



IRIS

• Intervention • Rehabilitation • Inclusion • Sensitisation

ISSUE 1
OCTOBER 2024



e-magazine from
National Institute of Speech & Hearing (NISH)

NISH
We are here because we care



IRIS

• Intervention • Rehabilitation • Integration • Sensitisation

ISSUE 1 OCTOBER 2024

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MESSAGES

Dear Readers,

I am very excited to share the inaugural edition of NISH's online magazine 'IRIS.' This magazine is a true reflection of the NISH family—their thoughts, their work, and their vision.

The idea for 'IRIS' arose from a desire to provide a platform for discussions on disability empowerment, service initiatives, and the latest news from NISH. It also aims to give our multi-talented members a stage to showcase their skills in arts, writing, painting, and more.

Our magazine includes sections on health, success stories, book and movie reviews, exhibitions of art, updates on disability-compatible technology, and more.

The creation of this magazine has been a remarkable team effort, and I applaud the dedication and creativity that have brought it to life. It stands as a testament to the hard work and collaboration of everyone involved.

I encourage all readers to actively engage with our magazine, whether by sharing your stories or contributing ideas. Together, we can inspire and learn from one another, fostering a vibrant and inclusive community.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions, as they inspire us to continue improving. We look forward to your continued participation and support.



Dr SUJA K KUNNATH
Magazine Editor-in-Chief



A Moment of Joy and Pride

.....



Dr. R BINDU

*Hon'ble Minister for
Higher Education &
Social Justice*

I am delighted to announce the launch of NISH's groundbreaking online magazine, IRIS. A testament to our institution's unwavering commitment to empowering and including individuals with disabilities, IRIS is more than just a publication; it's a heartfelt reflection of our community's thoughts, dreams, and tireless efforts.

IRIS offers a platform where every voice is heard, showcasing the extraordinary talents, inspiring stories, and boundless aspirations of individuals with disabilities. It's a space for sharing experiences, nurturing dreams, and celebrating the beauty of diversity.

Through IRIS, NISH is paving the way for a more inclusive and compassionate world, where everyone's abilities shine. I am confident that this magazine will inspire, inform, and uplift its readers, sparking meaningful conversations that drive real change.

To the entire NISH family, your dedication to this noble cause is truly commendable. May IRIS be a beacon of hope, empowerment, and inclusion, guiding us towards a brighter future.

Here's to the success of IRIS as it lights the way forward!

Love and regards.

Dr. R Bindu

(Minister for Higher Education and Social Justice, Kerala)



TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY





Assistive Technology: A Path to Inclusion

Development ensures that AT products are affordable, culturally appropriate, and sustainable.

Institutions like NISH support the full AT lifecycle—assessing needs, demonstrating devices, providing training, financing, and reusing technology. This holistic approach empowers people with disabilities to live confidently and independently.

The vision for AT is a future where entrepreneurs with mobility challenges can run businesses in fully accessible workspaces, and individuals across the country are collaborators in AT design.

Universal design principles can help make assistive devices a part of everyday life, from classrooms to workplaces.

Imagine a world where simple tools can transform someone's ability to hear, see, move, or communicate—a world where technology becomes the bridge between limitations and possibilities. For millions of people with disabilities, assistive technology (AT) is not just a convenience; it's a lifeline that empowers them to overcome daily challenges, pursue education and careers, and connect with those around them.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, marks a turning point in India's journey towards accessibility, highlighting the need to innovate and create environments where everyone can thrive, regardless of ability. This law stresses our responsibility to develop assistive technology (AT) solutions that truly transform lives.

In a country where around 2% of the population has disabilities, AT access is critical. Yet, economic barriers and limited awareness continue to restrict access. To overcome this, India must build a system where AT is not only affordable but adaptable to individual needs.

A key goal is to encourage indigenous innovation. Imported devices are often expensive and may not fit local conditions. Fostering local research and devel-

Key Assistive Technologies:

- Smart wheelchairs with GPS and sensors for safe, independent mobility.
- AAC devices that help non-verbal individuals communicate through icons and phrases.
- Eye-tracking devices enabling users with mobility impairments to communicate using only their gaze.
- Wearable devices that offer image recognition, real-time alerts, and emergency services, aiding those with visual or mobility impairments.
- Social robots that provide companionship and reminders, assisting elderly or disabled individuals with cognitive support.

