

NOTHING FOR THE DISABLED WITHOUT THE DISABLED



I Konnect



News letter -February, 2021

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Dr. Mithu Alur
 Founder Chairperson, ADAPT

Dr. Alur met with Professor Varun Sahni, Vice Chancellor, Goa University with the aim of taking forward discussions she had earlier with His Excellency, Governor of Maharashtra and Goa, Shri Bhagat Singh Koshiyari on the gap that exists in the area of Higher Education. She had asked that the curriculum of regular teachers and doctors include issues connected with people with disability and suggested that this be done by Universities through their B.Ed Colleges and the Medical Syllabus.

The Governor had agreed to support this initiative and his office had written to the Department of Social Welfare; however, the pandemic had slowed this process.

Dr. Alur picked up the threads with Professor Varun and discussed Teacher education inclusion in mainstream schools. The Vice Chancellor has promised all support and invited Dr. Alur to Chair the Department of Economic Policy and Public Policy at Goa University and lecture at the University.

Article in the Journal of Medical Evidence

Dr Alur was invited to write an article for the Journal of Medical Evidence under the Medicine & Society Section by Dr Ajeet Singh Bhadoria, Managing Editor and Dr Samiran Nundy, Editor-in-Chief. The article entitled 'Disabled in India....a Charity Model'? focuses on Services for the Handicapped and the Way Forward. The Journal is an official publication of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, (AIIMS) Rishikesh and is disseminated to doctors all over the country and abroad, medical institutions and others.

She was also asked to contribute to a commemoration of Professor Sultana Zaman, who pioneered services for the disabled in Bangladesh. Professor Zaman was a dear friend and also a professional colleague of Dr Alur and they had come together on various International platforms, including the first North South Dialogue that Dr. Alur convened in Mumbai.

Dr. Alur has Chaired a meeting on web management and created a plan of action for a more dynamic website for ADAPT to be implemented over the coming months and has been sharing her creative inputs regarding the content and structure of our Annual Fund Raising Show.

In addition, Dr. Alur is working on the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for the new project The Mithu Alur Centre for Special Education and Inclusive Education and has held meetings with the team to explain the project. She has continued reviewing the short and long term goals of her team, in keeping with the process of quality assurance she has set up.



A New Project: The Mithu Alur Centre for Special Education and Inclusive Education

We are pleased to share that we are beginning a new project, in partnership with the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI). APPI aims to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised people and facilitate a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society.

They work, partner and collaborate with civil society organisations who share the same ideals and the project, the Mithu Alur Centre for Special Education and Inclusive Education, consolidates the work of our Founder Chairperson over the past five decades.

APPI is now part supporting our existing programmes for children and youth with disability.

The programmes being focussed on are:

- Preschool Inclusive Nurseries for children in the age group of 2-6 years.
- Inclusive Education for children and youth the 6-18 year age group and pre-vocational training for youth above the age of 14 years
- Skills Development for young adults above the age of 18 years
- Training of parents.

Dr. Alur is developing the Key Deliverables and Performance Indicators for the Project Implementation Plan with Dr. Ragini Sen, Dr. Siamack Zahedi and Mrs. Varsha Hooja and has had several initial meetings with the team to strategise and direct on implementation, reporting and documentation.

A place in the Sun.....Corporate Social Responsibility and towards Inclusive Employment of disabled people.

Paper presented at the Inclusive Job Fair, ADAPT, Mumbai, 2006.

By Dr Mithu Alur

My talk is titled 'A place in the Sun...corporate social responsibility and moving towards inclusive employment for people with disabilities'. I shall begin with a few points on CSR and then move onto how disabled people can be mainstreamed into society through employment.

India is a fast growing economy and is booming with national and multinational firms. We also know that India is a land of contrasts and contradictions. We are technological giants in one way but in another there is vast poverty....the Indian land also faces social challenges like poverty, population growth, corruption, illiteracy, unemployment just to name a few. My concern in the social sector, having worked in it for thirty five years, is that we will not be truly globalised until we also extend the benefits of development beyond the 30% who enjoy it to more than 60% of people including the disabled who are still excluded. This is where CSR finds a niche.

Since 1991, we have witnessed a dramatic shift in the needs of business and society in general. Many companies in India have started realizing the importance of business involvement in the community. Today, Corporate Social Responsibility has become an integral part of good business practice.

What is CSR?

No longer is it considered good enough only to be committed to one's own profits or to one's own shareholders....a business cannot succeed in a society which fails to establish its good health. CSR is how companies manage their business process to produce social change. Its about how they focus not only on their own profits but also on how an overall positive impact can be made on Society in partnership with Civil Society. CSR is considered an effective tool which synergizes the efforts of Corporate and the social sector agencies towards sustainable growth and development of societal objectives at large.

CSR is a powerful way of making sustainable /competitive profit and achieving lasting value for the shareholder as well as for / stakeholders. CSR is a win-win opportunity, not just for companies and for financial investors but for society at large. The issue is one of prioritization.

Ethics and CSR are closely related. The concept of CSR is fundamental to the notion of giving back to society CSR should focus on benefitting people who are socially, culturally, economically disadvantaged. The relevance is rooted in our understanding that businesses can and indeed ought to contribute to "equitable development in society", thereby impacting on poverty and introducing processes both in their domain of operations and generally in society. This understanding stems from the belief that businesses have immense potential to contribute to development and nation building.

Gandhian thinking has always influenced me which we put into practice through our work. Gandhi who was essentially an economist of the masses believed in human dignity, upliftment of the poor and the socially oppressed and social justice. The core of Gandhian economic thought was enrichment of human life rather than a higher standard of living with scant respect for human and social values.

