



PURPLE VOICES

“Celebrating Human Diversity”

Stories of Ability, Dignity, and Inclusion

An E-Book



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Indian Edition

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Foreword Message

राजीव शर्मा
संयुक्त सचिव
Rajeev Sharma
Joint Secretary



75
आज़ादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

भारत सरकार
सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय
दिव्यांगजन सशक्तिकरण विभाग
Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)



FOREWORD

It gives me immense pleasure to present *“Purple Voices: CELEBRATING HUMAN DIVERSITY,”* a commendable collaborative effort of NIEPMD and TRINAYANI. This unique publication beautifully captures the lived experiences of individuals representing the 21 disabilities recognized under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

The book moves beyond definitions and statistics to highlight dignity, resilience, and achievement. Each narrative reminds us that disability does not define a person’s potential; society’s barriers often do. By presenting real stories of determination, leadership, creativity, and advocacy from across India, this collection strengthens the national movement toward inclusion and equal opportunity.

I congratulate the dedicated teams of NIEPMD and TRINAYANI for conceptualizing and developing this meaningful resource. Their combined expertise in rehabilitation, research, capacity building, and ethical storytelling has resulted in a powerful awareness tool that will benefit policymakers, educators, professionals, families, and the community at large.

May this publication inspire greater sensitivity, accessibility, and commitment to ensuring that every person lives with dignity, equality, and full participation in society.

(Rajeev Sharma)

Place New Delhi
Dated: 27/02/2026



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Preface

Purple Voices: “Celebrating Human Diversity” is a curated collection of lived experiences of persons with disabilities, developed as part of the Purple Fair initiative. The e-book draws upon 21 short films representing the 21 disabilities recognised under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, and presents real stories that reflect dignity, resilience, and inclusion.

The publication has been conceptualised and developed by the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) in collaboration with Trinayani, with the objective of creating an accessible, visually engaging, and narrative-driven resource that sensitises the public to disability through real stories rather than labels.

All video narratives featured in this e-book are courtesy of Trinayani and have been sourced from their Disability Awareness Website (<https://disability.trinayani.org/>). The written profiles are based on these films and accompanying descriptions, complemented by high-resolution stills drawn from the original videos.

Purple Voices: “Celebrating Human Diversity” affirms a simple truth: inclusion begins by listening and every voice matters.



About Trinayani

Trinayani is a non-governmental organisation, committed to make people understand disability, challenge stereotypes, promote awareness, accessibility, and dignity for persons with disabilities. Trinayani amplifies the voices and lived experiences of persons with disabilities through curated workshops, storytelling, visual media and advocacy. It works at the intersection of disability, culture, and communication, using games, literature, films and digital platforms to start conversations around inclusion.

The organisation is widely known for its carefully curated short films that document real lives, everyday struggles, achievements, and aspirations of self-advocates (persons with disabilities) across India as well as interviews with experts. These films serve as powerful tools for awareness, sensitization, and dialogue, reaching diverse audiences including families, professionals, students, policymakers, and the general public.

All video narratives featured in this e-book are courtesy of Trinayani from their Disability Awareness website. Through its visual documentation and ethical storytelling approach, Trinayani ensures that persons with disabilities are represented with dignity, authenticity, and agency.

Through collaboration, creative expression, and a strong rights-based perspective, Trinayani continues to contribute meaningfully to the disability inclusion movement, ensuring that lived experiences are not only seen, but truly heard.



About NIEPMD (D)

The National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (Divyangjan) [NIEPMD(D)] was established in 2005 at Muttukadu on East Coast Road, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India. The Institute functions as a National Resource Centre committed to the empowerment, rehabilitation, and holistic development of persons with Multiple Disabilities, particularly individuals with two or more disabilities as defined under the RPwD Act, 2016 and the National Trust Act, 1999.

NIEPMD(D) operates from Monday to Friday between 9.00 AM and 5.30 PM and delivers comprehensive, multidisciplinary services under one roof. Core services include Early Intervention, Special Education, Behaviour Modification, Psychological Assessment and Intervention, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Audiology, Sensory Integration, Rehabilitation Medicine, Prosthetics & Orthotics, Vocational Training, Vocational Guidance & Counselling, and Community-Based Rehabilitation, ensuring an integrated approach to rehabilitation and inclusion.

