



**DELHI ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF**

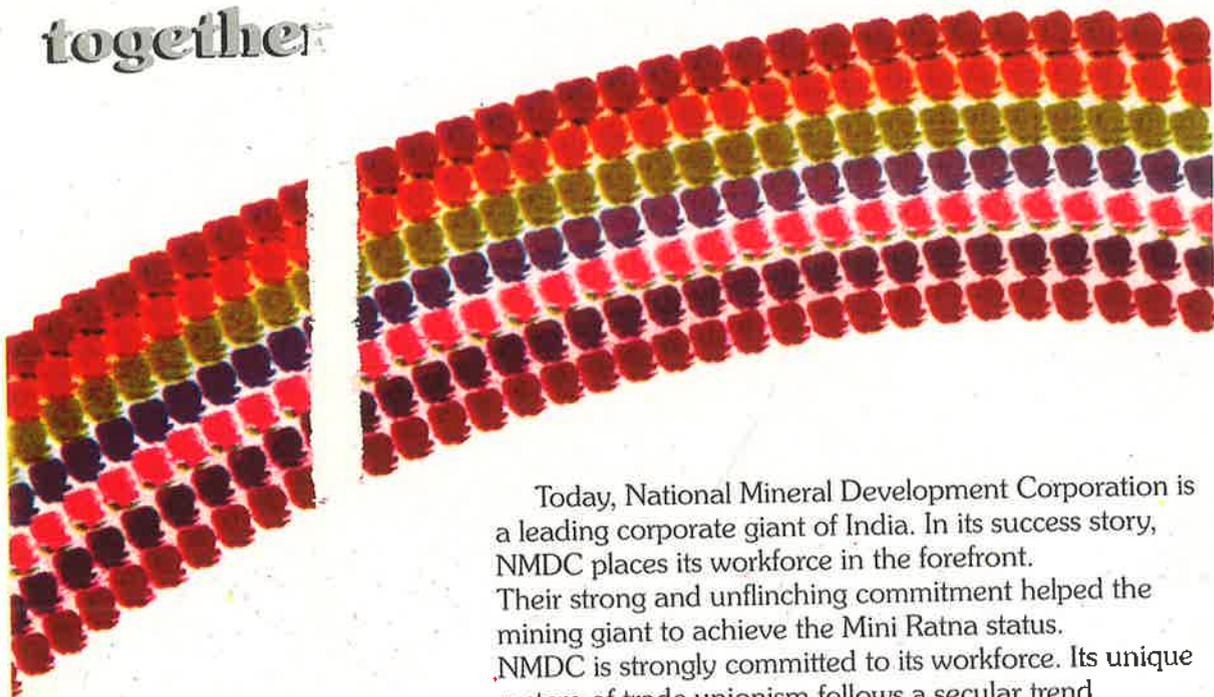


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**55th ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS**

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30th OCTOBER, 2005**

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### Message

I am happy to learn that Delhi Association of the Deaf will be celebrating its 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Day on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2005 at India International Centre, New Delhi.

I trust the occasion shall be utilized to look back upon the short comings of the past year and efforts shall be made not to repeat them in the coming year. Also, plans for the futures will be discussed and these will be implement by the set dates.

We have before us a challenge and that is completion of our Building Project and make it functional. We have to accept the challenge in right spirit and do our best to overcome all the hurdles in our path.

I avail of this opportunity to wish all the members and office bearers a very happy Deepawali and a prosperous coming year.

( Rajiv Pratap Rudy )

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## We Are Harming Our Own Cause

**RAMESH GUPTA**  
Executive President

First, I will tell something about my self. This will establish my bonafieds. I was born deaf. I received education at Govt. Lady Noyce School for the Deaf. I passed class 6<sup>th</sup> in the year 1957. Thereafter, I have been involved in the work of deaf welfare. Over the period, I have through my own efforts, got good command over Hindi, English which I can understand easily.

Thus, I have been engaged in deaf welfare now for four decades and more. I have been earlier associated with New Delhi Deaf & Dumb Club and when it merged with Deaf & Dumb Association to form a unified organization named Delhi Association of the Deaf in 1977, I became its member and subsequently held several positions in it. Now I am its Executive President.

I have been associated with All India Sports Council of the Deaf. I was its Vice Chairman for four years from 1996 to 2000. I have, thus, good knowledge about its working. I am, also, quite familiar with the working of All India Federation of the Deaf and have observed its functioning from close quarters.

I have traveled all over India. I have visited most of the metropolitan cities in India as also small towns. I have visited numerous educational and training institutions for the Deaf, interacted with students and staff alike. I have been to most of the Associations of the adult deaf in India, met their office bearers and ordinary members. I have made it my business to keep myself abreast of happenings in the organizations of the adult deaf across the country and am aware of goings on there.

I have traveled widely in foreign countries including Pakistan, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, Hongkong, Sweden, Australia, Denmark etc. etc. and have observed from close quarter the standard of living of the deaf in these countries, the facilities and concession that they enjoy, their behavioural attitude towards their fellow sufferers, social adjustment and so on.

I am, therefore, well placed in comparing the status of the deaf in India and foreign countries.

Having said this much now I come to the subject matter of this write up.

To begin with, I have noted that though friction and clash of egos exist in foreign countries also but not to the extent that is seen in our country. In India, where ever I have been, be it Kolkata or Kashmir, Guwahati or Gujarat, I have always found a familiar spectacle, more than one organization of the deaf in each city. Delhi is no exception. It has over half a dozen organizations of adult deaf, all committed to betterment of the deaf. They have a common aim but never work in tendum.

Sadly, they even work at cross purpose. Though the avowed aim is the same, in a bid to upstage others, no mean fair or foul is spared. By doing so, if they harm the cause of the deaf, they are the least concerned. They are only interested in one-up-manship. Putting

obstacles in the path of the others, to cause harm to the others is also quite common. That in the process they also gain nothing does not bother them.

