

# A slice from a disabled's life

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 5. — Naresh Sharma, an Arjuna Award winning shooter, is denied enrolment in the sports category for a job only because he walks on crutches. Disability does not pain him as much as society's "reminder" that he is disabled.

Naresh is just one among many who have to suffer humiliation because of their handicaps, their brilliant achievements notwithstanding. For them, they have had enough and no longer want "categorisation and sympathy" as it shakes their confidence.

The Invisible Minority, a docu-fiction by a psychiatrist-turned director, Dr Parvéz Imam, is an attempt to put across the disabled's point of

view. The 28-minute film portrays real characters with various disabilities.

Dr Imam, who has worked with the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences at Shahdara, says "mechanical" drugs therapies will not work, unless the diagnosis has the understanding of traditional socio-cultural values.

The 28-minute film, which will be screened at Max Mueller Bhavan on 11 April, shows real disabled persons facing the society's scorn, and two fictitious characters portraying the "constant confrontation" between the disabled and the society.

"I have introduced chess, a level-playing game, in an attempt to draw parity between a normal person and the disabled", says Dr Imam.

Piyush Mishra, who represents society in his different appearances, challenges Salil, a wheelchair bound person to play chess. As Piyush loses game after game, he starts taking Salil seriously.

The game continues throughout the film, and everytime, Piyush is the loser. In the last scene of the film, he is shown throwing chessboard on Salil's face, says Dr Imam.

The film, interspersed with portrayal of some real characters, tries to strike a balance between fact and fiction. Akhil, who was "written off by the doctors in his childhood with down-syndrome", is now doing a job in a Delhi-based company.

Dr Imam says Akhil's father's recounts the doctors' apathy showing how medical

profession has become a "routine-affair" over the years.

Shivani, another real character, who worked with a hotel was refused petty jobs after breaking her legs in an accident. Determined, she chose to paint and won laurels.

"Tell me how can you call her disabled. Disability is more a mental state than physical", asks Dr Imam.

Suggesting that the government should incorporate some traditional forms of diagnosis in primary healthcare systems, he says most of the rituals to treat people in remote villages are explainable.

He says, "If the government has to reach out to masses, it has to absorb some part of the system, which is ingrained in the minds of the people."