

The design was conceptualized and cast in the context of the structural amnesia that has traditionally and culturally prevailed in our country regarding physical disability over centuries. A universal design for equitable access foregrounding the needs of physical disability of various kinds, becomes a special kind of challenge when it is to be worked through in an old heritage building like Indraprastha College wherein addition to old and worn-down structures, there are many constraints of construction imposed by civic and urban heritage bodies. The design also incorporated the needs of the “temporarily – abled persons” always vulnerable to ageing and accidents, and so was inserted into existing spaces, rather than the creation of exclusive spaces.

The external paths has been laid with track-tiles right from the gate of the College, through the corridors into classrooms and other academic and recreational spaces. Fences and railings are placed on raised walks to secure VH students from falls. Ramps are built at every change of level after determining the routes of wheelchair access. Toilet blocks have been revamped and redesigned with cubicles for orthopaedically- challenged members of the College community. A customized toilet for a non-wheelchair OH male member of the office staff was culled out from existing space where minimum effort would be required to access it. The College appoints a Mobility Training instructor for a two week Orientation Program for its VH members, in which the co-ordinates of direction and location are taught, so that they can navigate in the College along the track –tile paths.

Internal spaces posed more problems to resolve. The grand library in three floors was fitted with a lift by an external shaft, and through that by ramps access was made to the new Museum and Archives and the Translation and Translation Studies Centre. One of the most gratifying solutions found was in creating access to OH persons to the first floor Seminar Room in the main block which could not be through installing a lift. Imagination and technology came to the rescue. It was then fitted with closed circuit teleconferencing facilities to enable a student on wheelchair on the ground floor Audio-visual room situated just below, to present her work on the Seminar Room screen and have a live interaction with the audience.