



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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Calling for Profession!

Dear Friends,

At the outset I would like to thank EC of ISHA and the members of ISHA who showed the confidence in me and elected me as the President of ISHA. It's with pleasure and a great honour I accept this post for the year 2011-12.

Friends, with the position comes the responsibilities. ISHA is an organization with more than 40 years of history. The stalwarts have struggled hard to make a path for Speech and Hearing profession in India. Now we all are walking on the footprints of those steadfast professionals who have not only shown the green pasture but showed a path to make a difference in people's life. The most gratifying part of our profession is we can make the difference in somebody's life. But it does not mean to be a clinician only. We can make a difference as an academician; contribution towards the research work will indeed help us to solve our own issues, and hurdles. Working towards advocacy will help for the horizontal growth. We have to decide our own path, and have to trail on the same path for few years before you consider exploring, the unexplored fields.



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The profession has been demanding, we have reached the level where internal and external pressures are increasing to bring the change. Sixty years ago Mahatma Gandhi said, 'be the change now on the other side of the world the message is constantly given as, 'be the change'. It is certainly need of the hour. We need to march ahead with the changing times. What is to be changed? Every time the change cannot be in 180° or as simple as black and white. But we have to make change to accommodate new issues, new challenges. This will possible only if we have a synergy.

We work together best when we respect each other's perspectives and identify issues that reflect our interests and collaborate on them. We need better partnership between the professionals as we are marching ahead with specialization. There has to be a synergy of Audiology and Speech – Language Pathology as well as between clinicians and scientists and the industry. To achieve this harmonious relationship we need to understand the calling of our profession.

Friends let me elaborate on, "What is calling of a profession?" Sense of calling is one of the most important life values. It makes you happier person in your personal and professional life simultaneously. Do you remember sense of calling during your college days? We all were very much charged to become something!

That something means the best Speech and Hearing Professional, it meant being the responsible citizen of India, it meant earning the comforts, name and fame. In later life sense of calling shifted to become good partner, spouse, a parent and many more things!! We are managing these various roles with pride. But unfortunately during this journey there is a paradigm shift, family became first and the profession became a rear burner. I say a burner, the urge to work of the cause is there, desire to achieve something is there, need for working 9 to 5 is there. But it remains in a low key profile. That's the reason ISHA might not have made an impact towards the policy makers or towards people at large.

We have been experiencing passages in our own life cycles. The decade of twenties, decade of thirties and the decade of forties have given us different experiences. What we were aspiring in our twenties did not continue in the thirties, what we dreamt in thirties changed in forties. This is certainly an evolving process. Dreams and the horizon are never static, they are dynamic so naturally they keep



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on changing. But certain values remain unchanged. That's the value of sense of calling, or calling or our profession. It also meant giving back to the society. We are so fortunate to be in the field of Speech and Hearing. So while doing the professional services, we serve the society. Serving to the community is ultimately serving to the nation. I would like to quote George Bernard Shaw "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can".

When we say serving to the community, are we having the zeal? Answer may not be affirmative. Let us shake up, let us take an audit of our duties and roles of a professional. We have achieved many more things in our personal lives but what about the professional achievements? I am not talking about medals, applause or accolades. Yes we all need those credits, but I am saying about professional excellence. Let me ask you, have we changed our therapy or diagnostic techniques in the last five years? Have we modified our service delivery model in the last five years? Have we incorporated new instrumentation in our work set up in the last three years? How do we see ourselves five years from now? (No yes answer to this). If we answer these questions, affirmatively then yes, we know the sense of calling of a profession. But if the answers are more inclined towards negative side then we have to fasten our belts. It is never too late for any activity. Let 2011 becomes the year of professional focus. Let us develop a road map for ourselves.

Recently they are several issues, which are raised by the professionals. Issues are about the growth and survival of this profession. Professionals have raised issues for protecting, preserving and promoting the Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists. They have felt a major paradigm shift, which requires immediate attention. The shift is not only with reference to manpower development but also with the technology. The fast changing technology and the professional's skills do not stay on the same page for long. Professionals experience the drain out feeling with fast changing technological scenario and with the instrumentation required in the professional field. There is a strong need to discuss about the curricula modifications to meet the current needs.



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Here I would like to bring to your notice certain activities happening at Indian Medical Association. The association is 84 years old and the national President of IMA Dr. G Samaran voiced out few objections in his speech delivered on 22nd June 2010. I quote.

