware of the honor bestowed on me, by the Chairperson and members of the Awards Committee, and thank the judges for selecting me to deliver this Oration, which in all humility I dedicate to all the mentally retarded persons of the world; to my Kamayani institution persons I would like to say "Thank you little ones, I have learnt much more in your company than I could teach you, for, while guiding you and your parents, to what I hope, was a better fuller life, I have truly been guided through a definite form of maturity, not only in my professional career, but also in all dealings with humankind.

A BRUSH WITH DR. D.L.N. MURTHY RAO

Unlike many of the distinguished orators preceding me, I did not have the privilege of knowing Dr. Murthy Rao personally, or as a student; but I do claim a unique encounter with him at an impressionable age during my career, which left an indelible mark on my academic life.

At the 1959 I.P.S. annual conference when I finished presenting a clinical drug trial paper, a dapper gentleman complimented me, but also expressed his displeasure, in no uncertain terms; being an uncontrolled trial he admonished, it was scientifically unsound and therefore unacceptable to the learned congregation. During the recess he introduced himself, explained his stance, and advised on what should be have been done; it was then that I realized that it was the much admired teacher-clinician-research worker Dr. Murthy Rao who was talking to me, a brash newcomer in the field, and I marvelled at the humility of such an erudite senior introducing and teaching such a junior the ethics of proper methodology - that I think was the greatness of Dr. D.L.N. Never again, did I present an unscientific work at a scientific convention.

WHY THIS TOPIC?

I began to get aware of the intellectually not so well-endowed around the age of 12 years, when 3 or 4 of my classmates were allowed to drop some of the curricular subjects, with which they could not cope, and were given the "Special Course Students" status. They were neither rejected not considered intellectually inferior by any one. They were not allowed to sit for the matriculation examination with us, but stayed with us till the end, finishing school in the same year.

Rousseau, a universally acclaimed academician, advocated over a century back, that educational systems should be tailored to the needs of each individual child, and not the other way around. Our school was trying to follow this, which for those times was real forward thinking [mental retard management personnel started advocating "integration in the mainstream" of the school-children population in the 1970s]. However, this experience in school did leave a good impression on the growing minds of many of us at school.

During my postgraduate days, and later at many child guidance clinics, I met many more such retardes, but a unique pair of twins left an indelible mark - they were so genial, so ready-to-please, so affection starved, but so totally incapable of comprehending anything.

By now, I had realized that the developmentally disabled and disordered were a socially stigmatized universally rejected lot, who needed to be given the right kind of help, and correctly managed through their life span. I even toyed with the idea of super specializing in this field, which was vetoed by my teachers; only my father, a dedicated educationist who had spent his professional life with boys and adolescents thought it could be a "good hobby". "Go slow," he admonished, "Or you will be totally frustrated; our society is still uncaringly and totally ignorant about the needs of this unfortunate group". Even today, I realize how true his prophetic words would ring, for though special kind of management
of this groups is a stark reality, and superspecialization a universally acknowledged necessity, a specialist in this field would get no support, and would find himself completely isolated from his peers in pediatric and general psychiatry.

My compassion for them never left me; in some way I was hoping to bring some sunshine and a ray of hope and happiness in their dreary lives. One of the noble tenets of my religion is "Usht Te, Usht Temo" (i.e. "happiness can be yours, only if you bring happiness in the lives of others"), so when an opportunity presented itself, I of course grabbed it with both hands, nurtured it for thirty long years, and the Kamayani Institutions are the result.

While studying the three topics of archaeology, anthropology and comparative religions, which had also fascinated me, I became convinced that all grades of retards must have existed since humankind became the ruling power on earth. That set me wondering, "How could they have survived the only law prevailing was the law of the jungle for the survival of the fittest?" Wonderment stimulated questions, questions lead to search, library research, discovery and knowledge, which I firmly believe should be put to use for a better understanding of today's retards.

At a time, when our present young generation is preparing to become the scientists and elders of the twenty first century; at a time when man is hurtling at a vertiginous speed into space towards maybe a wondrous future, he should also reflect on his past inventions, knowledge, culture and scientific developments, by attempting to sum up the heritage of our past civilizations to which we owe our present perspicacity.

The task I have set myself is not just to read a paper on mental retardation, but share with you the knowledge I have gleaned about them by delving through tomes on evolution, archaeology, anthropology and some religious scriptures. I will start with the birth of the human race, trace their fundamental identity, their psycho-socio-cultural evolution, the scientific contribution of various human groups of each age in every region, which eventually made up the mosaic of humanity as it exists today, and in that vast mosaic, how a tiny speck that formed the mentally retarded community managed to exist and come through the eons.