The Institute offers 13 Human Resource Development (HRD) programmes ranging from Certificate to M.Phil. level and also facilitates Ph.D. programmes in relevant disciplines. It was reaccredited by NAAC with B+ grade (2nd Cycle) in 2024. NIEPMD(D) has established three Composite Regional Centres (CRCs) in recent years and has received national recognition, including the National Award for Outstanding Work in Creation of Barrier-Free Environment (2012) and the National Award for Best Accessible Website (2011). The Institute also has the distinction of nurturing more than 10 National and State Awardees who have received training and/or therapeutic services at NIEPMD(D).

About RPwD Act 2016

“Disability is not a limitation of the individual, but a reflection of barriers created by society. The RPwD Act, 2016 affirms dignity, equality, and full participation as fundamental rights.”

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 marks India’s shift from charity to choice, from sympathy to rights.

RPwD Act, 2016 — a glance

- ✓ 21 recognized disabilities
- ✓ 4% reservation in government employment
- ✓ 5% reservation in higher education
- ✓ Accessibility as a legal right
- ✓ Protection from discrimination & abuse

“The RPwD Act, 2016 reminds us that inclusion is not an act of kindness — it is a matter of justice.”



Disabilities recognised under the RPwD Act, 2016

Physical Disabilities

1. Locomotor Disability
2. Leprosy Cured Person
3. Cerebral Palsy
4. Dwarfism
5. Muscular Dystrophy
6. Acid Attack Victims

Visual Disabilities

7. Blindness
8. Low Vision

Hearing Impairment

9. Deaf and Hard of Hearing
10. Speech and Language Disability
11. Multiple Disabilities including Deafblindness

Intellectual Disability

12. Intellectual Disability
13. Autism Spectrum Disorder
14. Specific Learning Disabilities

Mental Behaviour

15. Mental Illness
16. Chronic Neurological Conditions
17. Multiple Sclerosis
18. Parkinson's Disease

Blood Disorders

19. Thalassemia
20. Hemophilia
21. Sickle Cell Disease



1. Blindness

Blindness is a lack of vision. It may also refer to a loss of vision that cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lenses. Partial blindness means you have very limited vision. Complete blindness means you cannot see anything and DO NOT see light.

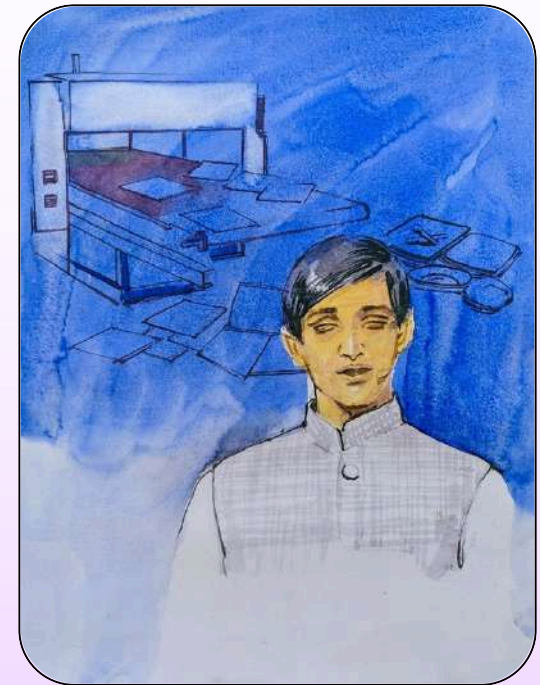
- RPWD Act, 2016

Blindness or visual impairment refers to partial or complete loss of vision that significantly affects daily functioning. It may be present from birth or acquired later in life. Yet, blindness does not mean inability - it simply means navigating the world differently.

For many individuals with visual impairment, the barriers are not just physical but social. Limited awareness, overprotection, and low expectations often restrict opportunities more than the disability itself. Education, employment, mobility, and even everyday independence - such as cooking or dressing are frequently doubted by society.

Assistive technology, inclusive education, and accessible environments can transform possibilities. Screen readers, voice assistants, audio labelers, tactile markings, and mobility training enable independence. But beyond tools, what truly empowers is belief - both self-belief and societal trust.