Thus, where there is need for unity, co-operation and joint efforts to get the deaf their justly deserved rights, we have the spectacle of organizations splitting up, formation of rival organizations and continuous efforts at pulling the other down. It is altogether another matter that most of these organizations exist only on paper, without any office or staff and just a handful of members. But they do succeed in creating a bad impression of the deaf people which denies the deaf sympathy and support from society at large and of course from the Government.

That Government support even to the deserving organizations of the adult deaf is not always available is quite well known. Also, if available at all, it is always symbolic. A glance at the list of grant-in-aid receiving NGOs on the website of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment will reveal that in the whole of the country there are not more than a dozen organizations of the deaf in the list of grant receiving organizations and the amount of the their grant is nothing worth writing home about.

There are, of course, NGOs running the educational institutions for the deaf but the deaf have no say in their functioning. While no doubt, these serve a very useful purpose and, supplement Government's efforts, the fact remains that without proper checks and controls, it is difficult to ensure that these actually deliver the desired results. My own personal experience is that some of these NGOs obtain grants for the education of the deaf but the end results are nothing to write home about.

This applies to Government run institutions and schools for the deaf as well. Without exception, their educational standards are poor. Even after spending ten long years in a school for the deaf, the linguistic skills of the deaf are so poor that they can not write even a single sentence that may be grammatically correct.

All these could not have happened if the deaf had made a common cause and, apart from conducting their own activities, had seen to it that their organizations worked properly, were made eligible for Government grants and helped each other to procure the same. Similarly, they could have kept an eye on the educational and training institutions of the deaf in their area to see that these functioned properly.

While other categories of persons with disabilities are alive to their needs and work hand in hand to pressurize the Government to get their needs met, on the deaf front, there is a stunning silence. Without any attempt on their own part to get their needs met, Government is hardly to take any note. Of course, there have been stray attempts to put up a show of strength, notably in Assam, Haryana and Tamil Nadu but these were only symbolic and hence left no lasting impact.

Deaf are neither realizing their own predicament nor trying anything to come out of their shell. They are busy working out their strategies to out smart their rivals (sadly that is the word, and not the colleagues or collaborators) which happen to be another organization of the deaf comprising of those who were once also friends. No one knows as to when they will realize their predicament and do something to assert themselves and help themselves to a better deal.

The situation, alas, is disappointing. Even among the persons with disabilities they are being discriminated against. They do not have equal facilities and concessions compared to those enjoyed by persons with other disabilities. They do not have adequate educational facilities. This, when to know or learn any language, (which the hearing children acquire through natural process of hearing), they must have an access to formal education. There is just one Government run training centre for the adult deaf when the country can do with a score and more.

The worst is that deaf have themselves not taken any initiative to have a language of their own, that is the Indian Sign Language. Its absence has played havoc with the lives of the deaf, as the teachers have no means to explain lessons and hearing people can not understand them. Then too, the communication barriers that could have been narrowed down have widened further cutting off the deaf from normal society. And all this the deaf in India accept without even a murmur or protest.

In advanced countries – if my understanding is correct, as many as 30 of them have accorded acceptance to sign language as a national language. To achieve this goal, basic requirement is a standard sign language capable of meeting domestic, educational, professional, social and cultural needs etc. of the deaf which has to be put in place. Government has made some half hearted attempts in this direction but these are only as window dressing.

It is distressing that in India, there is a total absence of capable leadership among the deaf. Those with a bit of leadership qualities are content at ploughing their own lone furrow. There is now a need for a mass leader of the deaf in India who can mobilize, enthuse and motivate the lacs and lacs of deaf masses to become assertive, struggle for their rights, fight to be treated as equals and get for them their rightful place in the society. Sadly, there is no possibility for this to happen, not in the near future.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that those who are leading the deaf now a days are mostly uneducated. They lack vision. They are self centred and mostly work for their own advantage. The ordinary deaf people are misguided. They fall easy prey to the mechanism of scheming leaders. The average deaf is brain washed to such an extent that even when he or she realizes the truth, at first doubt crops up and then if the truth is confirmed, they find themselves helpless to act.

It is indeed, these self-styled leaders, one of whom it is understood runs a Deaf Leaders Association, that are doing more harm than good. The need now is to expose these fraudulent leaders, unite the warring factions, build up a strong national body, elect persons with proven record of deaf service as its office bearers and then make an all out attempt to gain the deaf their inherent rights – right to education, right to acquire linguistic skills, right to gainful employment and right to lead a satisfying dignified life.

The work ahead is stupendous. Only hard work, unflinching determination and perseverance can help us attain the goal. It would be advantageous if well educated deaf youth are given the mentie of leadership and helped to consolidate the gains and work with a resolute zeal to bring the deaf at par with their normal peers – in all respect. Let me hope that this will happen sooner than later and a bright future for the deaf shall be unfolded over a period.

Amen.

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## 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Report



It is my singular honour that I have been permitted to present this annual report for the twentieth year in running. I am grateful to Association's nearly fifteen hundred members for the trust and confidence that they have reposed in me. Though we have covered much ground, I am sorry to admit that in spite of my best efforts, I have not been able to meet the expectations of the members.

I may state here that though I had come to Delhi first in the year 1953, it was only in 1955 that I sort of settled down in Delhi and started to serve my fellow sufferers in my humble way. Thus, I have completed fifty years in the service of our society's most neglected section, the deaf.

Alas, I have nothing to show for my labours. The ambitious Rs. one crore building project lies, in shambles, a testimony of my incompetence, and inaptitude. Our numerous members still remain unemployed, one percent reservation for the deaf in government services notwithstanding, no notable improvement in their facilities for education and training, the root cause of the growing incidence of unemployment among the deaf across the country, could be achieved.

What is more, various schemes and projects that the Government has lined up for the welfare of the deaf remain largely on paper and could neither be got initiated nor implemented. To cap all, even the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995, the *Magna carta* of the Deaf has nothing for the Deaf people, except definition of 'Deaf'. The amended version of the Act has a number of provisions helpful to the deaf. These were got incorporated by the Association. Sadly, it has yet to be placed before the Parliament.