I therefore give you, my learned friends, this topic of the Saga of the Developmentally Disabled Thorough the Eons.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Reconstructing, how the ancients evolved and lived, is like detective work; highly subjective and often controversial inferences have to be drawn from scarce clues and spotty evidence such as would be found at excavation sites in bones, durable artefact, works of art and ruins of habitation.

Paleontology, archaeology and anthropology record that the first humanoid creature to emerge from Africa, was intellectually no better equipped than the apes, and roamed the earth for thousands of years in that stage.

Around 15,000 BC, hunter gathers seemed to have made an appearance; they practiced the art to harvest and cultivate wild grain in Jericho, spread to the Andes circa 8,500 BC and China circa 2,700 BC. Having turned pastoral, the began domesticating wide animals -the llamas, the alpacas, the camels and the dogs were among the earliest to be domesticated circa 5000 BC in the Americas; Horse were tamed for warfare in Mesopotamia circa 1500 BC and were extensively used for tribal warfare from then on, by the nomadic tribes. Man thus began to lead a more stable, civilized family and community life of co-existence, which was established first in prehistoric Iran circa 6000 BC where several cultures settled down; also among the Indus People circa 3000 BC, among the Sumerians circa 2500 BC and the Arameans circa 1000 BC.

During this phase man's mental abilities began to get honed; he began to appreciate the feeling of security which led to the propensity for ownership, taste for good living and acquisition of wealth and real estate. He also learnt the importance of family and tribal allegiances, law codes laid down by rulers and religious leaders, and a socialized civilized way of co-existence. Inter-tribal warfare became inevitable to be able to acquire greater power, more wealth, and thus, better security.

Prosperity led to an abundance of surplus mental and social energy, which could be channelized into creative activities and religious fervor. Magic-religious beliefs, mythology and folk-lore were freely exchanged among the then extant civilizations.

Our pre-historic man has not passed on just the biological heritage of bodily and mental equipment, but has also evolved his menial capabilities to pass on the knowledge of the material and mental cultures and discoveries, acquired over the ages, to the subsequent generations of civilizations.
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

REPUBLIC AND PHILOSOPHY

The study of religions brings us face to face with the fundamental principle of human nature. All ancient religions like Mazdaism, Zarathushtrianism, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism teach us that religion begins with awe and wonderment at nature and natural phenomena, leads to knowledge, proceeds to practice of worship and sacrifice to the natural elements, and ends in happiness for those professing it.

In three separate learned discourses, Dr. K.D. Irani of the City College of New York, discusses how the ancient civilizations developed a conscience, ethical thought, moral vision and a social code over the ages.

The earliest, which is termed the Premoral Social Existence, is amply illustrated in the Rig Veda, the Avestan Yashts, the Shah-Nameh of Ferdausi, the Talmud, the Dhammapadda, Iliad of Homer, ancient Roman legends and mythology, and, the ancient Nordic and Grecian Epics, where man existed at the tribal-mentality level with the only permissible personal emotion of gratitude or vengeance, without any concept of humaneness towards outsiders. A defenseless, intellectually highly underdeveloped even for those times retard would have no chance of survival in such a group. The less retarded would be used by a cruel master as a slave, in return for scraps of food.

The Premoral Existence passed into the Protomoral Social Stage, wherein religious leaders, shamans and kings who lived by their wits, and were considered the intellectual colossuses of those ages, held sway over the rest of the people. They may have been compassionate, but once more the useless helpless retard would be delectable sacrificial fodder for the gods of their cult.

The Religio-Ethico-Philosophical stage followed the Protomoral stage. The ancient religious thoughts, mainly Zarathushtrianism, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism significantly influenced the conduct of human civilizations, each one teaching morality and the punishment to be meted out to the immoral. Here again, there is no specific mention of the mentally retarded. The laws of the Aryas, the Vendidad, and the old Pahlavi texts, the Talmud, the Dhammapadda all talk about the rewards to the good, punishment to the bad, cleanliness and cleansing of the impure in the mind and body, the nursing of the sick, the debarring of the crippled from performing religious rituals, but, nary a word about how to nurture and educate the intellectually disabled or crippled to understand and act upon the ethical-religious code, or, what punishment to mete out to those who ill-treat or neglect such persons. It was a matter of great indignation to me to read several chapters in the ancient Zarathushtrian scriptures devoted to the nurturing, caring, breeding and handling of dogs with respect and love; punishment to be given to humans who neglected, under-fed or ill-treated the dogs; even the burial rites after its death are enjoined, proving that as civilizations progressed, life which was useful and productive, was nurtured with great care, but, a useless unproductive retard was neither worthy of nurturing nor special care.