Kesavulu, a Gandhian scholar writes that Gandhi wanted to liberate the modern economic philosophy from the quagmire of materialism and bring it to a higher spiritual plane. Gandhi's efforts towards "spiritualizing economics" are truly reflected in his concept of trusteeship which was the fundamental ethical values dominating his economic ideas. Though the Gandhian concept of trusteeship does not seek

to destroy any particular class, it provides us with an idea of how to narrow the class gap. At the centre of this concept is the urge to protect human dignity. One of the first steps to achieve this human dignity, justice, and equity is to eliminate the ever-present troublesome element of class struggle in the society. As Gandhi writes that as man advances from a narrow sphere of personal satisfaction to the nobler concept of the welfare of all, he marches closer towards self-realization (Source: Gandhi Marg, Vol.25, Number 4, Jan-March 2004)

His concepts of Trusteeship provides a means of transforming a society into an egalitarian one. In fact, the Gandhian theory of trusteeship applies equally to both tangible and intangible property, such as the muscular energy of the labourers and the talents of a Helen Keller (K.G. Mashurwala, Gandhi and Marx, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, 1951, p. 79).

Disability and Employment: Investing in human potential

Helen Keller brings us to what this Job Fair is about... looking people who may be different but are talent, looking at strengths rather than weakness of people who are differently challenged, people with disability... let me quote what a disabled person writes.

'The best thing that I ever did was go out to work because along with a career there comes a social life as well you know, and I would dread to think of sitting at home or going to a day centre, that would kill me off, I just couldn't do that.'

All over the world there has been a sea change to the approach to disability. Historically people with disabilities were put away into institutions and asylums because people did not understand disabled people. They believed that they came from another planet. This has been called a type of cultural oppression.

However it is being increasingly realized that people with disabilities can make valuable contribution to businesses and to the national economy. Studies have shown that disabled people are capable, reliable employees, who often stay in the job longer than other employees. They contribute to productivity, to staff morale and to team spirit in the workplace as a whole.

Today Acts of Parliament, reformative action has brought about a new approach to disability. This approach is called the Social approach. The new social model has taken centre stage and this new approach looks at not the dysfunctioning individual that needs fixing, fitting and curing but the environment and society that needs to change to be designed in a way that facilitates, enables people who may not walk, talk like us to be a part of us instead of apart from us.

Employers are playing a more central role than ever before in promoting opportunities for job seekers with disabilities, as well as in retaining workers who acquire a disability while in employment. Employing disabled people can enhance business profitability and dramatically improve the quality of life of individuals. It is essential that employers consider disabled people and those employees who will become disabled, as they seek to develop a socially responsible approach to employment.

Several surveys have been completed looking at what employers perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of employing disabled people.

"Employers felt that disabled employees show a high level of commitment and loyalty to an organisation...as a result employees are hard working, and have low sickness absence and high retention rates." (Institute of Employment Survey 2005).

Disabled people were rated the same as or better than non-disabled co-workers on punctuality; attendance; work quality; task consistency; overall proficiency, with slightly lower scores on work speed. A study conducted on behalf of Telstra Australia in 1999 found that:

- People with a disability worked on average 4.1 years in a call centre, compared to 3.2 years for people without a disability.
- Over a 15-month period, people with a disability had 11.8 days absent, compared to people without a disability who had 19.24 days absent.
- There were no significant differences when comparing people with a disability to people without a disability in the areas of performance, productivity and sales.
- Other research shows that:
- Over 90% of employers who had recently employed a person with a disability said they would be happy to continue employing people with a disability.
- 78% of employers described the match between their employee with a disability and the job as 'good.'

The leading edge of thinking and practice is steadily shifting beyond legal obligation and well-meaning philanthropy, towards a solutions-focused culture which shifts the emphasis from the person's disability to the changes a business can make easily to enable that person to contribute their skills and productivity. The shift is from a focus on cost and dysfunction to an emphasis on investment in human potential.

A Different Approach: how to operationalise policy

Employing disabled managers and staff signals to existing and potential staff that the company is a 'caring company' which treats people fairly.

In India with the PWD Act 1995 in action from November '96, disability is now much higher on many corporate agendas. Many are looking at disability for the first time and wondering what their role is.

As far as multiply disabled people are concerned, they have been described succinctly as “an intelligent mind in a disobedient body” (which the Spastics Society or ADAPT JOBS is working with). We find that the main reason for not finding too many in the labour force is because education of the multiply disabled person was earlier neglected. Having stemmed this malaise let us see how we can give some of these talented people an opportunity through Inclusive Employment. I am going to look at two issues – Policy Formulation and Policy Implementation.

Policy Formulation

First of all we need a policy without ambiguity. Effective engagement of vulnerable groups requires a clear policy, statement and commitment on the part of the company. Just as we have done in education policy... It is key therefore for a Company to have a clear cut CSR policy which also includes employing multiply disabled people.

This I have called COPP... a Code of Policy and Practice. This is like the Mission Statement of the Company (Details of this are in the Booklet provided).

Policy Implementation:

Policy without implementation and fiscal allocation is policy without teeth or without a mechanism to operationalise. To implement the Corporate Policy, it will be important to address key issues which are barriers.

Key Issues 1: Accessibility issue: Accessible Workspaces: Removing Physical Barriers:

A relatively new term called Universal Design that encourages accessibility to people with disabilities is being used. Universal Design grew out of the recognition by architects that they needed to design the built environment so that it would be usable by all people, regardless of age or ability.

To enable the company in giving equal opportunities, access, has to address Universal Design. For e.g. people with mobility problems need ramps, toilets with bars and wheelchair access. People with speech problems need a voice synthesizer to communicate, people with hearing problem need sign age, people with visual problem need Braille symbols and auditory signals in lifts. All common areas, such as the foyer, reception, canteen, library should be accessible. All this is now becoming universal in other countries.