Challenges remain, including a lack of awareness and high costs of imported devices, but with local innovation, these obstacles can be overcome.

Together, we can make AT accessible, transforming lives and creating a more inclusive society.



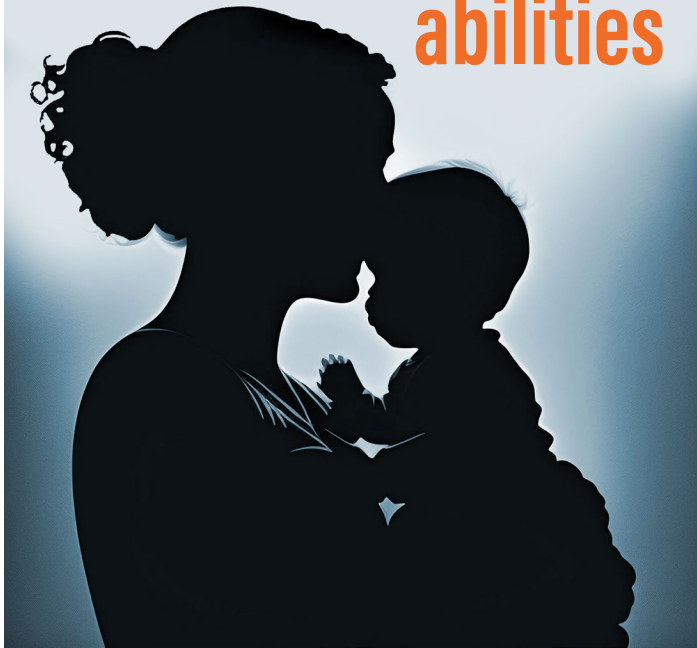
Dr SUJA K KUNNATH
Executive Director, NISH



SMALL GREAT THINGS



The Experience: A Mother's Journey with different abilities



we missed valuable time in his development.

We sought help from different centers, first in Mysore. Then we moved to another centre but the training there was in Kannada, which we didn't understand. Thankfully, a parent we met guided us to Balavidyalaya in Chennai. That's where everything changed for us.

The training at Balavidyalaya was strict and well-structured. It helped our son learn to speak, read, and write, just like other children of his age. The teachers and parents worked together, which gave us hope and confidence. By the age of five, Denny was ready to join a regular school. From then on, he continued to succeed.

We moved to Thiruvananthapuram, where Denny attended an English medium school. As technology improved, we upgraded his hearing aids. He did well in his studies, scoring 82% in his 12th grade exams, and went on to study B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering at College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram.. Later, he completed his MS in the US.

I got married while I was still a student in MSW, and within a year, I became a mother to a lovely baby boy. Since I had studied child development, I was keen to watch how my son grew. At first, I was happy with how he was doing, especially with his eyesight and other senses. But soon, my happiness turned into worry.

One day, during a storm, a strong wind slammed the door shut with a loud bang. While we were all startled, my son continued to sleep peacefully. This made me think—could he be deaf? My family scolded me for thinking this way, but I kept watching his reactions to sounds, and I grew more concerned.

When we visited the doctor for his first booster shot, I shared my worries. The doctor reassured me, saying that some babies start responding only when they can turn their head and neck. But during the second and third booster visits, the doctor also noticed that my son didn't react to loud noises. He advised us to see an ENT specialist.

The specialist confirmed our fears and urged us to start treatment right away. I decided to put my studies on hold and focus entirely on my son's future. We sent his hearing test results to Delhi for a hearing aid, but it took five long months to arrive, during which

Today, Denny works with Indian Oil Corporation in Kochi. He is married to Divya, a physiotherapist with normal hearing, and they are living a happy life.

It has been a long journey, but one filled with hard work and blessings. In 1997, I joined NISH when I received an invitation from its honorary director. I believe it was part of God's plan. Now, I share my experiences with other parents at NISH, knowing how important it is to get the right advice at the right time. Every little effort matters.