As against this, while the membership of the Association, which was in two figures in 1955, has floated to nearly fifteen hundred. Perhaps this is due to greater awareness and a tendency of the deaf to stick together or due to increasing incidence of deafness. The fact, however, remains that Association now has to cater to an ever increasing numbers of the deaf people. Now people come from all over the country to enroll themselves as Members of the Association to avail of services rendered by it.

And yes, despite near total failure on the building construction front, there have been some positive developments also – in so far as providing succour to the members is concerned. They are extended all possible help in settlement of their personal grievances, their case are taken up with various agencies of the government, help is extended in obtaining admission of their children in schools, securing for them fee concessions, sponsoring their candidature for various posts and so on.

Facilities for formal, informal education, training in secretarial practices including computer operations and a well equipped library-cum-reading room exist. Believing in the dictum – healthy mind in healthy body, utmost emphasis is placed on sports and games. One of our members, I am happy to inform has won the coveted Arjuna Award.

Other activities introduced include holiday camps, educational tours because deaf learn with their eyes, seminars and conferences. However, financial constraints remain and it

has become difficult to extend these benefit to all at ago. So, these are arranged for members in batches from time to time.

It was during the last decade that the Association won Government recognition and became eligible for grant-in-aid for its welfare and rehabilitation activities. Incidentally, the Association had been receiving grant-in-aid for sports promotion since much earlier.

I regret having strayed from reporting past year's performance. However, it was felt that a brief review of just ended two decades period was quite in order.

Now to come to the point, i.e. the fifty fifth year's working, as has already been stated by me our biggest failure has been to unravel the maze created by an avaricious contractor, out to take advantage of our twin disabilities. He had gone to the extent of erecting a mazar on the Association's plot in an attempt to convert a perfectly private owned premises into a place of public worship. It was the prompt action taken by our Chairman, Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy and Vice Chairperson, Dr. Shakuntala Dawesar that saved the day for us. Association is grateful to them.

Our second failure has been our inability to resume free computer training for the deaf people. This has been largely due to our inability to find suitable place for the purpose, as also an instructor with the knowledge of sign language. We have, however, not given up and though it may take some time, we will re-start our free computer training programme for the deaf because we believe that I.T. is best suited for them.

These two are our major failures. We are quite aware of these short comings on our part and within our inherent limitations, we are doing our very best to see that these issues are successfully addressed.

Now about the positive aspects of our activities during the year 2004-05, I may say with some justification that our endeavours to find gainful employment for our members have been better than that of Special Employment Exchange for the Physically Handicapped. Though most of our unemployed members are untrained and uneducated, it has been possible for us to find annually employment for nearly a dozen of our unemployed members - essentially in the private sector. In this, Baloons, an export house for garments prepared by physically challenged persons, have been of great help. We are grateful.

Because of age old prejudices, and absence of awareness, employers by and large, are reluctant to employ deaf workers, due to fear of communication barriers. However, once a chance is given to the deaf, they find ready acceptance, but alas, at a cost. They are open to exploitation as they are given less wages and made to work more.

Association has an excellent record in solving the personal problems of its members. And this has become known far and wide - through alas not by word of mouth but through the sign language. This is one reason as to why deaf from even distant places come to seek Association's help. This is readily extended, with good results.

Association's Library and Reading Room functioned well during the year under review. A number of books were added to the library's existing collection. Many news papers, periodicals etc. are made available. Members are therefore, able to keep themselves informed of the latest development. Where necessary, they freely ask explanations which are readily given.

On the sports and games front too, Association did quite well. While maintaining its regular activities, it was able to organize its Delhi Games of the Deaf, 33<sup>rd</sup> in the series successfully. M/s Pepsi Foods were most helpful in ensuring the success of these Games. They donated large quantities of their delectable soft drinks to quench the thirst of the players and sports officials alike. Similarly, as per their practice, M/s Britannia Industries donated a large number of their famous loaves of bread, also cases of biscuits. Association places on record its indebtedness to both.

The most important event that brought down the curtain on the year's activities was the two day International Seminar/Workshop on "Emerging Trends in Rehabilitation of the Deaf" a theme which is Association's one of the main objectives. It was held on 16-17 March 05 at Auditorium of Maulana Azad Dental College & Hospital, New Delhi.

Organised in collaboration with Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, Mumbai and in association with Hearing International (Indian Chapter), it was a huge success. It was sponsored by Rehabilitation Council of India.

The resounding success of the Seminar was due to the ready and willing support extended by Dr. A.K. Agarwal, Dean, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi on behalf of Hearing International (Indian Chapter) and Shri R. Rangasayee, Director, Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of the Hearing Handicapped, both of whom took personal interest in all the matters related to the Workshop/Seminar.

A galaxy of top-notch ENT Specialists including Dr. S.K. Kakkar, a father figure in the field and Dr. S.P. Agarwal, Director General, Health Services, Government of India, participated. Presence of Dr. Allauddin & Dr. Abdul Hameed from Bangla Desh and Pakistan respectively, also delegate from Nepal, gave it an international character.

A large number of deaf delegates from almost all the States of India took part and actively participated in all deliberations, freely airing their views and needs, through sign language which were given voice by an expert sign language interpreter, Shri Gyanendra Purohit from Bhopal/Indore.

The intellectual content to the Workshop was provided by Prof. (Ms) Vaishna Narang of Jawaharlal Nehru University and Prof. Gopal Rana from Delhi University. Then too, there were Dr. (Mrs.) Y.A. Azad from NCERT and Dr. (Mrs.) Neelam Sinha from Indian Institute of Open Schooling. Their presentations in contents as well as in style were superb.