Blindness does not reduce capability. It demands adaptation, not limitation.



Despite blindness and repeated rejection, **Srikanth Bolla** rose with determination. He founded Bollant Industries, creating eco-friendly products and jobs for persons with disabilities. He also became the first international blind student at MIT.

Veena Mehta Verma: Redefining Vision

Veena Mehta Verma's journey began in a small town in Odisha, where limited awareness delayed her formal education until the age of 12. A doctor's advice changed everything - education, not cure, was the way forward.

She joined NAB, Delhi, entering directly into Class 6, and never looked back. Choosing commerce over conventional paths, she completed her B.Com and fought for the opportunity to pursue an MBA at a time when management institutes lacked reservations for persons with disabilities. Her efforts contributed to policy change, enabling a 3% reservation in AICTE-approved institutes. She went on to complete her MBA and today serves as Manager (HR) at NTPC, with over 15 years of distinguished service.

Beyond her profession, Veena lives independently and confidently - cooking, managing her home with assistive technology, maintaining a disciplined fitness routine, and redefining assumptions about blindness and style.

Her life affirms a simple truth: Vision is not about sight. It is about clarity of purpose.



Veena

A Purple Reflection

Blindness is a different way of perceiving the world. When society shifts from sympathy to respect, from doubt to opportunity, inclusion becomes real.

Watch Veena's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we celebrate stories like Veena's - stories that illuminate possibility. Because true vision lies not in the eyes, but in determination.

2. Low Vision

"Low-Vision" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, namely: (i) visual activity not exceeding 6/18 or less than 20/60 up to 3/60 or up to 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible corrections: or (ii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 40 degree up to 10 degree.

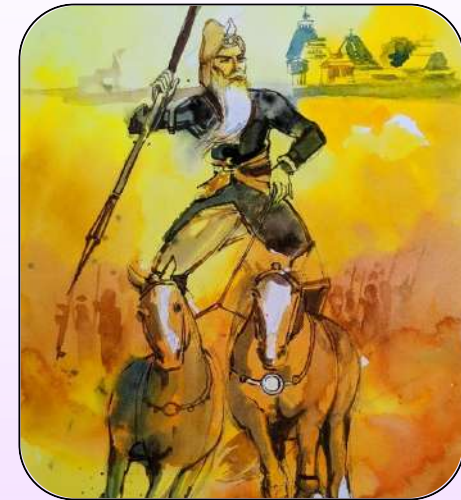
- RPWD Act, 2016

Low vision is a visual impairment that cannot be fully corrected with standard glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery yet the person retains usable sight. According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, low vision refers to a condition where, even after the best possible treatment and refractive correction, vision remains limited but functional with assistive support.

Low vision can occur at any stage of life childhood, adulthood, or old age. A person may be able to read, write, or move independently, but often with magnifiers, enlarged screens, high-contrast settings, or adaptive devices.

In classrooms, copying from the board can feel like decoding a foreign script. In workplaces, standard screens may be too distant or too small. In shopping aisles, identifying prices and product labels becomes an exercise in patience. Independence is possible but it demands adaptation, awareness, and access to assistive technology.

Low vision is not blindness. It is seeing differently and functioning with resilience.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh, also known as **Sher-e-Punjab** (1780–1839), was the visionary leader who transformed Harmandir Sahib into the Golden Temple. Despite losing vision due to smallpox, he built a powerful kingdom, kept invaders at bay, and safeguarded the Kohinoor diamond. His courage proved that true strength lies not in sight, but in spirit.

Sachu Ramalingam : A Life in Full Circle

For over 25 years, Sachu Ramalingam has dedicated her life to supporting children and adults with low vision while living with low vision herself. Diagnosed in infancy and having undergone multiple surgeries, she studied in a mainstream school, overcoming academic barriers that few could see.

Today, she is among the country's leading low vision professionals, contributing to the definition of low vision under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and combining clinical practice with advocacy.

Using adaptive tools like modified screens and magnification devices, she navigates both work and daily life with confidence and elegance.

Her journey came full circle when she received the National Award from former President Pratibha Patil, along with the Neelam Kanga and Helen Keller Awards.

