

White Cane Day

They don't let blindness come in their way

OCTOBER 15 BY JAVED AHMAD TAK

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Today marks the ability of blind people to walk safely on city streets. This day also highlights the progress of blind from poverty and isolation to full participation in community life. The white cane is a symbol of independence and a symbol of the dignity and capacity of blind people. Blind people need the understanding of the public. They need society to recognize their abilities and to give them a chance to demonstrate their talents.

White Cane Day is a time for blind and people with normal vision to come together in support of the movement toward full integration. Visually impaired do not want to be dependent on their families or on society. What keeps many blind people in dependency is not so much the blindness itself, but the lack of opportunity. Blind people need the chance to become educated, to develop their own interests and abilities, and the opportunity to seek employment on a fair and equal basis with others.

Blind seek understanding and recognition of their ability and desire to live and work alongside others in their communities. We have supporting laws and guiding rules to overcome these challenges or minimize the problems but the implementation at ground level is needed. JK Persons with Disabilities Act guarantees equal opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full participation for the persons with disabilities but it is unfortunate that so far the Act is on papers only and for 2 lakh blind people Jammu Kashmir state has no schooling facilities. Mostly they are dependent on the so called social security schemes which fetch them nothing more than Rs 400/- which can't fulfill their needs.

On May 25, 2001, Erik Weihenmayer became the only blind man in history to reach the summit of the world's highest peak - Mount Everest. Eric is the first blind person to climb Mount Everest. Eric's achievement is symbolic of the desire of blind people throughout the world to pursue their dreams and ambitions.

In the same way Tariq Bashir a blind person from Andoora Shangus of district Anantnag completed Masters in History and qualified Kashmir Civil services (Prelims) exams but he was not allowed to take the facility of scribe in (Mains). Still Tariq didn't gave up and qualified 10+2 Screening test and got through the interview conducted by JK Public Service Commission and got appointed as Lecturer History in School Education Department. Tariq is

presently posted in District Institute of Education and Trainings Anantnag and is successfully working there.

Such individuals can become an example for others. On this day we salute the courage of such men and women who don't let disability come in their way to success