I pray that I can continue to help differently-abled individuals for the rest of my life.



Ms DAISY SEBASTIAN
Coordinator, Academics &
Intervention Programs, NISH





MASTER MIND

Discovering the Magic of **Intentional** **Incidental** Learning



In the quilt of life, learning weaves together moments of discovery and understanding. Few years ago, while watching NISH preschool children and their mothers chat near my home, I assumed they were talking about everyday things. But as I listened closer, I realized they were sharing important lessons. This really struck me when I heard a mother guide her deaf child to notice the sound of a dog peeing—a small detail but a big lesson. It showed me how every interaction can teach us something new.

Join me on a journey where everyday moments become extraordinary lessons, and the joy of learning lights up our path. We'll explore how both incidental and intentional learning shape our understanding of the world. Each interaction, whether planned or spontaneous, offers a chance for growth and discovery.

Incidental learning is like finding treasures as we go through life's adventures. It's when we learn new words while watching a movie or absorb information just by paying attention. Children excel at this, soaking up knowledge like sponges.

But **intentional learning** is important too. It's like setting sail with a clear goal in mind. It means seeking out knowledge, whether by studying from a book or practicing a new skill. While it takes effort, it's crucial for targeted learning.

Deaf individuals who lack early intervention often face deficits in incidental learning. Certain information that hearing individuals naturally absorb needs to be explicitly explained to them. Ideally, educators should intentionally impart what would typically be acquired incidentally. Pre-lingual hearing loss contributes to a limited understanding of the world.

Why choose one when we can have both? By blending incidental and intentional learning, we create a rich array of educational experiences that suit everyone's style.

Think about it: while enjoying a movie, we might learn new words without trying—that's incidental learning. But studying those same words from a textbook helps us understand them better—that's intentional learning.

Reflecting on everyday experiences can offer profound insights. Maybe you've seen caregivers chatting with kids, teaching them important life lessons without even realizing it. Watching preschool kids and their moms made me rethink how I teach in my classroom. So, I started using intentional teaching methods, ensuring my students learn both incidentally and intentionally. It made a big difference for me and my students.

Every interaction, planned or not, is a chance to learn and grow. By embracing both types of learning, we open ourselves to endless possibilities and start a lifelong journey of discovery.

So, let's embark on this journey together—a journey where ordinary moments become magical, and every day is a chance to learn something new.



Dr SHIRLY G, M.Tech, PhD
Head, New Initiatives
NISH



MINDFUL



LIVING



Caught in the Web: Understanding Mobile Addiction Among Young People

Mobile addiction is a strong, ongoing dependence on mobile phones, often leading to excessive use. It is characterized by a compulsive need to check devices constantly. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) describes smartphone addiction as excessive usage that is hard to control, resulting in “nomophobia”—the fear of being without your phone.

Recognizing the Signs

Identifying mobile addiction can be crucial for early intervention. Common signs include:

- A strong urge to frequently check the phone.
- Sleep disturbances due to prolonged usage.
- Using the phone in risky situations, like while driving.
- Difficulty in reducing or stopping phone usage despite attempts.
- Withdrawal from social interactions and activities.
- Irritability or unease when the phone is not within reach.
- Physical and psychological impacts, such as sleep deprivation, anxiety, and depression.

Why Young People Are Vulnerable

Young people, especially teens, are more susceptible to mobile addiction because their brains are still developing. They often turn to smartphones as an es-

cape from problems or stress, leading to dependency. Although it may provide temporary relief, relying on smartphones can worsen underlying issues, reinforcing the addiction cycle.

The At-Risk Groups

Research shows that mobile addiction is more prevalent among teenagers than adults, with studies indicating that up to 31% of children and adolescents in India struggle with excessive smartphone use.

Impacts on Life

Excessive smartphone use can lead to neurological changes that reduce attention spans and increase distraction. For adolescents, the instant gratification provided by smartphones can affect their relationships, hobbies, and overall mental health. This dependency may result in anxiety, depression, impulsivity, and loneliness, as well as communication problems within families.