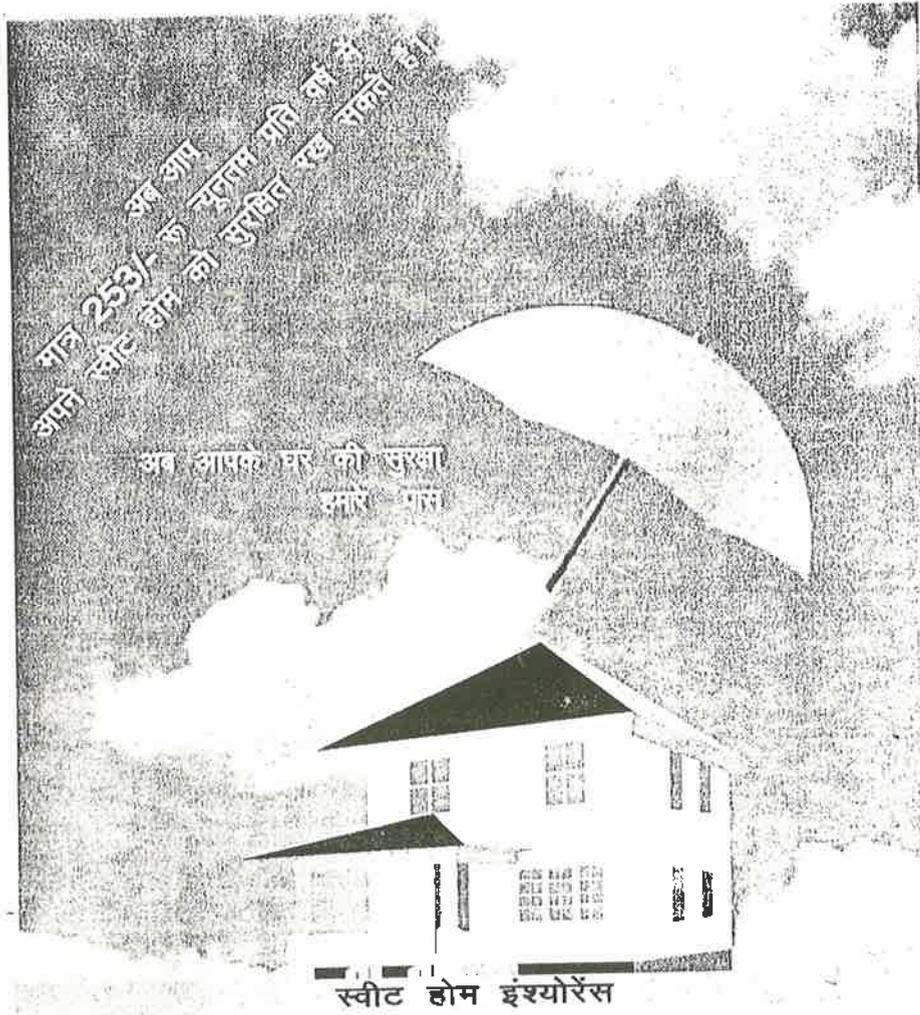
The finale was provided by two of the most well known faces of disability sector – Mrs. Anuradha Mohit and Shri Javed Abidi. Both of them need no introduction. They articulated feeling of the disability sector as a whole

The Workshop, largely attended, 'FULL HOUSE' on both days, helped in creating awareness about the cause of the deaf. There has been persisting demands from other States to organize similar workshops in their States too and the Association is extending its knowledge and expertise to the desirous in this respect.

I may kindly be forgiven for having taken too much time. I think it will be my swan song. To be seventy five soon, I will like nothing better than to follow the age old Hindu way of life – Renunciation, pass on the baton to younger generation, hang up my boots and pass my sunset days, telling my beads. I need your good wishes for this to happen.

Thank you.

॥ वास्तु ॥



ओरिएण्टल इंश्योरेंस प्रस्तुत करते हैं स्वीट होम बीमा पॉलिसी बहुत कम प्रीमियम राशि पर आपके घर की व्यापक सुरक्षा प्रदान करते हैं।

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- ▶ चयन के लिए तीन योजनाओं का विकल्प
- ▶ व्यापक सुरक्षा हेतु पाँच खण्ड
- ▶ घरेलू वस्तुओं की सूची देने की आवश्यकता नहीं
- ▶ न्यूनतम कागजी कार्यवाई : पॉलिसी प्राप्त के साथ ही एक पक्ष घर दावा फर्म

\* शर्तें लागू



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E-mail: deafwelfare@yahoo.co.in  
Web-site: delhiassociationofdeaf.org.

**DELHI ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (Regd.)**  
92 KAMLA MARKET, NEW DELHI-110 002

**FACT-SHEET**

**ESTABLISHED:** AS DEAF & DUMB ASSOCIATION, DELHI OCT.4, 1950  
**RENAMED :** DELHI ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF  
( On Merger of New Delhi Deaf & Dumb Club  
and Deaf & Dumb Association, Delhi ) 1977  
**FOUNDER:** (1) ALL INDIA FEDERATION OF THE DEAF 1955  
(2) ALL INDIA SPORTS COUNCIL OF THE DEAF 1962

**VITAL STATISTICS:**

**LIFE MEMBERS** More than 1350  
**ANNUAL BUDGET** About Rs.5,00,000/-  
**FULL TIME PAID WORKERS:** THREE  
**REHABILITATION VENTURES:** ONE  
(One Shop 'MOOK PREETI' at Yashwant Place,  
New Delhi)

**OTHER ACTIVITIES:** SPORTS & GAMES, RECREATION, EDUCATIONAL  
TOURS, HOLIDAY CAMPS, PICNICS & FUNCTIONS,  
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, EDUCATION &  
TRAINING, LIBRARY & READING ROOM,  
REHABILITATIONAL ASSISTANCE, COUNSELLING  
& GUIDANCE, SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
REHABILITATION, INTERACTION WITH  
GOVERNMENT, LOCAL BODIES, STATE  
ORGANISATIONS, TRAINING IN INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY ETC.

