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BIJBEHARA: He cannot move without the support of the wheel chair, but this did not dampen his spirit to pursue education and work for the welfare of the physically challenged people. Javed Ahmad Tak, a resident of south Kashmir's Bijbehara town, was rendered 'disabled' 14 years ago when identified gunmen fired at him on March 23, 1997, damaging his spinal cord.

- "I was studying in B Sc final year when the tragedy struck me, but I never let my spirit for education die. I completed graduation after I was discharged from the hospital after a year," Tak told Kashmir Reader. After completing his graduation, Tak qualified the entrance test for post-graduation in University of Kashmir and later passed Master's in Social Work.

Recalling his university days, Tak said some of his classmates used to take him to the varsity on a wheel chair every day. "I was putting up in a rented room along with some of my family members, one km away from the university. Some of my class mates would every day arrive at my accommodation and take me to the department on a wheel chair," Tak said. He did not stop here but kept pursuing Diplomas and other courses to achieve what he had dreamt of. "After completing PG, I did one-year Diploma in Human Rights and six-month Diploma in Computers," he said. Disappointed by the response of the society and indifference of the government towards the physically challenged, Tak vowed to devote himself for the welfare of the 'disabled'.

"Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches. So I felt the pain of the people with 'disabilities' only after I met the same fate," Tak said. On seeing the attitude of the government towards the 'disabled', he formed an NGO 'Helpline'.

Later in 2004, he started a special school for the specially-abled children 'Zeba Aapa School of Inclusive Education' in which, at the moment, 84 children with visual, hearing, ortho, mental and other disabilities are enrolled.

"The children enrolled here had lost all hopes when I brought them to school, but today their parents cannot believe their eyes on seeing them writing, reading and developing teaching learning material," Tak said. He accused the government of not doing anything for rehabilitation of the 'disabled' children. "We have identified over 300 children with different disabilities in district Anantnag alone, but due to the lack of transport facility and other infra-structure we have not been able to reach out to them and bring them to school. We many a time approached the authorities for their support but they always ignored our pleas," Tak said.