Strategies for Managing Addiction

Self-control plays a vital role in managing mobile addiction. Effective strategies include:

- Setting limits on usage.
- Promoting self-awareness about phone habits.
- Seeking support from peers or professionals.
- Keeping phones out of reach during certain times.
- Removing distracting apps or monitoring usage.

Guidance for Parents and Guardians

Parents can help identify and address mobile addiction in their children. Signs of potential addiction include excessive screen time, difficulty putting the phone down, and withdrawal from family activities. Setting clear boundaries, such as limiting screen time and monitoring content, is essential. Parents should also model healthy phone usage and engage in screen-free activities with their children. Open communication about the risks of excessive phone use can encourage children to find balance.

Looking Ahead

Future research should focus on raising awareness about smartphone addiction and its effects on child development. More studies are needed on preventive measures, particularly parent training, and understanding the link between smartphone addiction and other mental health disorders.

TEAM PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Psychology, NISH





JOURNEY TO WELLNESS



Occupational Therapy: Unlocking Potential Through Personalized Care in Multidisciplinary health care.

Occupational Therapy is a dynamic profession focused on promoting health and well-being through meaningful activities (WFOT). Occupational Therapists (OTs) empower individuals facing physical, cognitive, or emotional limitations to engage in everyday life by enhancing their abilities, modifying environments, and adapting activities to improve participation.

At the heart of occupational therapy is a hands-on approach. Clinicians work directly with individuals, equipping them with essential skills to lead independent, productive, and fulfilling lives. OTs treat a wide range of disabilities, helping individuals reintegrate into their families, workplaces, and communities. Areas of specialization within the field include pediatrics, sensory integration, gerontology, dysphagia, oncology, and even de-addiction programs, highlighting the breadth of services occupational therapists provide.

In addition to clinical settings, Community-Based Rehabilitation plays a vital role in supporting individuals with disabilities by bringing healthcare services directly to their homes. This initiative strengthens the bond between individuals with disabilities and the healthcare system, ensuring that those in remote or underserved areas can receive the care they need without barriers.

One of the key therapeutic approaches within pediatrics is Sensory Integration Therapy, designed for children with sensory processing disorders. After thorough assessments, occupational therapists create personalized treatment plans that involve therapeutic play in a specially designed multi-sensory environment. Sensory rooms, equipped with specialized tools and equipment, help children develop adaptive responses and skills to better engage with the world around them.

For older adults, Geriatric Care is a critical component of occupational therapy. OTs provide essential therapy services that support the aging population, addressing their unique needs and enabling them to maintain the quality of life and independence. To meet the specific needs of each patient, the Occupational Therapy Splinting Unit, Wheelchair Unit, and Assistive Technology Unit provide customized solutions. These units are vital in offering patients the best services, whether through specialized splints, mobility aids, or innovative assistive devices that enhance functionality and independence.

Occupational Therapists are also key members of multidisciplinary healthcare teams, advocating for holistic, client-centered care that transforms lives. Their unwavering commitment to unlocking the potential of every individual ensures that all patients are equipped to thrive in their everyday lives, regardless of their challenges.

Occupational Therapists are vital to multidisciplinary healthcare teams, advocating for holistic client-centered care that transforms lives. OTs are committed to unlocking the potential of every individual, ensuring that all patients are equipped to thrive in their everyday lives.



Dr VINITH DANI JOSE J P
HOD-College of Occupational
Therapy, NISH



ADVOCACY IN ACTION





Bridging the Gap: Support and Rights for the Hearing Impaired in Kerala

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 ensures better living conditions and legal protection for individuals with disabilities, including hearing impairments. Those with 40% or more hearing loss can access benefits using a UDID Card from the Central Government and a Medical Board Certificate from the State Government. Applications for these documents can be submitted via the **UDID portal** or at **Akshaya Centres**.

Kerala offers numerous rehabilitation services for hearing-impaired individuals, including early detection and intervention. NISH is a key rehabilitation center, and **District Early Intervention Centers** in all 14 districts provide timely support. The **“Kathoram”** project by the **Kerala Social Security Mission** ensures early hearing loss detection across 61 government delivery points. Assistive devices, like hearing aids, are available through the ADIP Scheme under the Govt of India, offering free or low-cost options for eligible individuals.