**STATUS:** Recognised and financially assisted by State (Delhi)  
and Central Governments.

**IMPORTANT PAST PRESIDENTS:** Shri I.K. Gujral, Ex. Prime Minister of India.  
Ms (Dr.) Late Sushila Nayyar, Ex. Union Minister.  
Late Shri Hari Krishna Shastri. Ex. Union Minister,  
Late Shri Dr. S.P.N. Puri, Smt. Sheila Dikshit, Chief  
Minister, Delhi, Shri Ashok Gehlot, Ex. Chief Minister,  
Rajasthan

**NEW PROJECT:** Rs.100 lac RESEARCH & REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR THE DEAF.  
Land allotted by Delhi Development Authority and construction has commenced.  
When functional, will provide facilities to 100 students for Degree level education,  
advanced training in electronics, information technology and produce video taped  
lessons. Design & publish text books for deaf etc.

**MANAGEMENT:** The Association has a dedicated and distinguished management. Association's  
Chairman, Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Ex. Minister of State, is a youthful statesman.  
Others on the Executive Committee are well-educated deaf who have dedicated their  
lives to the uplift of the deaf people.

# 55

## Annual Day Celebrations

30 October, 2005 at  
India International Centre  
New Delhi

### In Pictures



*Dr. Penelope Estabrook being offered bouquet.*



*Shri D.S. Chauhan, Secretary, Delhi Association of the Deaf presenting 55th Annual Report*



*A Guest being welcomed*



*Shri K.M. Singh, Chief Guest delivering presidential address.*



*Chief Guest with Mime Artists.*



*Chief Guest discussion Association's back ground over a cup of tea.*

*More  
Photos  
of the  
55th  
Annual  
Day*



*View of participants.*



*Kung Fu in action.*



*Another view of assembly.*



*Sharing a cup of tea.*



*Discussions over a cup of tea.*

*Seminar in  
snapshots  
March 16-17, 2005  
at  
Maulana Azad  
Dental College  
& Hospital  
Inaugural Function*



*Dr. A.K. Agarwal, Dean, Maulana Azad Medical College,  
Dr. Shakuntala Dawesar, Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy,  
Dr. S.K. Agarwal, Director General Health Services, India  
Dr. S.K. Kakkar at inaugural function*



*Dr. S.K. Agarwal, Director General Health Services India  
delivering inaugural speech*



*View (left) of Participants.*



*Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy delivering presidential address*



*Another view (Right) of participants.*



*Group photo of participants with Smt. Jayati Chandra,  
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment*

# Valedictory Function



Bouquet being presented to Mrs. Jayati Chandra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment



Mrs. Jayati Chandra delivering her address.

Shri D.S. Chauhan, giving the gist of the Seminar - sitting Dr. J.P. Singh, Member Secretary, RCI, Dr. A.K. Agarwal, Dr Abdul Hamid (Pakistan) and Dr. J.C. Passey



Dr. A.K Agarwal, Dean, Maulana Azad Medical College summing up the deliberations

## Reflections on Recent NGO Meets

**D.S. CHAUHAN**  
Secretary

From 1955, when I first attended the National Seminar on 'Education of the Physically Handicapped Persons' held at Mussoorie which was organized by the Union Ministry of Welfare to date, I have attended numerous seminars and workshops and meets. I have myself organised a few. I am thus not new to Meets etc.

But it was only till 1992, that I had been a regular participant in the Annual Orientation Programmes conducted by Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped (AYJNIHH), at its Head Quarters at Mumbai. These used to be attended by the leading lights of the day in the field of deaf education and their rehabilitation. A fair number of deaf community leaders too, used to be present.

These occasions were looked for and eagerly awaited because these provided opportunities to re-establish personal contacts, share experience and exchange ideas. These helped in formulating future programmes and schemes. Views of deaf community leaders, the actual stake holders, were sought out, considered and depending upon merit, accepted.

There used to be proper facilities for running commentary in sign language. The task was capably performed by Ms Mehar Sethna (now Ms Mehar Dadabhoy). To give her some respite from her hours long ordeal on feet, Dr. N. Rathna, first as Director, AYJNIHH and then as a participant, would gladly take over and interpret to make deaf participants follow the discussion properly and fully. In short, every effort was made to make the deaf participants to feel at home and cared for, also an inseparable part of the gathering.

Even the minutest detail – receiving at Railway station, guidance to reach AYJNIHH, confirmation of wait listed Railway tickets etc. used to be attended to. In short, these Programmes were not only informative and instructive but highly enjoyable as well. Alas, this did not last and progressively, these Programmes became mere rituals, lost their appeal and so I stopped attending the same. Of course, invitations did come. These still come to us but to give opportunity to the younger generation to expand the horizon of their knowledge, they are being deputed to attend these Programmes.

However, this time when an invitation was received to participate in the North Zone meet of NGOs working in the field of deaf welfare, despite short notice, and advancing age, I decided to participate to see for myself the present situation vis-à-vis NGOs Meets.

So at predawn on 21<sup>st</sup> Sept. 2005, I found myself along with Shri Jaswant Singh, my colleague of many decades, now Vice President of the Association, at a bustling Shimla Bus terminal.

Both of us, though articulate are totally deaf. Therefore, due to communication barriers, figuratively speaking, we found ourselves quite at sea on a mountain top. We had with us just a piece of paper with the address of hotel where we were to stay. Our enquiries either did not ever register, or where registered, the replies given in spoken words failed to register with us. Even a knock at the Police Post got us no where. No one was ready to give us directions in writing as no one had any time for the like of us.

Ultimately, a taxi driver, motivated no doubt by an opportunity to fleece the innocents, came forward, 'talked' to us in writing and agreed to take us to our destination but on his own

terms. There being no choice, the idea of waiting indefinitely at the bus station having no charm or appeal, we meekly offered ourselves to be driven to our destination.

Thank fully, we reached our hotel safely. Leaving the door ajar, we set out to freshen up. A peek in by Shri J.C. Gupta, Asstt. Director, AYJNIHH, Northern Zone, a friend of long-standing, re-assured us that we were at the right place. As instructed by him (he is an adept in sign language) we were ready to face the day by 9 AM and were driven to Institute of Himachal Pradesh Public Administration, Fair lawn, Shimla – venue of the Meet.