Key Issue 2: Accessible Transportation:

Providing transport becomes a key need in providing employment. This is because of the difficulty of travelling on buses: ramps not working, drivers refusing to use them, buses not close enough to the kerb, wheelchair spaces taken up by other people, buses pulling away before people were in place, experiencing problems with other passengers.

What I have suggested and have written up the Code of Practice to Companies to help make workplace accessible to disabled employees by providing transportation to and from the workplace. The Company can hire a private car/taxi/bus for them. Regular plying contract buses running on the routes can be used. This model is based on the successful partnership of the SSI with B.E.S.T. Mumbai wherein the BEST buses pick up and drop the children studying in the Bandra Centre of the SSI. This unique model has 2 exclusive buses plying from Borivli to Bandra and Mulund to Bandra carrying the children to and from their residence to the school.

A car pool system can be devised wherein employees with private transport can offer to pick and drop their disabled colleagues and they can contribute towards the fuel costs. The company could address transport issues through an Access Fund.

Key Issue 3: Disability Coordinator:

In our experience, what is needed is a continuum of support after placing the disabled person into the Job. A Disability Coordinator could be in place to whom all people who are disabled or who can become disabled at work go to. This could be a person who is a professional or could also be a disabled person doing this job of coordination with various Departments. Use of external support agencies can be invaluable. We have found that we need to establish a relationship with an NGO and the Company willing to employ a person.

Key Issue 4: Work-life Balance :

Retention needs adjustment to the job environment or modification of the job itself, training and retraining. Outsourcing of specific activities to disabled groups/persons could be a model. Building in the opportunity for individuals to work from home is another one. To ensure retention, its important to be flexible... Flexible hours to enable keeping medical appointments. Health and safety, are support systems which all employees need not just disabled.

Key Issue 5: On the Job Training:

On the Job Training is vital. There are many candidates who have done a great deal of work, despite huge obstacles, however, they need to be trained and shaped to the requirements of a job. We do this even with normal people...so why not with disabled people?

Key Issue 6: Orientation and Preparation of Personnel:

Inclusive Employment will not be successful unless some preparation is done. Without preparation it is called main dumping. Often disabled people are taken in but made to just sit and not given any jobs. Out of sheer boredom they leave.

To make your policy effective it is important that all employees, disabled and non-disabled are aware of the policy, understand it, and know what they have to do to make it work. Otherwise the policy is just a piece of paper!

Getting the right staff in the right positions to manage a process of engagement are crucial to the success of the process. Employees should be given programmes with an effective orientation. All department (HRD, Finance, Research and Development, Administration, etc) should have clear-cut objectives to support people with disabilities.

Encourage imaginative and innovative management responses. Successful engagement strategies often require individuals creating imaginative solutions to very complex problem.

Conclusions

Moving to the last section of my talk. What was the dream Gandhiji had of an independent India? He had said, "I will work for an India where the poorest of the poor feel that this country and this nation belongs to them and that they have a major role in its construction. An India where there is no higher class or lower class among all people. An India where all communities live in friendship and harmony. An India where women have the same rights as men." He had also said, " the Swaraj I dream of is a Swaraj of poor people. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that Swaraj cannot be complete till the poorest have a guarantee of being provided with the basic necessities of life". I have no hesitation to say that in all these statements, Gandhiji included all the disadvantaged and marginalized groups including the disabled. I find the present Government extremely inclusive of disabled people.

We have a large proportion of young people in our population. We will need to invest in their education and health so that their future prospects are bright. By doing so, our population will become our biggest asset.

The Prime Minister recently said "It is my belief that India's future is extremely bright and that this future is indeed, possible. In order to achieve this, we need to focus on achieving rapid economic growth and on ensuring social justice.

The true test of development is the number of people who have secured employment and the number of families who have prospered as a result. As long as there is widespread unemployment in the country, we cannot claim that we are truly independent. It is with this goal in mind that Smt. Indira Gandhi had given the nation the goal of 'Garibi Hatao'. Today, if we need to remove poverty, we need to create employment "Rozgar Badhao". In order to ensure that a minimum level of employment is available to everyone in rural areas, it is necessary to have an employment guarantee.

It is necessary for every section of society to be literate and educated so that they can take advantage of our growth processes. In order to achieve these goals, resources shall not be a constraint. Along with primary education, we also need to pay attention to higher education. We are also committed to providing education to disabled children as well.

Altruism or humanitarianism involves possible personal or organizational sacrifice. In encouraging businesses to embrace and practice CSR we will be creating an enabling environment of equitable (partnership between civil society and business).

A Chinese Proverb says that 'The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones' It may take a long time ... maybe a long journey but I am reminded of a stone cutter;

Have you ever watched a stonecutter at work? He will hammer away at a rock for perhaps a 100 times without a crack showing in it. Then, on the 101st blow, it will split in two. It is not that blow alone which accomplished the result, but the 100 others that went before as well.

All I am asking for is to join us in this journey and be one of the hundred in hammering away ... to ensure a place in the sun for our disabled colleagues. In the overall perspective we hope to create a caring company that cares for people who the World Bank has described as poorest of the poor and help in nation building.

"A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history."

- Mahatma Gandhi

Together we can try to do this, alter the course of history and build a better more carrying India... India that thinks of her under privileged, the needy the helpless the disadvantaged.

Among the delights of aimless cross-country wandering is encountering little creatures, engaging in chats with them. A less rainy day in the monsoons is the best time. Lush grass adds spring to steps as waterfalls sparkle over black rocks. On separate days I met fish and a beetle.

Fish

I'm in your territory little fish
so taste me
tickle my toes
teach me to swim
 like you
And when I wade
from rock to rock
slip past so I don't
 crush you

Beetle

You climbed too fast
little red beetle
now afraid to come down
remain stuck
halfway up
a grass blade

Don't you know
only the ground
can lead another way?

A few years ago I was at a cocktail party where the drawing room was dominated by a large fish tank. A variety of colorful fish swam around, mouths opening and shutting as if gasping for breath.