The **“Sruthitharangam”** scheme offers cochlear implant surgery for children up to five years old from families earning less than ₹2 lakh annually, with pre- and post-surgery therapy included.

NISH offers higher education programs for individuals with hearing impairments, including B.Sc. Computer Science, Bachelor of Fine Arts, and Bachelor of Commerce, in affiliation with the University of Kerala. Education initiatives provide inclusive learning opportunities, including scholarships, travel allowances, interpreter services, and a 5% reservation in higher education.

Additionally, 4% of jobs in the employment sector are reserved for people with disabilities, with 1% for

the hearing impaired. Public spaces are being made accessible, and there are travel concessions and social security pensions based on income. Misuse of these benefits is punishable by law.

Institutions like **NISH**, **KSSM**, and **NIPMR** are working towards a more disability-friendly Kerala. **The State Commissionerate for Persons with Disabilities** ensures equality and fights discrimination.

The various initiatives in Kerala highlight a strong commitment to supporting the hearing-impaired community. By promoting awareness and ensuring access to rights and services, the state is moving toward an inclusive society where individuals with hearing impairments can thrive and succeed.



Ms REJITHA L

Head of the Department,
Department of Social Work, NISH





PULSE OF THE COMMUNITY



Breaking Barriers: How Hearing-Impaired Individuals Access News

Insights from a Survey on Hearing-Impaired Individuals

Imagine missing out on crucial updates because they're not designed with you in mind. This is the reality for millions of people with hearing impairments, whose access to news media remains limited despite the technological advances of today. A recent survey sheds light on how individuals with hearing loss navigate the news landscape, the challenges they face, and the steps needed to create a truly inclusive media environment.

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

The survey focused on young adults aged 18-24 with varying degrees of hearing loss, primarily profound (91 dBHL and above). Male respondents slightly outnumbered females, but what stood out was the variety in how participants communicated. Many relied on sign language, some used both sign language and speech, and others preferred different visual or non-verbal methods. This diversity in communication styles highlights the urgent need for media content that is flexible and accessible, catering to various needs and preferences.

MEDIA USAGE TRENDS

While most respondents accessed news infrequently, usually once a week or less, their interests were wide-ranging—covering politics, sports, entertainment, education, science, technology, and disability-related issues. The variety in their interests underscores the importance of offering accessible news across all topics, reflecting the diversity of the hearing-impaired community's informational needs.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Several significant barriers were highlighted by the survey:

Lack of subtitles and sign language interpreters:

These essential tools were missing from many news platforms, making it difficult for those with hearing loss to follow along.

Complex language: News reports often use language that is difficult to understand without the aid of subtitles or sign language interpreters, further limiting accessibility.

These barriers point to a need for more inclusive measures, ensuring that news is not only delivered but understood by everyone.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Respondents shared clear and actionable suggestions to enhance accessibility:

Increase subtitles: Subtitles should be available across all media platforms, helping individuals with different degrees of hearing loss follow along with ease.

Expand sign language interpretation: More sign language interpreters should be featured in live broadcasts, recorded segments, and digital platforms to allow real-time access to news.

Simplify language: News reports should use more straightforward language to make content clearer and easier to understand for everyone, particularly the hearing-impaired community.

PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRESS AND MOVING FORWARD

While some respondents noted positive changes, such as more subtitles and interpreters, many felt that accessibility remains insufficient. Satisfaction varied, with many expressing dissatisfaction due to persistent barriers.

This survey was done with the valuable assistance of the Degree HI Department, NISH.