Disciplined, reflective, and purpose driven, Sachu's life is not defined by limited vision but by limitless commitment.

At the Purple Fair, we honour journeys like Sachu's stories that remind us:

It is not how clearly one sees the world, but how clearly one sees their purpose.



Sachu

A Purple Reflection

Low vision teaches us that clarity does not depend on perfect sight. It depends on perspective. When we design spaces, systems, and attitudes that acknowledge unseen struggles, inclusion becomes authentic.

Watch Sachu's film here:



3. Leprosy Cured Persons

"Leprosy Cured Person" means a person has been cured of leprosy but is suffering from:

- (i) Loss of sensation in hands or feet as well as loss of sensation and paresis in the eye and eye-lid but with no manifest deformity;
- (ii) Manifest deformity and paresis but having sufficient mobility in their hands and feet to enable them to engage in normal economic activity;
- (iii) Extreme physical deformity as well as advanced age which prevents him/her from undertaking any gainful occupation and expression "leprosy cured" shall construed accordingly;

- RPWD Act, 2016

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is one of the most misunderstood conditions in history. Contrary to common myths, it does not spread through casual touch, sitting together, or sharing space. It is not a curse, not a punishment from a past life, and not a mark of sin.

Leprosy is caused by bacteria and is completely curable with timely medical treatment. Free multidrug therapy is available at government hospitals across India. When detected early often through symptoms like light or white patches on the skin with loss of sensation it can be treated effectively without leading to disability.

The real danger is not the disease itself. It is delay, misinformation, and stigma.

When treatment is taken fully whether for six months or a year the person can be completely cured and live a healthy, independent life. Leprosy does not discriminate. It can affect anyone. What matters is awareness and medical care, not fear.



Samba, son of Lord Krishna, inherited his father's charm but misused it with pride and disrespect - insulting sages like Durvasa and misleading Narada. Cursed for his arrogance, he was afflicted with leprosy. Through twelve years of penance at present-day Konark in Odisha, he eventually attained healing learning humility through suffering.

Maya Ranaware: Breaking the Silence

Maya was born in a leprosy colony. Both her mother and mother-in-law had experienced the disease. At the age of seven, she noticed patches on her own skin. Her family acted immediately she was taken to the hospital, received medication, and recovered. But recovery from the disease did not mean recovery from society's judgement.

Because she lived in a "leprosy colony," schools denied her admission. Fear and myths overshadowed facts. People believed the disease spread by touch. Films often portrayed individuals affected by leprosy as beggars or outcasts, reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Maya's life challenges those narratives.

She pursued education despite rejection. She speaks openly about early detection and the importance of completing prescribed treatment. She urges families not to turn to superstition or misinformation - but to seek medical help immediately.

Her message is simple and powerful: Leprosy is curable. Stigma should not be permanent. Through her voice, the conversation shifts - from fear to fact, from exclusion to empowerment.



Maya

A Purple Reflection

Leprosy may leave marks on the skin if untreated, but stigma leaves deeper scars. True inclusion begins when we replace fear with knowledge and discrimination with compassion.

Watch Maya's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we honour stories like Maya's stories that remind us:

No diagnosis defines a human being. Awareness heals.

4. Hearing Impairment

"Deaf" means persons having 70 DB hearing loss in speech frequencies in both ears.

"Hard of Hearing" means person having 60 DB to 70 DB hearing loss in speech frequencies in both ears.