I often wonder why people keep birds and fish as pets. You can't relate to a fish or bird as you would to a dog, cat or rabbit.

They become ornamental objects, no different from a porcelain ballerina or mountain landscape on a wall – except that they are alive.

Freedom is the ethos of fish and birds. They belong in the limitless ocean and sky. To trap them to prettify a home seems selfish, callous.

Then, it struck me that the fish tank is a mirror of my hosts' life.

Fish in tanks feel safe
in their pretty little space

Fake food, fake stones,
fake house, fake plants
in a gilded glass cage

No freedom to explore
sun, reeds, rocks,
river, pond, lake
lizard, frog, snake,
lose, win, escape
It's a dead life

by Meher Pestonjee

Parent's Point of view

My son Kush Thapliyal now aged 13 years has attended the ADAPT centre from 2016 to 2017. This centre acclimatizes the method of educating students who necessitate special requirements in a manner that speaks to their individual disparities and desires. I saw that the teaching procedure entails separately designed and methodically scrutinized compilation of coaching assessments, custom-made tools and equipments, along with the accessible settings. These interventions are intended to aid students having special needs to attain an advanced level of individual self-reliance and achievement in school, college and their society. Teachers at this centre have grouped ordinary special needs students. These disabilities include communication disabilities, learning disabilities, poignant and behavioral muddles, improvement disabilities, and corporeal disabilities. They believe that their students are expected to be benefited from certain special forms of education such as different materialization of coaching, the exploitation of latest technologies, or an exclusively customized training place. Special educators are very compassionate and supportive of the children needs and are very patient in handling a variety of specific requirements for every child.



I thank the staff for their kind support Thanks ADAPT

Meghna Thapliyal, Mother of Kush an ex student at ADAPT Colaba ...



Inclusive Physical Education

Inclusive education is not limited to books and classrooms, but it also means inclusion in physical education as well. Before we deal in length on this, we must know why physical education is important. Research studies suggest that physical education is not only vital for the child's physical growth, but it also boosts the child's confidence, social skills and mental well-being. Therefore, physical education constitutes an important area of focus of every school. Inclusion in physical education simply means that all the students of the class regardless of any kind of differences should be able to participate in class activities without being left out. Students with disabilities should therefore get the equal opportunity to learn the same curriculum content, with the same lesson objective and in the same space.

There are many ways to make inclusive physical education possible. We are going to note down some of the easy, common yet important measures that the teachers can take to make all the students engagement in physical education possible:

- Know and understand your students and build strong relationships with them.
- Don't rely on ability grouping.
- Aim for quality over quantity: focus on activities where all students can actively engage.
- Use a variety of fitness activities and routines.
- Progress from easy to difficult.
- Listen to you students and allow their choice
- Content in adapted physical education should mirror the general physical education curriculum to the greatest extent possible.

Physical education programs can do a great deal to improve the lifestyle of children with disabilities; their motor skills will develop, self-esteem and social skills will improve. Physical education will encourage an active lifestyle and maintain motivation in various areas of life. Hence leaving out any students based on their differences would not only hamper their physical growth but it is hazardous for their confidence building and mental well being which would ultimately result in poor educational performance.

Contributed by Tsuknungtula, Tsewang under the guidance of Ms. Malini Chib

Pass it On: Three Decades, Two Generations, One Mission***Decade 1: The Mother***

I still remember the day in 1996, when I went to the Colaba school for an interview for joining the Teachers' Training Course (TTC) at the Spastics Society of India. Padmashree Dr. Mithu Alur (who later became Mithudi to me) and Mrs. Banerjee were on the interview panel and they put me instantly at ease, telling me about why and how the Society was founded in 1972, and what was envisioned for the future. I had read a lot about Dr. Alur and the good work that SSI was doing for people with cerebral palsy and other locomotor disorders and was really thrilled to meet her face to face. I realised what a difference SSI had made to the lives of so many children and their families and straight away, I felt that, given a chance, I wanted to become part of this family. Earlier, I had been to a couple of interviews at other special education institutions, but wasn't convinced that I was at the right place. At the SSI interview, one of the questions that Dr. Alur asked me was about why I wanted to join the course, as also how I would manage doing a full-time course and look after my son, Sudeep, who was in the IIIrd standard then. The care and concern shown by her was one of the other reasons I joined the course the very next day!

Doing the TTC was a great learning experience that shaped me into the person I am today. Listening to Dr. Mithu Alur's lectures opened my eyes to the social model of disability, where the environment is a major cause of exacerbating a person's disability, as opposed to the medical model which is treatment-based. Walking in the shoes of people with disability, an exercise designed to highlight the problems faced by them on a daily basis, taught me to think about the social model of disability, which exposes the inadequacies of our system that does not provide a level playing field for all. I completed the course and to my great joy, was offered a job in the Research and Training department. I discovered that I had an aptitude for training adults and began lecturing for the next batch of the TTC. My writing skills came to the fore when I began editing the library newsletter 'Jagruti' and the Research Department newsletter 'Breakthru'. I remember going to Varsha many times with issues I faced at work, and she would help me resolve them in a jiffy with a smile on her face, even when she was at her busiest.

My entire working life at SSI was a journey of self-discovery, lessons in humility and sensitisation to the issues faced by persons with disability. I realised the importance of hard work, perseverance and experienced the joy that small successes can bring, my promotion to the post of Deputy Head, Research & Training, being one such example.

I made a lot of friends during my time at SSI, some of whom have turned into life-long buddies. I remember evenings spent with Malini, sometimes at her house in Colaba, where Mithudi's gentle and gracious presence always made me feel at home. Then there were evenings spent in exploring Colaba thoroughly, going book-shopping at Nalanda, seeing plays at St. Andrews Theatre, films at Sterling and Eros, gastronomic adventures at the revolving restaurant at The Ambassador Hotel, sessions at Club IX, Leopolds to just name a few! I also treasure the wonderful evenings spent with Amena at her house, with Varsha, Nilesh and a few others at work and outside of work too. All of them are my good friends even today!