Ms SAPNA K

Coordinator,
Centre for Communication & Media
Development (CCMD), NISH



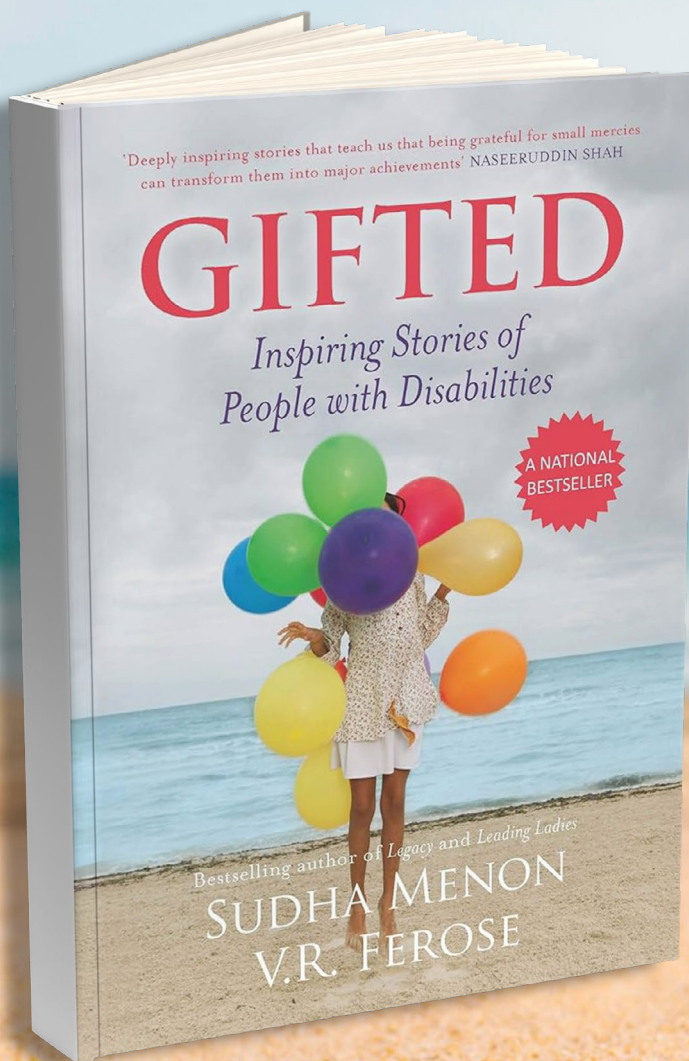
Ms SANGEETHA K S

Apprentice,
CCMD, NISH





MUST-READS FOR THE DETERMINED



A Reflection on "Gifted"

We have all read many inspiring books and autobiographies, or we may know famous people who influence us daily, like Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and the late Ratan Tata. There's no doubt that their lives continue to inspire us in various aspects of our own.

Similarly, many books highlight the incredible success stories of differently-abled individuals, stories that inspire us even more. **'Gifted'** is one such book.

For all avid readers, I highly recommend 'Gifted', authored by Sudha Menon and co-authored by V R Feroose. This book shares the inspiring stories of 15 remarkable people with disabilities.

The book begins with the story of an angel, Aisha Chaudhary, who has been a source of inspiration for me since I finished reading this book in 2015.

But I won't spoil too much here! Why unwrap the "Gift" before it's in your hands?

This book was recommended to me by Dr. Shirly Ma'am, the former Head of the Degree HI Department at NISH, while I was pursuing my Fine Arts degree.

You must read it from Aisha's story to Suresh's with your heart. I'm certain of one thing: once you start reading, you won't want to skip a single page!!!!.

Just as its title suggests, let Gifted be a surprise gift to your everyday life.



PISHON S FERNANDEZ

Graphic Artist, Centre for Communication & Media Development (CCMD), NISH



CAREER INSIGHTS



Achieve Big: Transform Lives with a Career in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology

Imagine a world where every voice is heard and every word is understood. The Bachelor of Science in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (BASLP) is your gateway to making this vision a reality. This transformative undergraduate program trains passionate individuals to become skilled Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists, equipped to identify, intervene, and prevent communication disorders.

In just four years, the BASLP program blends theoretical knowledge with practical experience, which includes three years of in-depth theory classes, a hands-on clinical practicum, and a comprehensive ten-month internship. This dynamic structure ensures you gain the skills necessary to thrive in the field of communication health.

Are you ready to make an impact? To enroll in the BASLP program, candidates must be at least 17 years old, have completed their +2 education in the science stream, and achieve a minimum of 50% in their qualifying exam.

The curriculum covers essential subjects, including Introduction to Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, Psychology Related to Speech and Hearing, Linguistics, Basic Human Anatomy, Otorhinolaryngology, Noise Measurement and Hearing Conservation, and Pediatric and Adult Neuro-communication Disorders. This comprehensive coursework prepares you to tackle real-world challenges in communication health.