Having devoured and digested the delectable diet of scriptural tomes, some pertinent facts emerged: in every one of them the story of creation begins with the concept of one omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent supreme being, responsible for the creation of all physical and metaphysical aspects of the universe, and therefore meriting veneration and sacrifice by the mortals.

The Greek philosopher Plato considered sacrificial rites as paying respect and honor to the gods in return for boons, benefits and prosperity. Ever the maverick, outspoken Socrates called such religion a straight business deal between the gods and man, wherein the humans outwitted their gods to get a better benefit through such deals!

So, ancients, in an effort to prove their sincerity, did often sacrifice their own children and loved ones; though there is no direct reference about sacrificing the mentally retarded it would be an educated guess to think that they would be more expendable, than the more useful normal children.

The scriptures also record that several millennia later, a natural calamity caused universal destruction and death; however, by a selective saving of pairs of seeds of every species of the animal and vegetable kingdom, a chosen savior could preserve the life of all species including humans, for posterity.

If in the light of modern knowledge about genetics, we contribute to two of their latest theories viz., the "genetic mass" of the Human Genome Project, and, Wilson's theory of "continuity" of the unmixed mitochondrial DNA, mutated from the 60,000 years old 'African Eve', by each subsequent generation of eves only", we can draw only two conclusions: First, the savior must have willingly or
Secondly, during evolution, mother nature must have mutated some new varieties of genes, else how can we account for so many variations in human genetics? The second view finds favor with a majority of scientists, as again according to Wilson, approximately 3% of the mitochondrial DNAs do undergo some random changes at regular intervals, which is termed "the molecular clock"; random changes in some of the molecular DNAs could be responsible for intellectual disability in the new progeny. Thus one could also account for the birth of severe retards in normal families of proband with even superior intelligence.

Sumerians, Mesopotamians, Assyrians, Persians, Arabian and Assyrian Semites and Egyptians have left behind imposing totems to deify their gods and grand mausoleums in their honor. The intellect of these races, being still at a very primitive level of development, the mild and moderate mentally retarded of today would be easily absorbed in the social mainstream; at worst, they would be put to domestic menial chores, farm work and tribal warfare. A gross mental retard of today would be unable to withstand the rigors of primitive existence and the rest of the tribe would consider him possessed by an evil spirit, to be charmed away by mantras, driven away by physical force, or, even exterminated through sacrificing. Aborigines all over the world, including India, still practice the first two methods.

As man's intellect evolved and he learnt to think, reflect, contemplate and reason, he began to realize the futility of primitive and voodooism. Under the enlightened guidance of the world's great thinkers and philosophers like Zarathushtra, Moses, Lord Krishna, Buddha, and Christ at different periods of time, the great monotheistic religions of the world were born. These ancient, earnest and patient seers of the old monotheistic faiths must indeed have been the intellectual colossuses of these eras, for as the developing mind was wrestling with the greatest thoughts that ever dawned on man, who was valiantly trying to grasp and measure the mighty nature before which he was constantly humbled, these seers brought much joy and solace to the perturbed spirits of their not so intelligent fellow tribes.

The code of the monotheistic religious ethics is to live one's life in harmony with others, and through logical reflection and contemplation attain knowledge, so far unknown. Any grade of our modern day mental retards would be hopelessly out of their depth and would be totally helpless lost souls, because they could neither think logically nor reason with any semblance of clarity of thought. How did the ancient seers deal with this group humanely? The Vedic medicines and Avestan scriptures, though rich in countless charms and stoats, as well as rituals, give no inkling of how they were dealt with.

Zarathushtra, they very first such thinker reformer, preached against and convinced several Aryan tribes that evil should be subjugated by the superior reflecting reasoning mind, through powerful tools of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds and not by torture, exorcism or sacrifice. The Gathas of Zarathushtra and the Vedas, two of the most ancient living religions are rich in countless stoats and rituals to practice hygiene of the body and the mind, and expel the demon of disease and disability. Modern medicine scorn these stoats and rituals, and rightly so, but three thousand years back, while the newly developed intellect was just developing reasoning and logical abilities and could barely differentiate between edible and medicinal plants and poisons, what alternative did he have to calm the sick and the disabled. Even today, in many civilized areas also, thousands of persons are practicing, and claim improvement with alternative medicines, and, "laying of hands" or "Touch Therapy".