1) IMA has strong opposition for the fast route of manpower development. IMA strongly opposes a program BRHS (Bachelor of Rural Health Care). While opposing this concept the National President of IMA says. There is no dearth of MBBS doctors to serve in rural areas. What we need is to increase the pay and emoluments to work in rural areas. It's also advisable to introduce residency type programs in all multi-specialty hospitals and conduction of national level exit exam after completion of stipulated 3 years residency. If the Govt. Wants basic doctors at sub-center level, let the MBBS degree be the minimum qualification. For this the Govt. & MCI has to increase the MBBS seats by 25% and allocate these seats exclusively to rural area students by having bond to work in rural areas for 5 years after completion of the education in all existing 300 medical colleges.

- 2)
 - A) IMA condemns dissolution of MCI as arbitrary exercise of power
 - B) IMA demands reconstitution of MCI immediately as per provisions.
 - C) IMA demands restoration of the independence of MCI.
 - D) IMA demands retaining of MCI in its present character and form
 - E) IMA demands two representatives for MCI to be elected from central council of IMA".

I suggest all the members to read this entire speech on the IMA website. What I see in that speech, there are parallel issues in ISHA, let us address those issues. We have to address four issues on priority 1) Position of DLHS program 2) Manpower requirement in the country. 3) Empowering Speech and Hearing professionals with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Let me elaborate these points in more details.

The audience will certainly agree with me that the scope of practice of DLHS has not been developed. To provide apt quality Speech and Hearing health care to rural areas appears to have no



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met till today. There is a strong need to take an independent audit of these programs. The DHLS syllabus clearly states in its objectives that DHLs personnel will be working as aide to Audiologists, and to Speech-language pathologists. But reality is these personnels are working independently in the field, with the title of either Audiologist and / or Speech Language Pathology.

- a) There is no dearth of undergraduate Speech and Hearing professionals as there are nearly 45 institutions which are offering these courses in our country. Many more institutes have shown interest to start these courses. But unfortunately majority of BASLPs continue their further studies to graduate as MASLPS. This professional up gradation is not because of the strong urge to upgrade, but not having jobs for BASLPs. Ultimately there are more MASLPS than BASLPs. Once again the scope of practice for these professionals is not defined. Ultimately they end up stepping on each other.
- b) What we need is to create SLP and Audiologist posts in all the health centers and medical colleges. Such mandate was given by Govt. Of India in the year 1979. (Ref. Earlier MCI/GOI order) The BASLPs are only expecting respectable pays & emoluments to work in rural areas.
- c) There is dearth of specialists and deficiency of infrastructure at CHC (Community health center) level. It's also advisable to introduce residency type programs in all multi-specialty hospitals and conduction of national level exist exam after completion of stipulated 1 year residency.
- d) If the Govt. Wants basis specialists at sub-center level, let the BASLP degree is the minimum qualification. For this, the Govt and RCI has to earmark certain seats exclusively to rural area students by having bond to work in rural areas for 5 years after completion of the education in all existing medical colleges and PHCs.
- e) Last but not the least, we do not have appropriate representation in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Hence the National Program for prevention of Deafness goes on the road without even acknowledging the role of Audiologists. Similarly Persons



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with Disabilities Act (PwD Act 1995), and National Trust Act (1999) have no room for SLPS to speak on behalf of our communicatively changed individuals such as Aphasics, Laryngectomees.

Friends, if we do not take appropriate measures at this time, there are chances that we may be jeopardizing the profession and professionals at large. Under these circumstances, we the professionals should meet to discuss, to deliberate and to define professional challenges, problems and issues.

While ISHA needs to do certain things collectively, individually ISHA members also can do significant contribution. We have to raise our voice, objections and concerns as and when see the opportunity.

We are all different with different habits, qualities, traits, strengths and weakness, in fact, each one of us unique. This uniqueness means that we may not always agree about everything. There will be differences of opinion. These differences can best be settled by allowing people to voice their opinions and enable ideas to mingle freely. The basic requirement is an open mind. We must listen to other people's viewpoints. At the same time we must have the ability to voice our own opinions without hesitation. Disagreements should be settled peacefully. We should all try to play the role of peacemakers.

Friends, whatever you do, or dream you can, begin it Boldness has genius and power and magic in it. Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put ones thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Friends, last ten years I heard over and over again what ISHA had done for me? You will admit ISHA had become a strong voice. Professionals, policy makers have started taking cognation of ISHA's opinions. We are certainly making a move, Change is happening. Keep in mind that the larger the ship, the longer it takes to turn it around. To turn it around you must have insightful and forward thinking members. You can only change it from within.



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Let us respond to our own inner voice. This is calling of Profession! Let the Year 2011 become the year of change!!!

I wish the organizing committee of 43rd ISHACON all the success.

JAI HIND!