To continue on with my journey of learning, I decided to work with an organization that catered to people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. I bid adieu to SSI with a heavy heart, but knew deep within that I would always be part of this wonderful organisation. I have come back to SSI many times as a visiting lecturer, and each time, I felt that I had never really gone away. Even today, I get invited for events, and the aura and the good vibes of the place and people therein warm my heart.

Never in my wildest dreams, did I expect that this wouldn't be the only generation of my family to work at SSI (now called ADAPT). My son, Sudeep, a post-graduate in the Social Sciences from TISS joined ADAPT as a Research Officer! And so, we come to...

Decade 2: The Son

You just read what my mother had to say about her time at ADAPT - notice how she dove right in? I'll take a slightly different approach; starting from the very beginning of my career.

Professionally speaking, I've been lucky. Along with nine of my batch-mates, I received a job-offer before graduation. Living in Haryana, where my work required me to be, I learned even more. Further mistakes were made and successes had, and through it all, I kept learning. This would help me through later times; I couldn't know it then, but my stint as an officer with the Government of Haryana was to be my first and last direct job in the disaster management arena, till date.

Circumstances played out such that I ended up resigning from my job in Haryana, and moving back to Mumbai – coming full circle, as it were. Eclectic in my choices, I opted to join a program which had me teaching sixth grade children in a low-income community in the Eastern suburbs. Six months later, after a chance meeting with Dr. Mithu Alur and her daughter Ms. Malini Chib, the stars aligned, and I was invited to work with ADAPT.

Now, I was initially hired to support the Founder & Chairperson of ADAPT, Padmashree Dr. Mithu Alur, in the research she had instituted, for a book about the history of the organisation's five decades. I'm proud to say, the book was published in 2017 by SAGE Publishers! During my time at ADAPT, I was also responsible for supporting Mrs. Varsha Hooja (CEO), with monthly communications - both internal and external - as well as contributing to the organisation's annual report. I was also tasked with liaising with the media, and helped author press releases and notes, whenever required to.

As I worked there and built up trust in the work I did, I was given the huge responsibility of organising, hosting, and managing the organisation's events including but not limited to significant ones like 'International Day of Disability', 'World Cerebral Palsy Day', and others. I was honoured, on one occasion, by Mrs. Hooja's faith in me, to represent the organisation on a live Doordarshan TV program, as a subject matter specialist. I even ended up being the coordinator for the ADAPT Rights Group (ARG) chaired by Ms. Malini Chib!

This, to me, is one of the most special things about working at ADAPT - you will always be given opportunities to prove yourself, and will be granted commensurate responsibilities to further the organisation's growth. Imagine how this felt for someone in their early twenties! Case in point: eventually, Dr. Alur saw my passion for teaching along with research and documentation, and I was tasked with designing modules for - and soon found myself on the faculty of - CII (Community Initiatives in Inclusion), an international course offered by ADAPT to students from 16 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Along with coordinating the training sessions under the Course Director. I even conducted some of the sessions myself. The sessions I conducted focused on inclusive education in disability. But it wasn't just that...trained in School Safety at the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) in New Delhi – and at the Jamsetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management (JTCDM), a school at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) before that – I put together a module on school safety focusing on students with disabilities. I expanded that module, later, to include aspects of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) at the community level. I was a disaster management professional again, even while working in the disability rights research and advocacy domain!

I eventually moved on from ADAPT - from the non-profit sector to the corporate arena, and from there to the startup world in India's hub for entrepreneurship - Bengaluru. That's where I am now, currently working as Lead Copywriter in the Brand Marketing team of an education-technology startup that has received close to \$200 million in funding. Quite a journey, wouldn't you agree?

But if I'm to be honest, I wouldn't have made it this far, were it not for my stint at ADAPT. Now, you might think I'm talking about all the skills I learned under the wise and patient leadership and guidance of my mentors, Dr. Alur, Mrs. Hooja, and many others who took in a young man in the early years of his career and helped shape him into a sharp professional, ready to tackle any kind of work in any kind of sector and domain. You'd be right, of course, but there's one other thing I learned during my time at ADAPT, which I am convinced, I could not have learned anywhere else - the value of empathy, and how to put it into practice in my daily life. ADAPT didn't just give me responsibilities and a salary; I received far more: the invaluable skill of listening, processing, and acting with empathy. This has served me well not just in my career, but also in my interactions with people, whether my family, my friends, or even my colleagues. And for this, I will forever remain grateful.

Decade 3: The Past (As Prologue)

This is us, mother and son, speaking in one voice: we don't know what the future holds for us, but even as we go about our respective lives - mother as a PhD student, and son executing his responsibilities as a professional, as a son, and as a responsible citizen of India, we maintain our connection with ADAPT. As we enter 2021, three decades have passed since this journey began with the mother, but it would be folly to say it's ended with the son. We may no longer be employed here, but what is one to do when a piece of one's very soul remains attached to the spirit of service that an organisation embodies? The past we've shared at ADAPT is, thus, but a prologue of things to come. ADAPT's story has been, and will always be one of unshakeable trust, unbreakable bonds, and immeasurable value. And, of course, of passing all this on!

by Sunita and Sudeep Pagedar

May we raise children
who love the unloved
things - the dandelion, the
worms & spiderlings.

Children who sense
the rose needs the thorn & run into
rainswept days the same way they
turn towards sun...

And when they're grown &
someone has to speak for those
who have no voice may they draw upon that wilder bond,
those days of tending tender things and be the ones.