Without the capacity of reflective thinking, how could the mentally retarded be taught the religious ethical teachings of the ancient thinkers to improve their lives? Recently a Buddhist monk in a discussion with me, at the Dalai Lama's monastery in McLeod Gunj clarified "It is possible to teach our very simple slokhas, by rote, to them NOT to cure their retardation, but to teach them the habit of a good, well-regulated, hygienic and productive life, through faith, which brings much needed solace to them and their parents. And, it may even ensure a better life in their next birth" he chuckled. He cited many illustrative examples of his retarded disciples and their anxiety-ridden confused parents, benefiting through such practice.

So were our ancient thinkers also able to help their mentally retarded disciples to improve their lives through simple but good thoughts, simple yet kind and good words, and, do simple but productive good deeds; are we talking here about the birth of an early precursor to our modern "behavior modification" method? It is possible, I was convinced.
We teach our hyperactive retard's to recite nursery rhymes and sing action songs; likewise, the ancient seers must have taught them simple slokas they could comprehend, to calm them and give them solace. Our severe and moderate retard's can be given a sense of security by learning to trust their parents, teachers and other mental health workers; the ancients must have taught them faith in God through simple prayers. Our retard's can be trained to perform simple repetitious productive tasks and chores; the ancients must have taught their retard's to work at simple tasks to do good deeds to help others. So we can conjecture that even if they were second class citizens in the ancient civilizations, they could have been accepted and compassionately treated by the tribals. But were they? We shall never know for all the ancient scriptures are stoically silent on this topic.

In the later scriptures like the Holy Bible and the Quran, there are scattered reference to the fool, the kesil and the congenital idiot. In various chapters such as Proverbs (Morris, 1928) and other chapters, the Bible advises "Leave the presence of a man who is a fool, for you will not discern knowledge over there"; "the kesil is a stupid dull fellow, hates knowledge, delights in not understanding, cannot acquire wisdom because he lacks the heart to; neither fine living nor honor is seemly for him; stripes should be his portion, though they would have little effect on him. The possibility of reformation is practically ruled out, and the use of the rod is enjoined. Some congenital idiots even take sport in wickedness, and departure from evil". This can lead to only one conjecture, and that is as civilizations progressed, life which was not useful and productive, was allowed to perish. As the mind continued to evolve to a greater and higher degree of intellect, some lost out in this race, stagnating at the level of the "early man", and were considered socially and emotionally immature subnormals, therefore, unworthy of nurturing.

**EVOLUTION OF THE MIND**

"Man's mind, stretched by a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions" (Oliver Wendell Holmes).

During the process of evolution the hominoid lost the strong nosmic sense of his ancestral primates, and developed a much more useful visual and auditory sense. The grasping mobile hand combined with the newly acquired stereoscopic vision and sound, paved the way for advanced mentation, by improving eye-hand coordination and acuity of visual and auditory attention; the psychic functions of perception and mental concentration continued to develop at a rapid pace, resulting in directed thinking, registration and retentive memory, as well as logical thought and reasoning. We can thus understand how having developed the ability to perceive, learn, adjust, accommodate and socialize, the Homo sapiens evolved the unobservable, unmeasurable, hypothetical entity we now know as intelligence, which enabled him to get absorbed in his contemporary group. According to Aristotle, the Homo sapiens was the wisest of all living creatures inhabiting the planet then, therefore he could develop the skill of a prehensile hand, and, discover the use of tools.

While studying embryology, one gets aware of an amazing feat of nature. Compressed within the nine months of intrauterine life, are the equivalent of millions of years of the infinitely slow adaptation through different stages of man's evolution from the beginning of time; by a process of multiplication and specialization, a fertilized ovum passes through many complex stages to become a physiologically functional vertebrate; from a totally aquatic foetus, developing and maturing while floating around in the amniotic fluid, to get ready to be born as a terrestrial creature. Packed within these nine months, one can say is the story of the evolution of the human race.