In the large gathering, I looked and looked for a familiar face (barring that of Shri Gupta) but in vain, and thought that I was in the shoes of Rip Van Winkle, who slept for over twenty years and when woke up, everything for him had changed. Mercifully not one but two familiar faces – pretty too, of Mrs. Santosh and Ms Reena Gautam, came in sight followed by Shri A.K. Sinha, Asstt. Director, Eastern Zone of AYJNIHH whom I had met earlier.

The very first introduction, with Shri Gupta acting as the Master of Ceremonies, was with Dr. (Ms) Vijayalakshmi Basavraj, Dy. Director (Tech.) AYJNIHH. I had known her well – but only through her reputation as a very kind and considerate ENT doctor at All India Institute of Medical Sciences to whom I used to refer our members for examination and issuing Medical Certificates etc., and members commended her helpful attitude and consideration shown to them.

When settled down, I looked around to note that we two from Delhi were the only deaf present. All others were either from the management cadre of NGOs or teachers from the schools for the deaf. Also, that there was no interpreter.

Realizing our plight, Shri Gupta, spontaneously, on his own, volunteered to be our interpreter without waiting for our request, an offer which was readily and gratefully accepted. He had to play a double role – that of Manager attending to management work, and that of an interpreter. It goes to his credit that he discharged both his roles with élan and efficiency.

Mrs. Santosh too pitched in and acted our interpreter in a most efficient manner. But for these two we would not have been able to understand the goings on or make a meaningful contribution to the deliberations. For me power point presentation proved to be a boon, as I could read most of whatever was spoken.

About the papers that were presented, I will be brief. The best one was, of course, that presented by Dr. (Ms) Vijayalakshmi Basavraj. Full of data, highly informative, it appeared to have been based on her own decades long work and experience in the field. It is doubtful if any one going through her learned presentation, would have any doubt in the efficacy and dire need to identify a deaf child as early as possible and ensure requisite, proper intervention by qualified personnel immediately thereafter.

This took me back to 1955 when in the First National Seminar on Education of Physically handicapped was held. Among many of my suggestions/proposals most of which were finally accepted, was a proposal to introduce nursery level education for the deaf. This was vehemently opposed by the teachers present. But this too was finally approved to be included among the recommendations to be made by the Seminar to the Government. Sadly, it took half a century to win acceptance of the teaching fraternity. May be, I was ahead of my times then.

I may add for the sake of record that the Meet was inaugurated by H.E. Shri V.S. Kokje, the Governor of Himachal Pradesh and the valedictory function was attended and addressed by Shri Veer Bhadra Singh, Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh, who in his address did not fail to

remind that service to the deaf has to be taken up by way of duty and not out of pity. For the deaf, he had a clear message too, that they should know their rights and claim them accordingly.

Since we had to return by the night bus of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2005, it self, we had no time to spare. Even though a few deaf friends from Shimla had met us during our halt at Shimla and urged for deferring our departure by a day, due to previous commitments that was just not possible.

So soon after the conclusion of 2<sup>nd</sup> day's proceedings, we returned to our hotel, picked up our bags, ready packed in the morning, and but for the presence of Shri Gupta who came to our rescue again and helped us even in the drizzle to board the local bus to Shimla Bus Terminal, the story of our arrival at Shimla would have been repeated, that is stranded once again.

The night long sleepless journey gave me ample time to ponder over the events of the past two days even though on earlier two nights also, sleep had eluded me. The first thing to trouble me was the near total absence of the stake holders – the deaf in a Meet which was being organized for their welfare. I felt sad that the deaf people are neither given any say, nor are their views elicited in affairs of vital importance to them. It goes against the very dictum – **nothing about us, without us**. Presence of a fair number of deaf community leaders should have been ensured as had been the normal practice in the past. This would have enabled them to spread the word about the meet and its deliberations around in their area and helped create awareness.

The absence of an interpreter of the deaf that too when the AYJNIHH has been training interpreters of the deaf was, to put it mildly, very disappointing. Any meet of the deaf or on the deaf is unthinkable without the presence of a qualified Interpreter for the deaf.

I also pondered and pondered over the near total absence of knowledge of sign language among people who work with the deaf people. Questions came up in a flood. How do they communicate with those of whom they are taking care? How do they establish rapport with their pupil or wards? How do they know if the children are benefiting from their instructions or they have any problem whatsoever concerning schooling, health, school environment etc ??? I searched and searched my mind but could find no answer.

Aural – Oral method of instruction is to be commended upon but in the lives of deaf people, sign language, which can be termed to be their 'mother-tongue', has its own place, whether or not one agrees with this statement. Therefore, to be able to understand and work with the deaf people, one has to know sign language. I asked my self that if those who daily come in contact with the deaf and work for their welfare do not care to learn sign language, how will others who never come in contact with the deaf will learn and use it and will this not perpetuate communication barriers?

Then too, to carry proceedings in a predominantly Hindi speaking region in English appeared to me to be counter productive. I myself saw participants taking notes in Hindi of what was spoken in English. This is understandable as they have eventually to shape their thoughts and express themselves in Hindi. By conducting proceedings in the regional language, a better impact on participants could have been achieved.

Of course, the reason, for conducting proceedings in English is understandable. Material prepared in English can be used in all the four zones, leaving it to the participants to shape and deliver their thought in their regional language. This no doubt saves expenses, also work but taking into the consideration all other aspects, I asked myself "Is it worth the while.?" Again there I had no answer.

To me it appeared that material can, with a little effort, be translated into regional languages by the Regional Centres and region wise CDs can be prepared. These can be used at the Meets and can also be given away as present to the participants, who in turn can use the CD to reach out far and wide. The little extra expenditure, also effort that it involves, would be nothing compared to the benefits that would accrue through dissemination of vital information in commonly understandable medium far and wide.