~ Nicolette Sowder



Contributed by Manju Thakur



Maneeta from our team held a zoom etiquette workshop as part of the in service training. The meeting focussed on how to make the most of zoom meetings - mute yourself from the beginning, to position in front of the camera to how to participate or ask a question.

The meeting was also to introduce the staff to the social media handles of ADAPT and how they can promote our cause by sharing with friends and family. Mrs Vijayakar and Maneeta gave pointers to them on how to reply to the posts as well as to share them . We thank the staff for joining our Instagram and Facebook pages



Ms. Ruksana Sayed - 2nd February

Vidya Ghadi (25th February)

From
All at ADAPT



Manoj Shevale

has been with ADAPT since 2014 And has become one of our sincere staff. He stayed put on the ADAPT campus during pandemic lockdown and his immense contribution along with all the other residing staff of ADAPT helped to sail through the lockdown under the guidance of our Founder Chairperson, Dr. Mithu Alur.

Manoj has a little daughter who goes to the Bandra Center and his ready to serve attitude with a smile has endeared him to all staff.

Wishing Manoj continued success in his job.



Thank you



ZINDAGI NA MILEGI DOBAARA

You must be wondering why I selected this title for this write up, well, although real life is not really playing out as the reel life story in this case, yet the movie title makes you realise that there is nothing you can take for granted anymore. The global Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly entered our lives and put everything to a halt. It affected the lives of people around the world bringing a flood of tension and worries followed by negative thoughts and piles of boredom. But I took it as a challenge to handle this situation with determination and positivity thereby taking advantage of the lockdown.

For me this ordeal began on 21st of March 2020 when the city of Mumbai went into lockdown and my life as I know it came to a complete halt. The first two weeks were quite fun as I could wake up late without the fear of deadlines and could catch up with some much needed sleep but then it began to get boring as I missed going to office and catching up with friends and colleagues. As we started working from home, things started moving, though initially at a slower pace. As the trend to “Work from home” caught on, I began to enjoy it as I could speak to my colleagues on Zoom and do my work from the comfort of my home. I used to go out once a week to the market to get essentials for the house, keeping in mind all the safety protocols. Mom was happy that I was at home spending quality time with her and I was able to help her in the housework too. But as usual I longed to go to office so that I could spend more time with my colleagues. I missed the trivial moments of life that under normal circumstances would go unnoticed. Birthdays were celebrated at home without any fanfare. Even Christmas this year was quiet, as we decided not to celebrate it in support and respect for the families who lost their loved ones to Covid. Instead we decided to donate that amount to an Orphanage. Then in the New Year we were asked to come back to work and I was relieved to be going back but also a little anxious due to the Covid situation which has yet not been completely resolved.

Life, may never be normal again but the resilient human spirit is indestructible. I have realised that it will take much more than a pandemic to bring me down. If anything I have decided to make my life better spiritually, physically and mentally. I have learnt to value the small things in life to make the most of any situation and most of all to never take things for granted as the saying goes Zindagi Na milegi dobara.

Stay Blessed.... Stay Safe.

by Annamarie Shepherd

*Heartiest congratulations to
Mrs Bhavana Mukherjee
on her son's wedding!*

*Our best wishes
and blessings for
the newly weds*

*Deepthi
and
Shobhit!*

Name : Sangeeta Manna
Department : Computer, SDC

Years at ADAPT?
4 years

What brought you to ADAPT?
I was searching for Job in Education Sector and was surprised to see ADAPT was so close to my place. And I didn't know about it.

Who inspires you?
All freedom fighters, who did very hard work to get freedom for our country.

Where's your favorite place in the world?
Nature and natural things attracts me the most. My village where I was born is the favourite place in the world.

What are you passionate about?
Painting and gardening.

What's your favorite movie?
There are so many.

Who would you like to swap places with for a day?
Better version of myself.

If you could visit any place in the world, where would you go?
Switzerland

What's your favorite family tradition?
Making and having kheer on birthdays.

Which 3 individuals, living or dead would you like to eat dinner with the most?
My family and friends.

What's your secret talent that no one knows about?
Would like to keep it secret.

Which is your favorite book?
All detective & motivational book.

At home we would find you doing.
Cooking, cleaning & taking care of my son.

The best meal you have ever had is.
Meal prepared by my father.

Your most memorable moment at ADAPT.
Every day I spent with my trainees is memorable and when I first met Dr. Alur for a round of interview.



You have your own late night talk show; who do you invite as your first guest.
All those who understands me well.

What would be the title of your autobiography?

As a child what did you want to be when you grew up?
An artist

Name the first 3 things on your bucket list.
1) Making good paintings.
2) My own Terrace Garden.
3) Learning musical instrument.

What is the one thing we don't know about you?
Keeping it secret.

if you could rename yourself, what name would you pick?
I am happy with my name.

What would you choose: Power to become invisible OR Power to read people's minds?
Of course read people's mind.

Which lines or lyrics sum up your view on life?
Mon mor megher songi
Ure chole digdigantero paane
Nihsimo shunye
Shrabono borshono songite
Rimijhim rimijhim rimijhim

A Story for Valentine's Day

Larry and Jo Ann were an ordinary couple. They lived in an ordinary house on an ordinary street. Like any other ordinary couple, they struggled to make ends meet and to do the right things for their children. They were ordinary in yet another way—they had their squabbles. Much of their conversation concerned what was wrong in their marriage and who was to blame.

Until one day when a most extraordinary event took place.

"You know, Jo Ann, I've got a magic chest of drawers. Every time I open them, they're full of socks and underwear," Larry said. "I want to thank you for filling them all these years."

Jo Ann stared at her husband over the top of her glasses. "What do you want, Larry?"

"Nothing. I just want you to know I appreciate those magic drawers."

This wasn't the first time Larry had done something odd, so Jo Ann pushed the incident out of her mind until a few days later.