It has been theorized that, at birth, man is a foetalized ape, meaning thereby that the evolution of humankind was retrogressive rather than a progressive step. Nature, which always does the best out of whatever is available, provided the human baby an opportunity of a longer period of learning, leading to a tremendous increase in the brain by postponing physical maturity, thus allowing the expansion of the cortex into the highly convoluted Neocortex. The Neocortex comprises of billions of neurones, many of them as centers with specialized functions, but the majority of them as association fibers, with the function of association of ideas, storage of memory particularly concentrated in the highly convoluted Frontal, Temporal and Occipital lobes.

The Homo sapiens now attained self-consciousness and awareness, as a result of a well-established neuronal system, a good memory and a functional image making capacity. A good memory created awareness of the past, an intelligent anticipation of the future and building a long racial life through
traditions based on past experiences. In this sequence of evolution of the mental abilities, particularly memory functions, how does the mental retard who is notorious for an exceptionally poor memory measure up? Perceptual ability in most cases is intact. Among the borderline and the mild retards, storing of innumerable life’s experiences is also not markedly affected, but the quick response of recall and wit, are. Among the moderate and severely retarded, memory function is almost lacking, making adjustment to group activities and meaningful communication almost impossible. How can we explain this congenital defect? When we know this exact cause, science will automatically find a cure as well as a method of prevention.

**EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION**

Speech, which was never considered a primary mental ability, is unique only to humankind. As a result of the rapidly enlarging Neocortex and the Homo sapiens’ powerful desire to control and influence his environment, tool making and communication became "necessity induced scientific inventions". These abilities still continue to evolve universally; even today, we are witnessing mind boggling inventions of new tools, new gadgetry, new medias of mass communication and computers. As these skills became well established, an area of the cortex adjoining the visual, auditory and motor areas become specialized into the specific center for controlling speech. As the higher planes for visual and auditory concentration were achieved, the pantomime stage for communication got replaced by babbling, formulation of holophrases, precise gestures, sound and symbols, directed and analytical thought, forcing the establishment of sophisticated communication through precise vocabulary, syntax and language.

Scriptography a much later development, enabled the ancient man to leave behind a vast among of historical knowledge about civilizations, in his dwelling places and mausolias. The earliest known pictoscripts left for us by various civilizations in Uruk (?3,300 B.C.), Egypt (3,000 B.C.), Indus Valley hieroglyphics (2,500 B.C.), Iran (2,300 B.C.) and Greece and Crete (2,000 B.C.) Archeologists are still excavating fresh scripts, universally.

The scriptographic scripts gradually gave way to the easier form of cuneiform script. The first known alphabetical script came from the Canaanites (1,600 B.C.), the ideogram-based script of Knossos (1,400 B.C.), the Shang dynasty Chinese script and measuring system (1,300 B.C.) and the Aramean script (1,000 B.C.). From these records we realize that 40,000 years after the last Neanderthal man walked this planet, we still carry within us, his legacy of powerful passions and emotional tendencies - the passion to communicate, the passion to acquire and retain property and power, the passion to control the environment, and the need and desire to re-unite with the rest of the universe, through community living, religious faith, ritual art, mysticism, philosophy and literature. How can we relate this pattern of civilization to the lot of our helpless mentally retarded children?

As we watch our babies developing the communicative skills, we realize that each baby generation, repeats the steps by which its remote ancestors gradually learnt to communicate on a hitherto wordless planet, and managed to leave behind records of their achievements. Thus like the Neonate, the Lower Paleolithic man was totally inarticulate, but communicated through sounds and body language more meaningful then other primates. If we observe our low-grade severe retards, we find them doing the same thing.

Like an infant passing through the babbling, gesticulating and single word formation stage, the Middle Paleolithic man rapidly progressed to the holophrase stage, which gave expression to total states and events. Present day severe retards appear to be fixated at this level of communicative skill development, which makes them almost incomunicado with the rest of us.

Like our modern 3 to 5 year olds, the Upper Paleolithic man developed precision of speech, learning the name of objects and persons, communicate ideas through sentences, have elementary discussion, and during the last glaciation period, learnt to speak coherently, make plans, discuss simple problems, and pass on the accumulated lore to their progeny. Most moderate retards appear to be fixated at this level of communicative skill.

Like our 5 to 7 year olds, Neolithic trades-folk, craftsmen (potters and weavers) and other skilled workers developed a sophisticated vocabulary and writing skill to communicate, and numeration and digits were invented for easy commerce.