My thoughts then turned to the local deaf, for every where deaf people are present. Side lining of local deaf where the Meet was held is also difficult to understand. There may not have been any Association of the adult deaf in Shimla but to my knowledge local officials of the Directorate of Social Welfare are aware of the presence of a number of well known deaf personalities. An invitation could have been sent to them. The additional cost would have been insignificant and benefits substantial. It has to be noted that parents of a deaf child first of all contact a known deaf person for help and guidance. The adult deaf can, therefore, prove to be an important link between service providers and service seekers. I concluded that it would, therefore, be advisable to involve local deaf in a meaningful manner in such Meets.

Looking back, I recalled that without exception, papers were presented by the members of staff of AYJNIHH. They are eminently qualified and experienced no doubt but some outsiders of stature from medical, academic, social spheres could also have been involved to give the meet wider scope and deeper depth.

I felt sad that before departure, I could not know the conclusions arrived at during the Meet. The recommendations of the Meet should have been formulated and put to vote before it wound up. This objective can easily be achieved by designating a few participants, selected on the basis of their knowledge of subject under consideration, to draft the recommendations, by sitting late in the first night. Since they would have copies of all the papers to be presented and some of which would have been discussed on the first day itself, they would be in a position to draft the recommendations. The final finishing touch could be given during the afternoon tea break on the second and last day by the select committee. These can then be put to vote and got approved before dispersal. It is an easy as that.

As I tried to put myself in as comfortable position as possible in the cramped reclining bus seat and adjusting my aching bones to its contours, sleep continued to elude even though it was third consecutive sleepless night for me, for I had hardly slept at all on the way to Shimla and had burnt mid night oil on the second night drafting my suggestions for inclusion in the recommendations of the Meet for submission in the morning of the second and the last day. My thoughts again and again turned to the much talked about inclusion aspect of the disability judging by our own experience. Here were two of us deaf against nearly fifty of the normal persons. Both of us had above average (for a deaf that is) knowledge of language and yet we were left to our devices. There was no bonhomie that the others displayed for each other. Even the formal greetings commonly exchanged between participants were missing. In other words though participants along with the others, we were definitely not one of them.

And turning and twisting in my seat trying to ease my cramped old bones, I again and again thought if this was the fate of the inclusion? Here were persons daily exposed to the deaf – not stranger to their twin disabilities, behaving as though we did not even exist. What then I thought would be the attitude of those who have not come in contact with the deaf people? And what would we have gained for all our troubles had not Shri J.C. Gupta and Ms Santosh been present? And how thankful we both were for their very presence, also help.

Again and again I thought would it be enough just to put the able and disabled persons together in the classroom, particularly the deaf who just do not have any worthwhile knowledge of

language for achieving inclusion? To me, it appeared to be impractical. There has to be a common meeting ground and binding force – which only language can provide.

Then my mind's eye conjured up the numerous meetings of our Disabled Rights Group. Most of group members being themselves disabled, there was understanding, spirit of accommodation and most important – a keen desire to be helpful and put at ease the other by attending to his/her specific particular needs. In my case that was need for bridging the communication gap.

That no one knew sign language did not deter those present from being helpful. Knowing that I was literate, any one of those present would slide beside me, take out pen, layout a paper and start writing verbatim what the speaker was saying. All this without asking. Among these numerous self effacing volunteers to render this service is one who now heads Rehabilitation Council of India. I shall always treasure such unsolicited help because as a rule such help is not extended even when specifically asked for.

And I came to the conclusion – rightly or wrongly, that to make the disabled persons, deaf included, an integral part of the society, mere inclusion will not do. Assimilation and acceptance as equals has to be attempted for. And this can not happen unless and until there is a change in attitude across the board. To achieve this objective much more than putting disabled and able bodied together needs to be done, strategies have to be worked out, awareness programmes launched and ground laid to prepare able bodied persons to accept persons with disabilities as an integral part of society – their equals in all respect.

This can only be possible if the persons with disability are made self reliant and self supporting for which we have still to go a long way. They have to be provided with adequate educational and training facilities and an assured gainful employment. My thought wandered and wandered. Again and again I asked myself if the slogan of inclusion will merely remain a slogan or become a reality. My experience at the Meet created doubts in my mind. I reflected and reflected on all that I had witnessed for over half a century and rightly or wrongly, I came to the conclusion that the idea is good, nay Utopian but it may also be as distant as Utopia.

Troubled in mind, restless due to long confinement in a chair in a speeding bus, with my thoughts my only company, questions continued to crop up in my mind. Sadly, no ready made solution appeared in sight. I concluded that there was along haul ahead and to win acceptance as equals, the deaf will have to bring themselves at par with their hearing peers – at par in the matter of education, command over language, and earning capacities through their own efforts. Recognition can not be had for the asking. It has to be earned.

To achieve this desirable objective, deaf will need help from the society and the government in the matter of creating adequate infrastructures for education and training. Utmost emphasis needs to be placed on these two foundations for empowerment of the deaf.

The vast and most powerful media of mass communication – print as well as visual have to be harnessed to create awareness. Community leaders and normal persons heading NGOs of the deaf can also prove most helpful in bringing about attitudinal changes by setting personal example. **I remembered what the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, had said about deaf at one of our functions. He had said that those who do not hear the sound are not deaf, the deaf are those who do not hear their inner voice, the voice of their conscience.**

The chain of my thoughts broke up suddenly when the bus, having completed its trip, came to a halt before Himachal House, New Delhi leaving me sleepy eyed, still pondering over the past and the uncertain future that awaits the deaf.