Graduating with a BASLP opens up a world of opportunities. Here's where your journey can take you: as an Audiologist, you will conduct hearing evaluations, fit hearing aids, and provide rehabilitation services. As a Speech-Language Pathologist, you will evaluate, diagnose, and deliver therapeutic interventions to

enhance communication and swallowing abilities. You can explore employment avenues in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, speech and hearing clinics, cochlear implantation centers, special schools, and research institutions.

For those ready to specialize, pursuing postgraduate programs like the M.Sc. in Speech-Language Pathology (M.Sc.SLP) and the M.Sc. in Audiology (M.Sc.Aud.) is an excellent option. These two-year programs include academic coursework and clinical practicums, equipping you for roles in teaching, research, and clinical supervision at colleges and universities.

The quality of the BASLP, M.Sc.SLP, and M.Sc.Aud. programs is regulated by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), ensuring high standards of education and practice. Graduates must register with RCI to obtain a valid license to practice in India.

Furthermore, BASLP graduates have numerous opportunities for higher education and employment abroad. Top universities in the USA, UK, Australia, and New Zealand welcome BASLP graduates for postgraduate courses, opening doors to job roles in hospitals, schools, and research institutions worldwide. Overall, the BASLP program and its postgraduate specializations offer a solid foundation and diverse career opportunities in the rehabilitation of communication disorders. If you are passionate about making a difference in people's lives and eager to explore the world of communication health, embark on your journey with BASLP today!



Ms ARYA CHAND

Senior Lecturer/Audiologist
Department of ASLP



MOVIES THAT MOVE US





A Journey into the Heart of Imagination

Directed by Aamir Khan and penned by Amole Gupte, *Taare Zameen Par* is a profoundly moving film that illuminates the struggles of Ishaan Awasthi, portrayed by Darsheel Safary. At just eight years old, Ishaan finds himself lost in a world where school is a daunting challenge. He struggles with every subject, fails every test, and faces ridicule from both teachers and classmates. Yet, beneath this façade of academic failure lies a vibrant internal universe filled with magical lands, animated animals, and unexpressed creativity.

Ishaan's struggles stem from dyslexia, a condition that remains unrecognized by those around him. This rich imagination, however, goes unnoticed in a system that prioritizes conventional academic success over individual talent. The film takes a poignant turn when Ishaan's new art teacher, Ram Shankar Nikumbh, played by Aamir Khan, enters the picture. Recognizing Ishaan's dyslexia, Nikumbh employs innovative teaching methods infused with compassion and creativity. Through his guidance, Ishaan slowly begins to discover his self-worth, confidence, and the joy of artistic expression.

Taare Zameen Par serves as a compelling social commentary on the urgent need to acknowledge and nurture each child's unique talents. The film advocates for inclusive education, emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding in teaching. It resonates powerfully with educators and parents alike, challenging the conventional approach that often measures a child's worth through standardized academic achievements.

For parents of dyslexic children, this film is particularly enlightening. It underscores the importance of nurturing a child's unique artistic abilities rather than merely focusing on their reading and writing challenges. Supporting these children with love and encouragement is crucial, as labeling them can be deeply demoralizing and counterproductive.

Ultimately, *Taare Zameen Par* is more than just a film; it is a call to action. It urges society to value individual strengths and embrace the idea that every child has a unique potential waiting to be discovered. This film should be essential viewing for anyone involved in education, parenting, or child development, reminding us that imagination and creativity are as vital as academic success.



Mr ADARSH S P

Apprentice,
Centre for Communication & Media
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LITERARY LOUNGE



Beyond the veil of memories

Short Story

“ Will Grandpa come over to claim his love on Valentine’s day?” I asked jokingly over the phone to my mother. Grandma has been sleeping since the past three months (a week before my grandfather passed away). She hid my toddler-nephew’s toy afraid that he would take it away, ate a slice of cake , mumbled her favourite God’s name and drifted off to sleep just like that. Some months back when Grandma began forgetting daily chores and faces, never did we know Alzheimer’s was in slow conquest of her entire being.