Like our Pre-pubertal and Pubertal school child, the Neolithic man continued to accelerate the development of communicative skills, because his social life became more settled, societies became
more stratified, property and other possession acquisi­tion powers increased, therefore his wit got sharpened, and mental powers got enhanced enough to discuss problems, make plans, and improve his communicative and adaptive skills still further. It was during this stage that the Gathas were born. Our mild retards and slow learners are capable of all this up to the level of enhanced communicative skills.

Should we pause here and ponder as to whether our profound and severely retardeds are fixated at the Paleolithic stage in the evolutionary cycle? Then, would some of the primitive tribes universally still extant in small pockets, and who still use pantomime rather than speech, be considered severe retards? And where would the deaf-mutes, who never develop normal speech, fit in?

Would we be justified in probing and further researching a postulate that the retard is a product of individual evolutionary status, rather than a developmentally disabled one; else how can we explain the birth of a retard to a set of parents with normal genotype? Maybe, in the twenty first century, Daniel Cohen of the Genome Project fame, can locate significant portions of human genes, which can come up with plausible explanations; maybe by then Samuel Bronde of the Biochemical Genetic Project, can explain the etiology of the developmentally disabled.

NON-MEDICAL AND MEDICAL LITERATURE

Having failed in my quest for satisfactory answers from the gleanings from ancient cultures and scriptures, I searched through the various known sources of recorded medical and non-medical literature, right from the Dark Ages, but was rewarded with little satisfaction.

The latest Encyclopedia Britannica succinctly says "throughout the recorded ages, the mentally disabled have been viewed with revulsion, fear and a desire to reject, neglect and ill-treat. In many cultures, society even sanctioned cruelty towards them, based on the belief that they were the product of supernatural evil powers". There is no evidence at all of the application of the Biblical adages like "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth", "Blessed are those who are persecuted", or, "Blessed are the merciful, for they too shall receive mercy" (St. Matthew).

The meager facts in the medical and non-medical literature revealed a lot of lip-service and compas­sion, but no real action. Scientists, legislators, educationists, and most hurtful of all, the medical fraternity, ignored them completely in their respective literatures.

The Laws of Sparta and ancient Rome permitted the extermination of the severely retarded. Coming closer in the time clock, Hitler, Nicolae Ceaucescu (of Romania) and the communists advocated much the same methods.

Ayurveda classifies the mental faculties into three types, the Sattavika, the Rajasika and Tamasika. The Tamasika is said to suffer from total ignorance and closely resembles our retards. The Tamasika is further subtyped into the Pasava (sharing the traits of an animal); the Matsiya (sharing the traits of a fish); and the Vanaspatiya (sharing the traits of vegetable life). The Pasava have a forbidding disposition, lack any intelligence, have hateful conduct and food-habits and indulge in excessive sexual appetite and sleep. The Matsiyas are cowards, lack any intelligence, are greedy, wrathful and passionate. They are always restless. The Vanaspatyas are totally unintelligent, greedy, indolent and deficient of all intellectual faculties.

Ayurvedic literature also mentions "loss of memory" and other neurological disorders, but, no mention about the management of these, or the Tamasikas.

Likewise, ancient Unani and Tibetan systems, and the more recent Homeopathic medical books make no mention of the retarded. It is, as if, cognitive disabilities did not merit mention, as it was considered beyond redemption. Literature of the Zarathushtrians, Judaics, Confucians and Buddhists enjoined humane treatment, exemption from criminal responsibility, but no right to practice religious rites.

During the medieval and renaissance periods, literature starting from Chaucer is full of references to jesters, freaks and evil creatures (Kesils) in alliance with the devil, particularly during the reformation period. Ancient religious literature, in contrast advocate humane treatment and exemption from criminal responsibility, but no right to practice religious rites.
cause there was no medical model concept of "diagnose-treat-cure" then.

Though sub-human treatment was replaced by humane special education and special institutional care, educational ideas too stagnated, and only vocational training of the trainable mentally retarded continued - the rest were shunted off to be segregated into special institutions, as they were neither worthy of rehabilitation, nor fit to mingle with the community. By the end of the eighteenth century, the mental retard was totally ignored.

By the nineteenth century, though considered a socio-educational problem, the legislators, educationists and scientists, and most hurtful of all the medical fraternity ignored them completely. Though human sacrifice had been completely abolished, the mental retards were such a neglected lot living under such sub-human conditions, that natural death due to all kinds of intercurrent diseases released them from their misery, very early in life.

