



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



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Good Morning!!

Dear ISHA members, invited dignitaries, and guests.

With great pleasure and honour I begin my term as the President of the Indian Speech and Hearing Association (ISHA). Thank you all for giving me this opportunity. My predecessors have provided a wonderful tradition of leadership and I hope to be able to call upon their experience and insight over the coming year.

I extend my heartiest greetings for the New Year! May this year overflow with fulfilling experiences for all of you. We are all assembled here in a city, which is proud of a glorious past. This soil has lured undaunted warriors who had the 'guts' and the 'will' to steer their mission against all odds. Even today they inspire us to walk ahead and meet the challenges to achieve our goal. Let the exemplary, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who was born on this very day, 23rd of January, be our guiding spirit.

Speech and Hearing field had a very humble beginning. It was the result of efforts put together by few thoughtful people who could selflessly forego their flourishing career and comfort abroad to serve the people of their motherland who needed their help. From the small beginning, we have now



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more than 35 colleges imparting speech and hearing courses at degree level, 10 having postgraduate courses and only a few offering PhD program.

We have more than 1500 life members registered with ISHA but the number is meager considering the huge number of persons with speech and hearing impairment in our country. Moreover, the dearth of speech and language pathologists to meet the country's requirement is due to the continuous brain drain. The young professionals are being lured off to foreign countries leaving here a ceaseless vacuum. Some research projects have tried to get the root cause of this incessant brain drain and have offered suggestions to arrest this process, but to no effect. However, it is said that 'tough time never lasts but the tough persons do' so, we must stand upright against all adversity and ensure healthy hearing and good communication for all the fellow citizens of this country, residing far and wide.

I take this opportunity to share my views regarding the training of audiologists and speech-language pathologists, communication within our community and with other professionals, technological development and advancement in clinical practice and finally the future role of ISHA. More than forty years have passed since the first training program for the audiologists and speech pathologists started in India. Some of the training colleges are 'Excellent' as rated by Assessment and Accreditation Committee appointed by the Rehabilitation Council of India, which provides recognition to undergraduate and post graduate education in the field of speech and hearing. The skills of our audiologists and speech language pathologists trained so far are well appreciated by others professionals within and outside the country. Last year while I worked in the Rehabilitation Council of India as Member Secretary, I had the opportunity to interact with various training centers and meet the expert committee of different disciplines including the one in the field of speech and hearing.

Training centers are spread across the country and in the recent past new colleges were set up mostly in southern parts of the country. Major states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and North-Eastern States still do not have any recognized training program in the field of speech and hearing. Most of the educational institute offering speech and hearing courses are in the private sector. In the



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last academic session number of colleges found it difficult to fill up the sanctioned seats at the undergraduate level.

We need to create wide publicity of our training program. The ISHA has already extended the facility of hosting the 'Admission Notice' of all the RCI approved training centers. I request all the head of the institutes to make best use of this facility. We may discuss other modalities to draw students from different parts of the country. Should we think of joint entrance examination? To reach out to the millions that are still deprived of professional help when the country is marching ahead to become a developed country, we must increase our tribe!

Strengthening academics is an important goal and the ISHA takes the lead to nourish it.

Faculty exchange program within and outside the country, utilization of existing facility of teleconferencing among the leading institutes and the access to 'Navshikhar' Channel of the Rehabilitation Council of India, may be explored to lend strong ground to academics.

I am of the opinion that the expert lectures/ case studies be videotaped and made available on the ISHA website to add new dimension and promote high educational and research standards in the field of speech, language and hearing. The ISHA platform can also be used for sharing research activity undertaken by post graduate students in the form of dissertation. I appeal to all the head of the post graduate training centers in the field of speech and hearing to make it mandatory for students to submit a soft copy of their dissertation to the ISHA which may be hosted on its website for the benefit for the training institutes and a wider dissemination of the research findings.

It is a pleasure to let you know that the ISHA plans to setup 'interactive- website' which will benefit the members and address their specific academic queries. I also propose a separate section for student members which would enable an access to expert opinion on diagnosis, therapeutics, short write up of different academic topics and question bank of multiple choice for post graduate entrance examination - all free of cost.



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The ISHA website (www.ishaindia.org.in) must be well equipped to provide necessary information to the audiologists and speech language pathologists, other professionals related to our field, clients/patients and their parents or caregivers. To address this issue, the Executive Council of the ISHA met on 16th November 2008 and took decisions to upgrade the ISHA website and make it an interactive forum for professionals, students and the clients, whom we serve. The beginning has already been made as you all must have noticed the new website. It is my earnest request to all the members to provide their e-mail addresses so that we can interact throughout the year and not just during the annual conference. If all of us agree we may now only have e-newsletter of the ISHA and all the communication among the ISHA members through our website or through e-mails.