# HELP LINES AT YOUR DISPOSAL

## ORGANISATIONS OF THE ADULT DEAF

All India Federation of the Deaf  
18, North-End Complex  
Shri R. K. Ashram Marg, New Delhi-110 001  
Ph: 23364766, 26563984

Delhi Association of the Deaf  
92 Kamla Market, New Delhi-110 002  
Ph: 23233991, 23218592

Delhi Foundation of the Deaf Women  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, DDA Community Hall  
Gali Chandiwali, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110 055  
Ph: 23583276

All India Deaf & Dumb Society  
Plot No.4 & 7 Institutional Area  
Kadkadi Mode, Vikas Marg Extn.,  
Near Preet Vihar Chowk, Delhi-110 092  
Ph: 22376670, 22376231

Cripple Aid Trust  
6-B, MIG Flats, Shivam Enclave  
Jhilmil, New Delhi-110 032

## EDUCATIONAL & TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Govt. Lady Noyce Sec. School for the Deaf  
Kotla Feroz Shah, Delhi Gate,  
New Delhi-110 002  
Ph: 23319419, 23720247

Balwant Rai Mehta Vidya Bhawan  
Masjid Moth, Greater Kailash  
New Delhi-110 048  
Ph: 26441798

Amar Jyoti Rehabilitation & Research Centre,  
Karkardooma, Vikas Marg, Delhi-110 092  
Ph: 22151286

Asha Awwa Centre for the Physically  
Handicapped  
Base Hospital, Delhi Cantt., Delhi-110 010

Awaaz Special School  
K-87 Kirti Nagar, New Delhi-110 015

Dr. Zakir Hussain Memorial Welfare Society  
Nr. Chhapadwala Masjid Sr. Sec. School  
Jamia Millia Islamia, E-mail, Okhla  
New Delhi-110 025

Handicapped Women Welfare Association  
Sector-14, Madhuban Chowk  
Near Tibet Hostel, Rohini, Delhi-110 085

Prabha Institute of Fine Arts Culture & Crafts for  
Handicapped and Disabled persons,  
28, Najafgarh Road, New Delhi-110 015

DAV College Trust and Management Society  
Chitragupt Road, Ashok Vihar  
Phase-1, Delhi-110 055

## HOSPITALS

All India Institute of Medical Sciences  
ENT Deptt.  
Ansari Road, New Delhi

Safdarjung Hospital  
ENT Deptt.  
Ansari Road, New Delhi  
Ph: 26165060

Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narain Hospital  
ENT Deptt.  
Delhi Gate, New Delhi-110 002  
Ph: 23231621

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital  
ENT Deptt.  
Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001  
Ph: 23365525

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Hospital  
ENT Deptt.  
Hari Nagar, New Delhi  
Ph: 25496320

Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital  
ENT Deptt.  
Dilshad Garden, Delhi

## EMPLOYMENT REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the  
Physically Handicapped  
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Vikas Marg, Delhi-110 092

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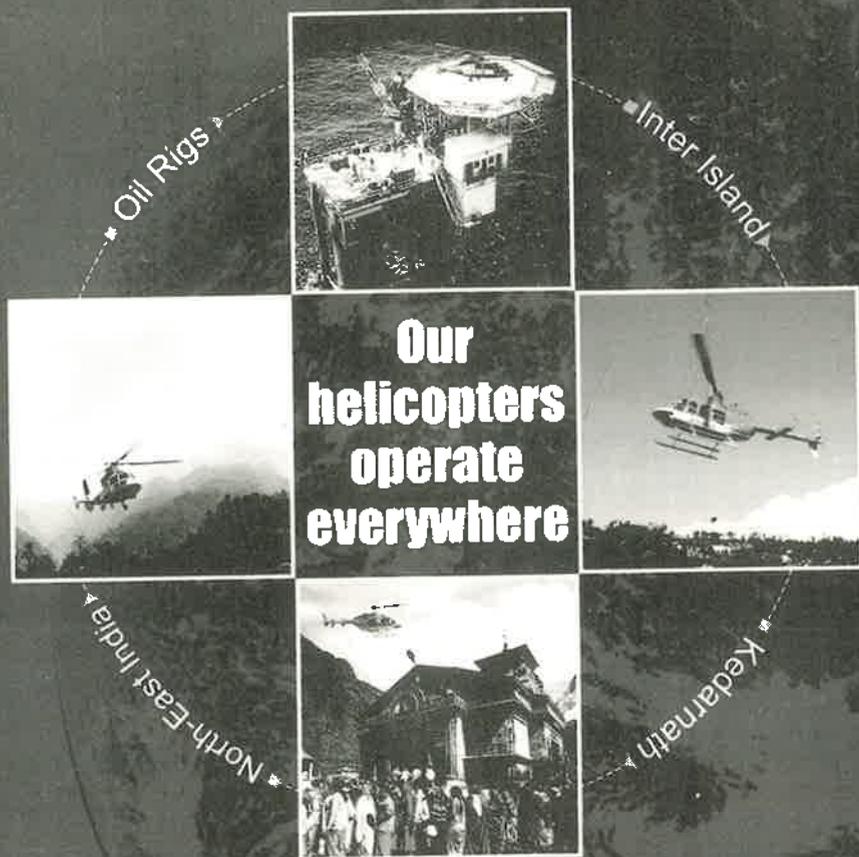
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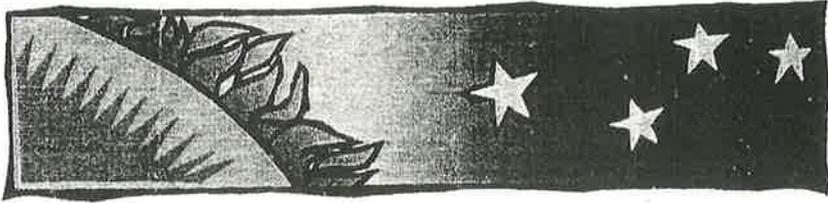
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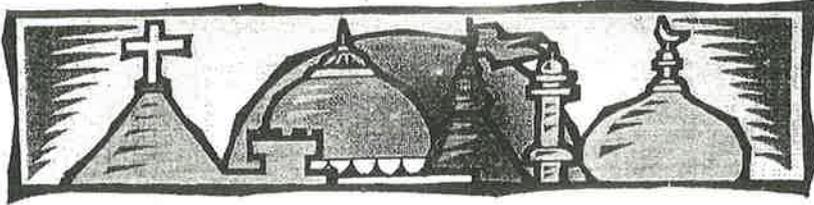
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