Some other pertinent medical literature worth mentioning here are the skimpy references by Hippocrates and his associates in their medical tomes, Seguin’s book "Moral Treatment, Hygiene and Education of Idiots and other Backward Children" (1846) and Itard’s "De l’Education d’Unne Homme Savage" (1801). These and others left no impact on the management of the mentally retarded.

But, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were a few crucial periods of politico-social upheavals in various European countries which actually stimulated a change in thinking about the more liberal humane and democratic attitudes towards all, including the various disabled.

The very first nation to start this process were the French, followed by the Americans. During their respective revolutions "The Basic Human Rights and Equality for All" concepts were germinated, and of course humane psychiatrists like Pine, Itard and many others took advantage of the legislation for the benefit of the mentally sick and the disabled.

The nineteenth century revolutions all over Europe, followed by global colonization by several European nations, benefited the retards obliquely. The concept of the retards being a medico-psycho-socio-educational problem was creeping in, one slow step by one painful slow step.

But by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a severe setback - the Parisian School of Psychiatry and Neurology mooted the idea that being brain damaged, these children were beyond any training in education or adaptive skill; they were social misfits and therefore only fit to live in "Idiot Asylums". Their British counterparts went a step further and dubbed them "Moral Imbeciles" (called "Morons" by Goddard). The extreme view of protecting society from such morally degenerate imbeciles was rapidly taking root. This encouraged the medical fraternity to, once more, push them into limbo. Goddard’s publication the "Kallikak Family" (1923) makes interesting reading.

Around the mid-nineteenth century, several American psychiatrists took the lead, established the American Association of Mental Defects and started actually treating the retards utilizing dynamically oriented educational methods. Their skimpy literature I could review, affirms that it was a lost cause from the start to the finish, but, one good resulted. Several of these psychiatrist instituted well-run homes for the retarded. The first such, to my knowledge, was instituted in Boston by Dr. Howe, who along with Gugenbuhl (1837) and Seguin (1864) germinated and propagated the concept of good, useful, productive special education for the intellectually poorly endowed, to all colonized nations. Many more such institutions were established throughout Europe, U.K., the Americas and other colonized nations. Mental health-care workers, now began to take the lead in running such establishment.

Unfortunately at the turn of this century France revolutionized the concept of education by introducing I.Q. testing. The work of Dr. Binet, though very laudable and useful, did affect the retarded community somewhat adversely, for following his lead many verbal and performance intelligence tests were standardized and universally used. For the first half of the twentieth century, these tests were the only criterion for the diagnosis and management of the mentally retarded. All educational programs as also the prognosis of social acceptability depended on them, resulting in a large number of retards being social misfits.

In the period between World Wars I and II, the care of the retards was again in the wilderness, because the mental health-care professionals turned away towards the more glamorous "community care in child psychiatry. Professional mental health care workers of the mentally retarded were given the "Cinderella Treatment" (Menolascino, 1970; Potter, 1954; Tarajan, 1966). Judicial legislators considered the "Moron" to be a juvenile delinquent, fit to be handled in the child guidance clinics of remand homes and correctional institutions, after being tried
in juvenile courts. Only the dangerous retards were incarcerated. Dehumanizing tactics (Vail, 1966) of restricting marriage, sterilization and life-long institutionalization were implemented; humane therapeutic personnel turned mere caretakers (Wolffensberger, 1967; Bhatt & Kaplan, 1974) and many rash conclusions were documented. The undocumented result known to, but left unspoken by all concerned, was that drastic measures had to be taken to protect society from the rapidly propagating social misfits, else they would not only overburden society by overpopulation, but would also be accountable for many social evils. Were we, I pondered as I reviewed the literature, returning to the pre-civilization days of neglect and sub-human treatment?

The post-World War II political resolutions brought about by the third pertinent revolution in the saga of the mentally retarded. A few compassionate psychiatrists still quested for research methodologies to focus their attention on the biomedical, psychosocial, genetic and other scientific studies. More governmental aid was made available following the lead by President J.F. Kennedy. This made for more public awareness, greater awareness and acceptance by the parents, formation of self-help groups and establishment of many training and research programs, all of which gave the retard a garb of respectability.

Lyon Cytrin, a worker devoted to this field, has expressed the cause of this sudden spurt of interest of the medical community, very succinctly, but with scathing punch (1980) "The mental retard was an ugly maiden, kept in the attic for a long time; suddenly suitors have begun to arrive since they discovered that the prospective bride is not so homely after all, and in addition, she now brings a handsome dowry!" From then on, a plethora of medical research literature came pouring in. The work of a few only can be mentioned here.