"Jo Ann, thank you for recording so many correct check numbers in the ledger this month. You put down the right numbers 15 out of 16 times. That's a record."

Disbelieving what she had heard, Jo Ann looked up from her mending. "Larry, you're always complaining about my recording the wrong check numbers. Why stop now?"

"No reason. I just wanted you to know I appreciate the effort you're making."

Jo Ann shook her head and went back to her mending. "What's got into him?" she mumbled to herself.

Nevertheless, the next day when Jo Ann wrote a check at the grocery store, she glanced at her checkbook to confirm that she had put down the right check number. "Why do I suddenly care about those dumb check numbers?" she asked herself.

She tried to disregard the incident, but Larry's strange behavior intensified.

"Jo Ann, that was a great dinner," he said one evening. "I appreciate all your effort. Why, in the past 15 years I'll bet you've fixed over 14,000 meals for me and the kids."

Then "Gee, Jo Ann, the house looks spiffy. You've really worked hard to get it looking so good." And even "Thanks, Jo Ann, for just being you. I really enjoy your company."

Jo Ann was growing worried. "Where's the sarcasm, the criticism?" she wondered.

Her fears that something peculiar was happening to her husband were confirmed by 16-year-old Shelly, who complained, "Dad's gone bonkers, Mom. He just told me I looked nice. With all this makeup and these sloppy clothes, he still said it. That's not Dad, Mom. What's wrong with him?"

Whatever was wrong, Larry didn't get over it. Day in and day out he continued focusing on the positive.

Over the weeks, Jo Ann grew more accustomed to her mate's unusual behavior and occasionally even gave him a grudging "Thank you." She prided herself on taking it all in stride, until one day something so peculiar happened, she became completely discombobulated:

"I want you to take a break," Larry said. "I am going to do the dishes. So please take your hands off that frying pan and leave the kitchen."

(Long, long pause.) "Thank you, Larry. Thank you very much!" Jo Ann's step was now a little lighter, her self-confidence higher and once in a while she hummed. She didn't seem to have as many blue moods anymore. "I rather like Larry's new behavior," she thought.

That would be the end of the story except one day another most extraordinary event took place. This time it was Jo Ann who spoke.

"Larry," she said, "I want to thank you for going to work and providing for us all these years. I don't think I've ever told you how much I appreciate it."

Larry has never revealed the reason for his dramatic change of behavior no matter how hard Jo Ann has pushed for an answer, and so it will likely remain one of life's mysteries. But it's one I'm thankful to live with.

You see, I am Jo Ann.

Jo Ann Larsen, Desert News.

Law of attraction

By Manju Thakur



Riddles

- 1) If eleven plus two equals one, what does nine plus five equal?
- 2) Can you write down eight eights so that they add up to one thousand?
- 3) What English word retains the same pronunciation, even after you take away four of its five letters?
- 4) What is it that given one, you'll have either two or none?
- 5) I am four times as old as my daughter. In 20 years time I shall be twice as old as her. How old are we now?
- 6) What common English verb becomes its own past tense by rearranging its letters?
- 7) Lighter than what I am made of, More of me is hidden Than is seen. What am I?
- 8) Different lights do make me strange, thus into different sizes I will change. What am I?
- 9) My tongue is long, my breath is strong
And yet I breed no strife;
My voice you hear both far and near,
And yet I have no life. What am I?
- 10) There's one "sport" in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends. What is it?
- 11) What word starting with BR, that with the addition of the letter E, becomes another word that sounds the same as the first?
- 12) Who spends the day at the window, goes to the table for meals and hides at night?



Indian Festivals in February

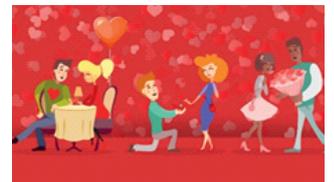
India is a land of festivals and fairs. Virtually celebrating each day of the year, there are more festivals celebrated in India than anywhere else in the world. Festivals are larger than life celebrations of various things. They occur at regular intervals and help in breaking the monotony of life. Furthermore, they give you the chance to celebrate the little and big things in life. Festivals are the carriers of peace and joy in the communities. As India is a very cultural and diverse country, so are the festivals. They divide into three general categories of national, religious and seasonal. Each festival pertains to different occasions, some welcome the seasons of the year, the harvest, the rains, or the full moon. Others celebrate religious occasions, the birthdays of divine beings and saints, or the advent of the New Year. A number of these festivals are common to most parts of India. However, they may be called by different names in various parts of the country or may be celebrated in a different fashion.

Here are some of the festivals that take place in the month of February:

Vasant Panchami - It is celebrated on the 16th of February. Goddess Saraswati is worshiped on this day and celebrated with great enthusiasm especially in eastern India. On this day people wear yellow clothes and offer prayers. It is the start of the spring season when the earth is naturally decorated with beautiful flowers and mustard flowers start shining in the fields. Barley and wheat earrings start blooming, mango trees blossom and butterflies start hovering everywhere.

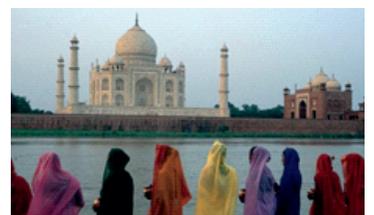


Valentine's Day - 14th February is celebrated as Valentines Day in different countries. Traditionally in Western countries, it is a trend to celebrate Valentine's Day, when people exchange cards, love signs, hearts, cupid, flowers, and greeting cards with the love of their life.



In India there was a tradition of adoring Kamadeva, the lord of love; exemplified by the romantic carvings in the Khajuraho Group of Monuments and by the writing of the Kamasutra.