Our state-wise branches and city-wise chapters need to be more active. State branches of the ISHA or the city-wise chapters are in lime light only during the annual convention. I urge members to continue to have meeting of the state branches/city wise chapters on regular basis as most of the state branch activities slows down/stops after the annual convention of the ISHA. Secretaries of state branches of the ISHA must keep the Secretary ISHA updated regarding the activities undertaken by them. I suggest that state branches of the ISHA place their annual calendar of activities in the General Body of the ISHA for approval. I wish each state had a State branch of the ISHA even if the number of members were less and conducted their business on regular basis. On 1st January 2009, members formed state branch of the ISHA in West Bengal.

Audiologists and speech language pathologists throughout the world as well in India are gradually being recognized as Health Care Professionals. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing disorders as well as providing audiological treatment including management of tinnitus and fitting of hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems including swallowing disorders. Member of the ISHA have been providing clinical services in institutional, hospital, clinical, educational and various other set ups. Early identification of hearing disorders is high on the clinical agenda of each professional working in the field. Importance of new born hearing screening program is being emphasized globally. The General Body of ISHA's decision to celebrate Speech and Hearing week (7th December to 15th December) was a good move to create awareness about our profession as well as strengthening our relations with other disciplines.



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We were supposed to hold forums, public discussions, and information campaign in support of the week, focusing on speech and hearing issues, trends, and ways and means by which speech and hearing impaired individuals and their families can seek good solution towards the betterment of their daily life. But the response was not up to our expectations.

Can we think of creating separate fund for conducting awareness programs in collaboration with government/corporate sector? The fund can be raised through voluntary contributions of the members, manufacturers, national/state governments and corporate sectors and perhaps be named as 'Healthy Hearing and Good Communication Fund'. The ISHA and its state branches may utilize the fund to create awareness and audited accounts may be brought to the knowledge of the Executive Council of the ISHA.

I urge all members to form strategies and actively participate to create awareness among the general public, school and college going students, community leaders and elders of our community for prevention, early identification and management of speech and hearing disorders. Rapid developments in hearing assessment, hearing aids and ear mould technology are taking place worldwide. More and more persons with hearing impairment are using assistive listening technology. Number of children and adults benefiting from cochlear implant prosthesis are increasing. Technological advancement has been occurring in the field of speech language pathology too. Computer aided voice diagnostic and intervention tools, tools for assessment of different physiological measures of speech organs, assessment and intervention tools for swallowing disorders, clinical tools for assessment and intervention of autism are rapidly flowing in and around the world. Therefore, the field of Audiology and speech language pathology is considered to be very dynamic. The same is reflected in number of books and journals published from the western countries. However, in India, we have very few indigenous journals in the field of audiology and speech language pathology in spite of having large clinical population. Journal of Indian Speech language hearing association (JISHA) has been published more or less on regular basis under the direction of Editorial Board. Now the journal has been indexed. Perhaps it will be right to consider publishing the JISHA biannually rather than annually. I also request the head of leading Institutes to consider publication of Journals in the field of speech and hearing jointly in collaboration with publishers as done in foreign countries.



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I call upon members to record more and more clinical data in the form of scientific paper/articles and contribute not only in national but also in international journals. With huge clinical population we must come forward and contribute to the field of speech and hearing rather than being mere users of the existing knowledge.

'Growth' is the key word for both our present and our future. We must support each other to face the challenges in academic as well as professional front and raise consciousness among other organizations and governmental agencies as we continue to push forward for recognition of the research and scientific achievements of our profession.

I congratulate the organizing committee of Maharashtra branch of ISHA for its efforts to make this conference a grand success. By involving local, national and international experts Maharashtra branch of ISHA has created a platform for academic interaction and exchange of ideas. I am sure this will be an enlightening experience for all the delegates attending the conference. I thank our corporate sector and each one of you who have toiled day in and day out in making this convention a grand success.

We do have very interesting and valuable discussions during the conference, but, there is no provision to store this information for future use. May be we can formulate a strategy so that these interactions can be made available for the professionals and researchers involved. I wish there were provision to record the proceedings of this discussion and means to circulate it among the members. If the organizers can implement these changes, this conference will mark the wonderful beginning of a new venture.

Although, audiologists and speech language pathologists make a very small group in India, we have been able to carve out a niche for ourselves through sheer hard work and sincerity. We are a group of dedicated professionals with precise goals to meet. However we must acknowledge that the pace of growth has not picked up the desired speed. We have grown in members and so has our



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attendance in the conference. Today we are recognized as health care professional and are given due status at the national and international level, yet we have a long way to go. We need to make the government realize the necessity of having a professional expert of the field at state as well as national level in the policy making bodies formed for the persons with speech and hearing disorders.

Let us all prepare ourselves to meet the challenge ahead of us, head-on. Our sincerity, dedication and constant pursuit to explore new opportunities for our clients will definitely create bright future for each and every member of ISHA.

Once again personally and on the behalf of the Executive Council of ISHA, I wish you all a very happy new year and once again welcome to the 41st Annual Convention, of ISHA and urge you to lend keen attention to the speakers and their presentation, participate actively in the discussions, make fullest exploitation of the networking opportunities and do enjoy.

Thank you all.

Jai Hind