



Indian Speech and Hearing Association (ISHA)

Regd. Under the Kamataka Societies Registration Act. Karnataka Act No. 17 Registration No. 25/67-68

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Presented by

MR. S. MANOHARAN

2004, MYSORE

Honourable dignitaries, respect seniors, fellow members & friends,

Wishing You All a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year and Happy Pongal and Shankaranthi.

It gives me immense pleasure in delivering the presidential address at the inaugural function of the 36th national convention of Indian Speech & Hearing Association at Mysore, the Mecca of Speech & Hearing profession in India. At the outset, I would like to thank all the members for giving me this opportunity to work for our association. At this great event, I would like to place my appreciations to all my predecessors and seniors in developing field of speech and hearing and the association from non-existence to existence and further developing this field into to multi specialty and most sought profession. I will assure that the developmental activities that were being carried out by our predecessors will be accelerated & will take necessary steps to develop proper matrix for conducting the scientific sessions & other association activities.

For the past four decades, we have grown in our professional activities and more educational centres have been established in different parts of our country. Now there are more than 20 teaching institutions, most of them are self-financed. Though the number of graduates and post-graduates has increased in multi fold, we still have the problem of getting professionals to work even in Urban India, not to mention about the Rural India. As you all know that more than 80% are populated in rural India. But our services are available only to 10% to 15% of the



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population in Urban India. For obvious reasons most of our fresher leave the country. Hence, we have dearth of adequate speech and hearing professionals to work in India. Many of our teaching institutions are run without adequate strength of teaching staff.

In the year 1974, there were 330 members in ISHA. After 30 years we have only around 750 members in our association list. Is it not surprising? What happened to all our professionals? Have most them got jobs elsewhere in the world or our association had not induced confidence in the minds of our professionals? We have to look into it more seriously. To improve the member strength, we have to take the addresses of the budding professionals passing out from all institutions in India and contact them for membership enrolment. Each and every local branch should be given sufficient membership enrolment forms for membership drive. We need to develop countries we have the responsibility to cater to the need of human resources to the developing and third world countries too.

Our financial status has to be improved to carry out our association's developmental activities. We can think of improving it by means of 1). Encouraging all qualified speech and hearing professionals to enrol as members, 2). Requesting the organizers of annual conferences to part with 50% of the balance amount to the parent body, 3). Getting a nominal amount as administrative fees from all the delegates attending the conference, 4). Taking necessary steps to market the ISHA journal worldwide, etc.

In India, there are about 25000 infants born with hearing impairment every year. As per the ICMR study in 1985 approximately 0.1% of our population in India are born with hearing impairment. It is alarming to note that Maternal Rubella is the causative factor in about 40% of the congenitally hearing-impaired babies. It is the single large cause, which is a preventable one. Till recently we believed that Rubella virus was non-existent in India. Now it has been very well established in very many studies that it is a single major causative factor contributing to congenital disabilities (WHO Bulletin, 1977). It should be made compulsory that all the adolescent girls and childbearing women vaccinated for Rubella. Our Governments are taking necessary steps to



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do the same, but this has to be done on a war footing and our contribution in this regards should be immense.

Our professional activities should focus not only on disease, disorder and disability management. We have much more responsibilities on our shoulders. We should extend our services to areas like, voice culture, voice bank, vocal music, voice register, forensic investigations, public speaking, theatrical activities, mass communication, normal schools, learning disabilities, swallowing disorder, electro-physiology of balance disorder, noise survey, noise control and management, community based rehabilitation etc.

Global technological advancement has influenced the developments in digital technologies in the field of speech and hearing in the areas of assessment and rehabilitation. The qualitative and quantitative assessments in the diagnosis of speech & hearing disorders have improved. This has enabled us to diagnosis of speech & hearing disorders have improved. This has enabled us to diagnose the problem very early and hence the management has become more meaningful and close to normalcy. The digital technologies in hearing aids and cochlear implantation have proved their usefulness in rehabilitation and have become milestones in the past decades. Totally implantable haring devices are round the corner. The role of the speech and hearing professionals becomes much more with the advent of these devices. But how many of our needy ones can afford to such latest technologies? Our government and other organization have the responsibility of providing such facilities t the needy ones at least at subsidized cost.

Recently WHO has come out with “International Classification of Function “ focusing on the following as its priority target areas: - A) Impairment: Structure and Function, B) Activity and C) Participation. The institutions across the country should take all the efforts to follow the International Classification of Function as recommended by WHO in order to meet the emerging challenges of globalization.

In 2002 at Biwa, Japan, Biwako Millennium Frame work has been formulated for action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and



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Pacific regions. It outlines the necessary actions, issues, plans and strategies. The BMW has identified seven priority areas in each of which critical issues and targets with specific time frame and action plan have been detailed. The followings are/focussed as the priority areas:- 1) Self help organizations of persons with disability, 2) Women with disabilities, 3) Early intervention and education, 4) Training and employment, including self – employment, 5) Access to build environment and public transport, 6) Access to information and communication including information and communication technology and 7) Poverty alleviation through social security and livelihood programs. It has set goals and time frames to achieve each and every priority area and the entire priorities have to be achieved by the year 2012. The next decade will ensure the paradigm shift from a charity – based approach to a rights based approach.

Our association, the institutions and our professionals should deliberate on these issues and be involved in achieving the task.

The institutions and the association have the responsibility of providing professional update to all the speech and hearing professionals. [It should be in the form of Continuing Education Program. This has to be organized & conducted periodically for the benefit of the practicing professionals. In the years to come, that periodic qualifying exams may be conducted to maintain the clinical acumen of the practicing professionals. Hence, one should update his / her knowledge by attending the CEPs to maintain his/her registration for practice. The association should be able to encourage periodic CEP activities in region and zone wise with the help of the local branches of the association, institutions etc. RCI is also assisting the institutions and the organizations to conduct the CEPs on different thrust areas and we should make use of the available assistance.

The legal environment for the professionals and the speech and hearing challenged should be conductive and protective. We, the service providers have the responsibility of providing fair, just and ethical practice. The practice of the professionals should be aimed at providing required diagnostic and rehabilitative services. If the required services could not be accomplished to the client, it is our duty to guide the client to the appropriate places. The association with its ethical committee will guide the individual members about their ethical clinical practice and will take



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necessary steps to protect the members in the event of any legal issues after going into the details of the issues.

We are thankful to all the related professionals, more specifically the otolaryngologists for their support and help in building our profession in India. Today the profession of speech, language and hearing has become an independent profession, still requiring the support of very many other professions. |With the involvement of other related professionals we need to focus our attention to the ultimate prevention of the speech and hearing disability, early intervention, habilitation and rehabilitation of the speech and hearing challenged.

Though we have representation to Rehabilitation Council of India, the representations are mostly institutions oriented. It is not a true representation of ISHA. Every year the ISHA office should have representation in the policy making high level committees formed by RCI to decide about the matters related to the profession. Hence our association should make a demand for its true representation in the high level committee formed by RCI. In the years to come I hope that we will have a separate council for speech, language and hearing. For that we need to take necessary steps from now onwards. If this is to be taken to parliament, we will work in that line and try to bring necessary amendments in the legislation for the formation of Speech, Language and Hearing council.

Once again I thank all the members for giving me this wonderful opportunity and on behalf of our members of ISHA, I wish to place my appreciation & thanks to the organizers of 36th National Conference of ISHA for their efforts to make the event very enriching and memorable one.

Thanking you all.