Taj Mahotsav - The Taj Mahotsav takes place at Shilpgram in Agra, right near the eastern entry gate to the Taj Mahal. The focus of this festival is on arts, crafts, Indian culture, and recreating the Mughal era. It gets underway with a spectacular procession that includes elephants, camels, and drummers. Apart from camel rides, there are games for the kids and a food festival. The venue has special significance, as it's said to be situated on the site where the artisans who built the Taj Mahal once lived. Best of all, it's free for foreign tourists to attend.



Losar festival - Tibetans follow the lunar pattern and their first day of the first month of the lunisolar Tibetan calendar are celebrated as Losar. Losar is celebrated for 15 days. They burn incense sticks as a ritual to please the Gods for the well being of the local people.

It is one of the major festivals of Ladakh and is also celebrated in Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. In Ladakh, Buddhist visit deities in the shrines and Gompas, along with celebration with dance, music, and merry making. Losar is marked with ancient ceremonies that represent the struggle between good and evil.



Deccan Festival - also is known as the Hyderabad Festival is a vibrant 5-day festival held in Andhra Pradesh. The culture of the Deccan region is reflected during these five days when the entire state comes alive with colors, music, and fairs. In this festival programs like qawwali, ghazal, dance, song, mushaira, etc. are organized. People from far and wide come here to enjoy these events.



Toshali Crafts Mela - Odisha's biggest handicraft fair is back for the fifteenth edition this year. It's organized by the state Handlooms, Handicrafts and Textiles department and has in excess of 350 stalls with products from across India. Participants include 130 weavers and more than 150 artisans. Other attractions are a food court, cultural performances, and a themed pavilion that showcases handlooms of Odisha.



Pondicherry Heritage Festival - The annual Pondicherry Heritage Festival was conceived as a way of drawing attention to the need to conserve the town's outstanding architectural legacy. It has since expanded to embrace the diverse traditions and cultural practices that give Pondicherry its distinctive flavor. For 2021, the theme is "The Talking Streets of Pondicherry." Accommodations book up early for this popular festival, so be sure to look into hotel rooms as soon as possible.



Rann Utsav - Set against the surreal backdrop of Kutch's white salt desert, the Rann Utsav showcases the region's culture and heritage (although it has unfortunately become rather commercial and overcrowded). Activities include folk dances and music, food stalls, ATV rides, camel cart excursions, para-motoring, meditation, yoga, and trips to surrounding destinations. A luxury tent village is constructed on the fringe of the salt desert to accommodate visitors.



Kumbh Mela - The largest religious gathering in the world, the Kumbh Mela brings Hindu holy men together to discuss their faith and disseminate information about their religion. Holy men and pilgrims also take a dip in the river on auspicious days to cleanse themselves of sins. The Kumbh Mela is attended by millions of people each day. In December 2017, UNESCO included the festival on its Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list in recognition of its importance.



17 Festive Season

Magh Mela - The Magh Mela is promoted as the "Mini Kumbh Mela". It takes place every year at the same place as the Kumbh Mela, at the confluence of the holy Saraswati, Yamuna, and Ganges rivers. Every twelfth year, the festival transforms into the Kumbh Mela there. The Magh Mela is widely believed to be older than the actual Kumbh Mela. Similar to the Kumbh Mela, hordes of pilgrims and sadhus (Hindu holy men) come to bathe in the water and cleanse their sins.



Goa Bird Festival - The fourth edition of the Goa Bird Festival celebrates the return of migratory birds to the state, plus the diversity of local species. There are more than 430 to be spotted. The festival features guided bird walks and field trips through the forest, expert talks, workshops, and bird photography competition.



Kala Ghoda Arts Festival - The Kala Ghoda (Black Horse) arts festival is a nine-day extravaganza that sees Mumbai's Kala Ghoda Arts Precinct transformed into an open-air exhibition space and stage show. This vibrant street festival includes arts and crafts, exhibitions, workshops, dance performances, music, theater, heritage walks, and special events for children. The great thing about it is that it's all free!



Goa Carnival - The colorful Goa Carnival, which began as a local feast by the Portuguese in the 18th century, has developed into the state's most famous event. During the festival around the state of Goa, the streets come alive with parades, floats, music, and masked dances. It culminates with the Red and Black Dance, a formal ball in Panaji, where the dress code is red and black. The festivities kick off with a Food and Culture Festival in Panaji.



Attukal Pongala - Trivandrum goes up in smoke on the occasion of Attukal Pongala, when the world's largest gathering of women for a religious activity cooks up a special offering for the goddess Attukalamma. The festival earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1997, when 1.5 million women attended it. Numbers have been on the rise ever since!



Sula Fest - At Sula Fest in Nashik, you can expect an eclectic mix of music, wine, food, fashion, and shopping, in this Indian-style Coachella. There are more than 100 artists performing across three stages. Fancy camping out among the grape vines? Let's Camp Out erects a special tent city for festival-goers, not far from the amphitheater. Local hotel accommodations are also available.





*Onwards
we march together*

Thank You

ADAPT Mission Statement:

ADAPT's mission is to influence and change public policy in order to create an inclusive, accepting, disability friendly India by demonstrating and promoting the philosophy of inclusion through model innovative techniques guided by the key principles and

Vision:

ADAPT's (Formerly The Spastics Society of India) vision is to establish rights and entitlements for children and youth with disability, to introduce policy and legislative changes combined with reformative actions so that all existing services of education, health, welfare and employment are inclusive and to ensure that

Solution to the Puzzle :

ANSWERS

- 1) 11 o'clock plus 2 hours = 1 o'clock
9 o'clock plus 5 hours = 2 o'clock
- 2) $888 + 88 + 8 + 8 + 8 = 1000.$
- 3) Queue
- 4) A choice
- 5) I am 40 and my daughter is 10.
- 6) Eat and Ate
- 7) An Iceberg
- 8) I am the pupil of an eye.
- 9) A Bell
- 10) Boxing
- 11) Braking becomes Breaking
- 12) A Fly