Workers of the calibre of Bowlby (1956) and Spitz (1946) focussed their studies on the cause and effect of "Detached Institutional Care" syndrome, leading to a better understanding of the ritualistic bizarre self-stimulating behavior of the completely withdrawn mental retard (e.g. Gesell, 1940; Flavell, 1963).

Several in-depth studies on child development made for a better understanding of the personality development of the developmentally disabled child as also a realization that co-morbidity of mental retardation and personality or mental disorder had to be better understood, diagnosed early and handled symptomatically. The concept of early diagnosis and early intervention centers was born, leading to re-involvement of all mental health-care professionals. It was soon realized that the families of the retarded needed support and access to primary health care, education, housing, work-opportunities, recreation and healthy interpersonal and sexual relationships. Better understanding of the critical developmental periods became mandatory; prevention of emotional and personality problems was possible; unmanageable adolescent behavior as also co-morbidity of many mental disorders among the aged retards could now be handled better.

Contributions along the line of these principles by Balthazar, Stevens and Gardner (1969), Beier (1964), Bernstein (1970), Bialer (1957), Garfield (1963), Melascino (1970 & 1977), Szymansky and Tanquay (1980), Egger and Menolascino (1978) have led to revolutionary changes in the management of the mentally retarded, including early diagnosis and proper medical management of co-existent conditions like epilepsy, motor and sensory handicaps, emotional disturbances and disruptive behavior.

But, sad to say, that despite all this, there is not one even among the mild retards of the calibre of Dr. Helen Keller or Dr. Alpaiwalla, whose worth has been revealed to humankind as a tall, burning flame, reaching upwards to overcome their own handicap and be a source of inspiration to others. At all levels our retards have still remained miniature weak flames, some of them hardly burning. But, we have to still shield these miniature flames, because they too radiate warmth and quiet joy in our lives, lighting our path to wisdom of mind, compassion of heart, and humane maturity. Therefore, let us hope and pray, we never ever look back to any further periods of dark interludes. To quote Petrarch of the mid-fourteenth century, who on seeing piles of plague victim corpses littering the street of Europe exclaimed "Oh happy posterity, who will not experience such abysmal woe, and, will look upon our testimony as a fable!"

However, a few pertinent problems still hounding the mental health-care workers need urgent attention. There are:

1) Creating greater meaningful public awareness, to accept unconditionally the responsibility of complete management of all retards from the "womb to
the tomb, which should also include training the elderly retards to remain independently in the social mainstream.

2) Training in the correct mental health-care approach to close the lacunae which still persist in some areas of management, particularly the management of co-morbidity. Chess, Korn and Fernandes (1971) have focussed on the view that subgroups of mental retards and their physical and emotional etiology can be associated with certain types of psychotic reactions. Berkson and Landesman-Dwyer (1977) have taken a healthy lead in the research of "type of personality defenses and specific personality dimensions which result because of mental retardation".

3) Urgent financially viable community projects need to be started, to cater to the needs of the poor, society-dependent and aged retards.

4) Many more outreach management programs need to be undertaken, for meaningful help to the rural retards. This should include adequately staffed centers for early intervention.

5) Establishment of several national institutes along the lines of the one at Secunderabad with research facilities for in-depth studies of Indian retards, as well as super-specialization courses for the medical, social-worker and special teachers managing the retards.

Before concluding, the truth underlying the following statement needs to be examined, and that is, "the fantastic achievements in progress apart, modern education, with its sequelae of high brow philosophy, scientific terminology and all round progress in statistics, genetics and computers, has also created a whole new tribe of intellectual snobs, whose tribal mentality is to fiercely defend their achievements through the ages, and have a loyalty only to their cult-gods of Progress, Power and Pen­nies, while completely ignoring a small group of underachievers among them". In that case, the bottom line to this oration should be "Are we any better, or worse than our ancient Neolithic tribal ancestors?"

And on this note I end by saying: "My saga of the mentally retarded community has a very long and hoary but a woe-begone past; and a very short, skimpy, pathetically poorly recorded history which started only about a century ago", and, conclude it by quoting the immortal Omar Khayyam.

Never did my heart abandon its pursuit of knowledge;
Few were the secrets which remained unknown to me.
After thinking deep, night and day, for two and seventy years,
It is now known to me that nothing was known to me.

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