Back then, every morning Grandpa used to close their bedroom door and when he opened it after a couple of minutes, the aroma of the Lavender-flavoured room freshener would mask the stinkiness of the room and Grandma would look beautiful in freshly laundered outfits and a big red Bindi and Sindoor. Meanwhile, Grandpa would be soaking the soiled bed sheets and Grandma’s clothes in the bathroom. He would invade the kitchen before the maid arrived to cook Grandma’ favourite wheat dosas and would never forget to get a packet of “Munch” on his way back home after running errands. They used to live together, in a world of their own, far away from their kids and their kids, in a home where we visited only during school vacations.

Ever since Grandma surrendered into the whirlpool of memory loss, the house no longer looked , smelled or felt the same. She would sit idly on a wooden chair at her kitchen, staring at the courtyard outdoors while her dimly-lit kitchen would remain silent with no lingering aromas of her cuisines. The neighbour’s dog would wag its tail and snuggle beneath the chair at her feet and they would sit for hours until Grandpa gently touched her hoping to remind her that she still belonged to life and to him.

Days before Grandpa passed away, I vividly remember the nurse handing over Grandpa’s shirt to my

mother before an X-ray imaging session and how we discovered his precious possessions from the shirt pocket- a packet of Eyetex Bindi, some U pins and safety pins. When we pulled his legs later, he smiled and said “she no longer remembers to dress up and I don’t want her to look worn out, after all she used to love dressing up” He sighed and added “ But I dunno who will remember everything for her when I’m no longer there..” Though we assured him, he was quite sure that he was irreplaceable.

Grandma never knew about Grandpa’s passing away. A blessing or curse , we still haven’t figured out, but Grandma never really woke up from her long slumber. Except for the rhythmic breathing movements nothing in her proved that she was alive. Everyday the hospital staff would attend to her , clean the sores from her prolonged sleeping posture, feed her through the tubes and even venture to take her to the hospital garden on the wheel chair. Somedays while shifting her to the bed, she would mumble faintly calling out for Grandpa. Some days her eyes would open and they would look like crystal balls. We would call out, smile and wave but Grandma never really woke up.

While watching her I always thought ‘We all exist in some reign of everyone’s consciousness. Through some miraculous network, some exotic fabric of consciousness we perceive , love and discern each other. Once the reign is lost, we are aliens to each other and alien to ourselves’.

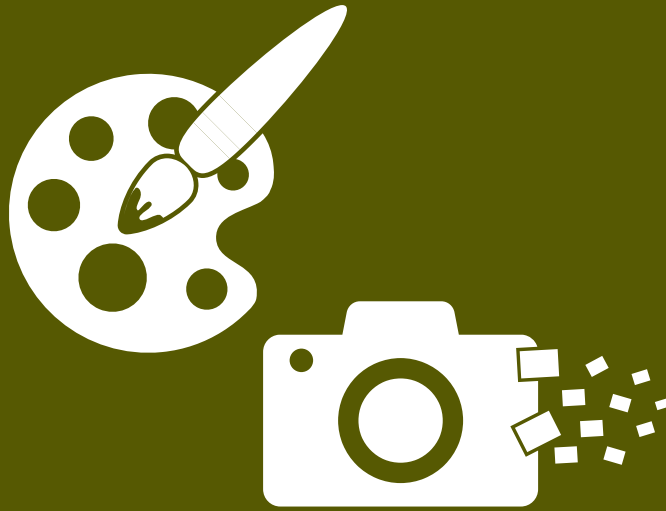
On the dawn of February 15, I woke up to five missed calls from my mother’s number who was then Grandma’s bystander at the hospital. I didn’t have to return the call to realise that Grandpa couldn’t celebrate a single Valentine’s day alone and he has come to claim his love back.....



Ms ARYA CHAND

Senior Lecturer/Audiologist
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CREATIVE MINDS



Captured by
Ajith Mohan M P
 Final year
 BFA(HI) student



Captured by
Praveena M R
 Final year
 BFA(HI) student



Painted by
Tilgia Manoj
 Final year BFA(HI)
 student



Painted by
Sreelal T B
 Final year BFA(HI)
 student





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