



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. BABUL BASU

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Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to chair a well nurtured professional body like ISHA where some of the predecessors are my respected teachers while some are my seniors and my friends. On this auspicious day I seek blessings from my teachers and request all the assistance from those who have led ISHA from the forefront to bring our organization to a healthy stage.

Onnaakkam. ISHA has had an irrefutable connection with Tamil Nadu, since the conception of this association, ideated at Vellore in 1966. Chennai, being the heartstring of Tamil Nadu and the capital of southern India has played host to a number of successful ISHA conferences in the past. Chennai has mesmerised me personally, with the tangy lip smacking savouries delighting the taste buds. Musical geniuses in the likes of Prof Bal Murali Krishna and A. R. Rahaman, has contented our ears and soul over the years, and rhythm of Bharatnatyam does not only fill my heart with joy but also enriches my augmentative communication. Given chance I can pick up the language,” Chennai, naan unnai kadalikiren”.

My initial tryst in the field of rehabilitation occurred, as I followed my mother’s footsteps and became a special educator for the hearing impaired after my graduation in pure science in the year 1970. My professors and mentors of the teachers training college, Kolkata always encouraged me to study more about the allied health sciences especially educational Audiology. The journals like ‘Volta Review’ and ‘American Annals for the deaf’ quenched my thirst to keep up with the



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latest developments. I still remember those days of early seventies when my 'shouting at the ear level' for most of the so called 'deaf' young students led to their acquisition of speech and language. Mass communication was in its infancy during those days and I came to know about AIISH, Mysore through a documentary film 'Hello Vadiraja,' during 1973. That became the defining moment in my career and I decided to upgrade my professional career from a special educator to a speech and hearing professional and started to communicate my earnest desire to the then director Dr Rathna. The rest as they say was a history.

The profession was in its nascent stages back then and the first conference I attended was at Manipal and the second was at my hometown Kolkata. Yes, I am talking about a phase when ISHA had decided to be independent in spite of only 10-12 members attending the then Annual event held in Kolkata. ISHA had hardly 30-35 members at that time with Sri Ram Mohan Babu as organizing Secretary. Under the Leadership of Dr. Rathna, Prof. Oza, Dr Shailaja Nikam, and many others, we are quite strong today having about 2100 life members besides many associate members and student members.

Our role in the field today is not only confined to the traditional realms of clinical and academic institution but has also expanded to the administrative domains. In my years of service in an administrative role as a Deputy Director for the government of West Bengal, I have realized the importance of our profession in the overall development of the especially able children. Even now several children, especially in the rural parts of the country are deprived of education and rehabilitation due to lack of awareness. We need to improve our outreach programmes to improve these services. We also need to motivate the government authorities to ensure better models of service delivery for the disabled. Our country needs to implement hearing screening programs for early identification and intervention. Our schools should employ at least one SLP. This way the job opportunities would also increase, and to do that we need to take up administrative jobs too, to increase our representation in the ministry, government departments and the rehabilitation council to initiate a change in their mindset regarding rehabilitation models.

Over the years our field is opening its arena to other professionals, and there has been an evolution in the professional boundaries. There has been improvement in the amount of interaction



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with other professionals of the team. Although blending of boundaries in certain circumstances has been termed as dilution, in my opinion this aspect needs to be treated with careful consideration. Certain amount of amalgamation of knowledge and multidisciplinary experience can also yield favourable outcome especially when treating children with multiple disabilities. My involvement with the organization for Cerebral Palsied has strengthened my competency as an SLP an enhanced my professional expertise. The kind of input provided to the other team members for rehabilitation of the spastics from the point of view of Communication therapist had enriched all of us. AAC is the resultant outcome and many of us are its stake holders. What is important for us to remember that speech and hearing does not exist or happen in isolation. Communication does.

The ISHA family has grown over the years and like any big family there are differences in opinion amongst the members. It is indeed a challenging job for the head of the family to arrive at a consensus, and yield unified opinion for the betterment of the professionals belonging to the organization. We have been going through a testing phase, wherein we find our existing professional domain is being encroached citing the greater interest of the hearing impaired. There are, I believe, some strong forces to undermine the professional growth. As a chairperson of ISHA I tell myself lending the voice of Tagore:

“Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers, but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for the heart to conquer it”.

We should be ready to defend our rights whenever our professional interests are endangered. ISHA as a professional organization strives for “professional excellence in Speech Language and Hearing Services, safeguarding professional ethics and the interest of professionals and the people with Speech Language and Hearing disorders”. With this in our vision, we the office bearers of ISHA should do all in our power to prevent dwindling of the standard of our profession. Only then can we deliver to our optimum potential. Collaborating with our allied professionals is necessary for the spread of profession but no at the cost of loss in depth. We should also ensure that a crucial part of aural rehabilitation should not fall into the mercy of personnel with few months of exposure to audiology as a subject. We as speech and hearing



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professionals will not withstand any other professional infringement into our field; neither would we tolerate any quackery, at the same time we should continue to uphold the noble cause of empowering the disabled section of the society.

