



# 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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ISHA

**'BACK TO THE FUTURE'**

The most cherished honour I have received in my professional career spanning 27 years was the nomination last year and subsequent election to the post of the President of the Indian Speech and Hearing Association. To be recognized by one's peers as having the potential to lead an association such as ours is heart-warming and very precious. It is even more special to be installed as president during the ruby anniversary conference and in the presence of three revered mentors and signatories of the original memorandum of association in 1967. Dr. Rathna, Dr. Nikam and Mr. Oza, Your presence here is an inspiration in itself, and we seek your continued support and blessings.

It is said that you are forty only once and we recognize this as a moment in time for reflection and assessment. There were some important lessons learnt from our mentors, teachers, and seniors. It is difficult to imagine the rough path they walked, lighting the way, knocking down walls, opening doors, so that life might be a bit smoother for those of us coming behind them. They defended, with fierce determination, the identity of the speech and hearing professional. Today, I ask you to remember them with pride and reverence. We are here today because of them and are grateful to them for protecting our professional identity, for nurturing the profession and creating a platform from which we could confidently look into the future.



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When this association was founded in 1968, the majority of us here were not in the profession and many were not even born. As a young student in the late seventies, ISHA was centred on personal experiences. Attending the conference was a part of a fun educational tour. I recall getting my first offer for a job at an ISHA meeting. I remember, attending the general body meeting of ISHA for the first time and my whole class being taken to task by Dr. Rathna for walking out enmasse from the meeting without permission of the chair. I have fond memories of reading drafts of Dr. Nikam's exquisite speech to the ISHA, and wondering what does one do, write like she does. After graduation, I became a life member of ISHA and the perspective changed. One began to wonder, about ISHA's role in the professional lives of speech language pathologists and audiologists. The journal, the sparkling 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, taking the conference to smaller cities, publishing ISHA battery and other monographs, the orations (Mr. Oza's moving oration in Mysore) all come to mind, but was this enough.? Was there something more we wanted from ISHA? Why should I be a part of ISHA?

I had asked my father, a chemist, the same question when he was secretary of the New Delhi Traders Association and also a member of the Rotary club. His opined that it was not enough to take responsibility for what we do, to those we serve. Being an advocate for the profession is just as important. One of the best ways of spreading the message of the work we do and strengthen ties to the communities we live in, is to be a volunteer in a professional or service organization beyond the walls of the place of employment. Hermen Melville's words come to mind "We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results."

For four decades now our members have been great advocates for our profession and on have determined the course and growth of this organization. There is no doubt in each decade there were different priorities and many crisis situations. Yet the organization has weathered many a storm and continued to grow in size and quality. Membership has flourished. From four core speech and hearing members in 1968, to 330 in 1974, to 750 in 2002 more than 1500 today. In the more recent past, the emphasis was on consolidation and strengthening the organizational structure. Many members have given generously of their time, skills and have participated and



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volunteered in this effort. Corpus funds have increased, documentation have been completed, the journal is much improved. The national and state chapter conferences have become bigger, better organized, more professional and of course more expensive. In this process I believe that what really mattered was outstanding leadership by past presidents and courage, conviction, hard work and never say die attitude of three unique members of our organization Dr. Kalyani Mandke, Dr. N. Shivshankar and Dr. S.P. Goswami. These three together made a difference that was greater than the sum of the parts. Tom Callanan was quite right when he said to “stronger the collective wisdom present, the stronger my sense of unique individuality -- only now it's within the context of the whole rather than separate from the whole.”

This past year under the able leadership of president Dr. Vijaylakshmi Basavaraj two significant events were organized that will have far reaching implications. The first, ISHA now has more than a headquarters address, we now have a physical space to in the AIISH campus in Mysore. The second, last November an unique videoconference was held to develop the draft of the mission and vision statement for ISHA. Members from across the country Delhi, Imphal, Pudducherry, Manipal, Mysore, and Mumbai participated in this seamless and fruitful discussion. Much was accomplished in the three hours but more important that event was described by the participant as one of the most productive meetings ever held by ISHA.

As mentioned earlier, this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the past and look to the future. It seems appropriate to quote Dr. Adenwalla who took inspiration from Janus, the two headed god in Roman Mythology, considered the guardian of the gateway of time. I quote “With one head he looks back into the past and gives the man the wisdom that comes from hindsight. With the other he looks into the future and to the man who dares to walk fearlessly into the unknown, he gives courage that comes from foresight”. Indeed the stage has been set and the time has come to “Go back to the future”.

ISHA has responsibility towards two important stakeholders: the population we serve and our members. Focused initiatives and additional strategic planning, are needed to set the agenda to meet their needs for the next several years. It might be a good to consider what we want to accomplish by the time the golden Jubilee comes around.



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As individuals we all serve as advocates for those with communication impairments. As long as people wish to speak, hear and communicate, we will impact their lives. Cannot ISHA help to make your individuals voices louder, more effective? Should not ISHA as an organization help to make your individuals efforts at advocacy better? In other countries the strongest advocacy and leadership for neonatal hearing screening and impact of personal music systems on hearing has come from professional organizations.

ISHA is an organization of individual members spread across the country and even internationally. Most of us will agree that while we help those with communication disorders we have failed to communicate effectively within ourselves. It will be our endeavour to maximize the use of available technology as was demonstrated during the videoconference, to reach out to all members. We have also failed to communicate our work nationally and internationally. Indexing the journal and opening our conference to international participation is needed to promote effective dissemination of our work. ISHA can be a catalyst in this area. If ISHA has to be a meaningful forum for our members, the conferences should have greater emphasis on continuing education. There is a need to provide opportunity for our own members to share their work. There is need to take a hard look at how the conferences are meeting the needs of professionals in the field.

There is also a need to groom and mentor young leaders. In the recent past we have had many new PhDs and many such as the Fulbright scholars who are rising stars in international forums. These youngsters who have been groomed in India by Indians and have been the face of the Indian Speech and hearing professionals. They represent us proudly. We need to help them to represent us better. I want them to know that we are all proud of them.

I have been amazed as how well each conference organizing committee coped with increasing number of delegates and scientific participation. Every year the conference strives to become better. In Mumbai there were 70 submissions for the conference, this year there were 270. The challenge has been to accommodate more delegates and more papers in the same available time. I think we have about peaked it in this conference. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the leadership, organizing committee for such fine arrangements this year. We



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appreciate your selfless efforts. It is exciting to meet old friends, renew old ties and learn something new and realize that ISHA provides us the opportunity to do all this.

It is my hope that we build on the foundations laid by our illustrious seniors, exploit the energy of the exponentially increasing numbers, to make ISHA an organization that is relevant in the professionals lives of every speech and hearing professional and responsive to the needs of every member. Let us use this opportunity to re dedicate ourselves to work towards our common future.

Before I conclude let me reiterate, that it is a privilege to serve as President. Along with the executive council and committees and members, we will attempt to move the association and our profession forward for this upcoming year.

Thank you