The standard of clinical services needs up gradation in periodical intervals. I also want to motivate all of our colleagues to be a part of ISHA. Many of us veterans have been a part of ISHA since inception, but I see that the present generation does not take up the membership of ISHA unless they are in an educational institution, or for a need to send scientific papers to ISHA. Our numbers have increased sporadically in past few years in actuality but not on paper. Unless we strengthen our numbers, our voices will die in the crowd, our representation will fall weak and our demands for maintaining individuality will be curbed. This organization is by all of us, and for all of us. I therefore encourage all our student members to be a part of ISHA after they graduate to help us serve the larger goal, the greater good.

To upgrade the professional service I would stress on leadership. To quote ex US President Sir Ronald Reagan, "Greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people do the greatest things". We are lucky to have leaders like Dr. Rathna, Dr. Nikam, Professor Oza, Professor Vijay Shah and many others who have illustrated a clear path to reach our individual goals in the career. Being a teacher I always remember Sir William Arthur Ward. He said, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." Our mentors were both formal and informal. The informal mentor ship had a huge impact on us. It had helped to flourish the innate potential of offering an adequate yet justifiable professional service to the weaker section of the society. To quote Tagore yet again:

"..... The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."

Let us rejuvenate the value of mentoring to strengthen the profession of Speech Language pathology and audiology and make it more vibrant.



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There are certain professional issues which keep bothering me over some years. We have our clinical practice in a multilingual set up mostly in urban areas but the research on therapeutic outcome for various Speech Language and Communication Disorders are scanty. In depth research is needed for establishing efficacy of various therapeutic techniques. Our documentation technique and compilation of the therapeutic results need to be looked upon for a better service in future. Also I must stress on the importance of a proper reporting technique. Many a times the reports for audiological evaluation and speech and language evaluation do not conform to any standard protocol. Empty diagnoses are made without proper inferences in hurry and a lot of crucial observations during testing or interpretations of test results are missed out. Careful documentation of cases for both diagnostic and therapeutic services can yield food for thought. Clinical researches are of utmost importance and should not be overlooked. Researches should be encouraged in all settings, not just in educational settings. Also I encourage our members to make attempts to publish their researches nationally and internationally.

Another persistent issue in most of the setups is an incomplete service delivery to the aurally handicapped. Most of the audiologists do take up diagnostics as a more lucrative and profitable hearing aid dispensing and /or cochlear implantation and sadly neglect to rest of the aural rehabilitation. We are all aware that the first few years after the child starts using the amplification device are the defining years for the child's speech and language development; it is the competence of a speech and language pathologist which delivers this difficult feat. Dealing with young children is no doubt demanding and at times may prove arduous but your diligence will bear the fruits of labour. It would be delightful if our dear colleagues invest at least 1/3rd of the amount of time and energy towards therapy for their cases; the resultant outcome of the situation would be more meaningful. I assure you, my friends, from my forty years of service towards the cause, your service will provide you with an eternal satisfaction. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others*" and in the words of Tagore,

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy".



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To me ISHA has two distinct responsibilities: - first to serve the members and second to serve the speech language and hearing impaired.

Regarding the first responsibility I have an interesting observation. The duration of the GB meetings are steadily increasing every year which indicates that at least once a year the members are utilizing their food for thought regarding ISHA. Now we have our website and a very energetic and active executive body, so why don't we make an effective use of the e-platform? Our Honorary General Secretary had invited agenda to be discussed in the fourth coming GB meeting well in advance, unfortunately only two life members have responded and one of them belongs to the executive body! Hence my first request to the members is to be a regular visitor of ISHA website.

In this connection I would like to share my experience of ISHA WB Chapter. We do meet in regular intervals to fulfil both the responsibilities stated earlier. However the enthuse members pour in numbers in times of crisis which had surfaced last year, but fail to show the same fervour in clinical meets. Does that mean that our honourable members are unified only in the emergence of a possible predicament but not for a regular meeting to upgrade their professional skill. I have been in this profession for more than 40 years, yet I deem the conferences, seminars and meets as an enriching experience, and I never cease to learn. I do believe our dear colleagues also have the heart to learn but the motivation is not yet strong enough for them to grace these meets with their attendance. Friends, I strongly feel the vast sky of ISHA is colourful today with bright, young budding professionals appearing as rainbow in its horizon. We seek your help in organizing workshops, seminars and other professional meets so that we learn more from each other to serve better for the cause.

The annual conventions held every year need to be geared towards the pragmatic aspects of the profession- the needs of the day. I am happy that the EC has consented to a very pragmatic theme this year, that is "Gearing up for the future-what ISHA can do", in lieu with the need of the day which, the organizers have further extended as "Bridging the Profession and Industry". I hope the participants have gained adequate knowledge from the Continuing



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Education Program. I do hope the regional chapters of ISHA would organize such CEP's in the near future.

While appreciating the honest, sincere and tireless endeavour of Mr Naraindran and his team for hosting such a colourful annual event at Chennai I tender my hearty Greeting to all my fellow members, the honourable guests on the dais and the delegates. I wish the 45th ISHACON a great success.