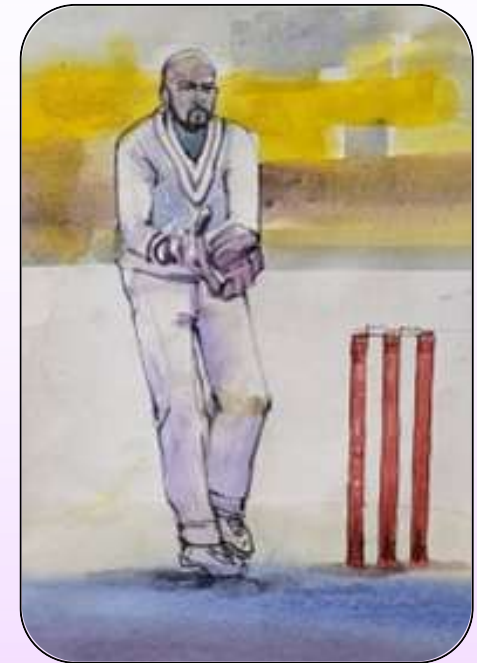
- RPWD Act, 2016

Hearing impairment includes individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. It may be present from birth or acquired later in life due to illness, genetics, injury, or other medical conditions. Some individuals have no functional hearing, while others may hear partially but with limited clarity even with hearing aids. Deafness is not a lack of intelligence or capability. It is a difference in communication.

Sign Languages - such as Indian Sign Language (ISL), American Sign Language (ASL) or British Sign Language (BSL) are complete and rich languages with its own grammar and structure. Many Deaf individuals also use lip reading, written communication, captions, or assistive devices. However, the true barrier often lies not in hearing loss but in society's expectation that Deaf people must always adapt.

Hearing impairment can also impact access to education, emergency information, healthcare communication, and workplace participation when interpretation or captioning is not provided. Early exposure to language, spoken or signed, is crucial for a child's development. With inclusive systems and accessible communication, Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals thrive academically, professionally, and socially.

Inclusion means shared responsibility. It means learning to communicate halfway. It means replacing pity with empathy.



Former Indian wicketkeeper **Syed Kirmani** suffered a fractured jaw and hearing loss after being hit by a fast ball during practice. He later observed that hearing loss remains a social stigma, often leading to rejection and embarrassment for those affected.

Askari Abbas: Designing his own Future

Askari Abbas became Deaf after a childhood illness and, due to lack of awareness and support, remained out of school for 15 years. Isolation, bullying, and communication barriers kept him disconnected from formal education and the larger world.

After his father's passing, a deep sense of responsibility reshaped his life. At 16, he joined the Oral School for Deaf Children in Kolkata, where he began learning English grammar, strengthening lip-reading skills, and embracing Sign Language with confidence. He completed his Class 10 and 12 through NIOS, pursued a B.Sc. in Animation and Graphic Design, and today works as a designer at PwC. Alongside his corporate career, he also models part-time - quietly redefining what Deaf professionals can achieve.

Askari chooses not to wear a hearing aid, valuing comfort and identity over societal expectation. His message is powerful: if Deaf individuals are expected to adapt, why shouldn't society learn Sign Language too?

For him, the difference between pity and empathy is clear: pity excludes, empathy includes.

His language is Sign Language. His confidence speaks louder than sound.

At the Purple Fair, we celebrate stories like Askari's that teach us to listen with our eyes and understand with our hearts.



Askari

A Purple Reflection

Hearing impairment is not an inability to communicate - it is an invitation to communicate differently. True inclusion begins when we value alternative communication methods like Sign Language, respect identity, and create spaces for all to participate.

Watch Askari's film here:



5. Locomotor Disability

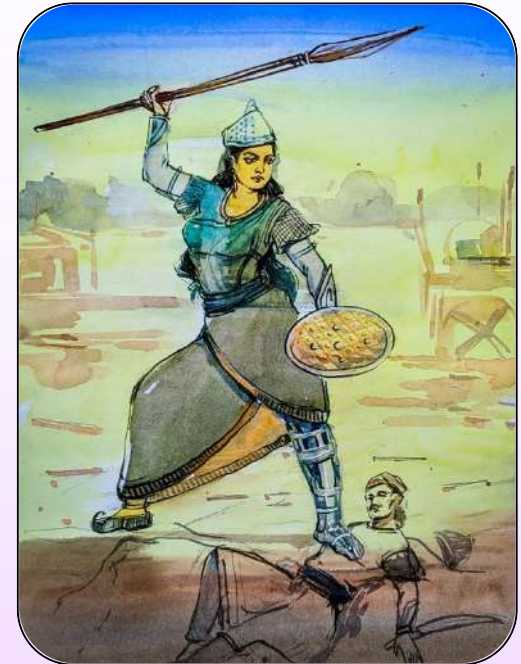
A person's inability to execute distinctive activities associated with movement of self and objects resulting from affliction of musculoskeletal or nervous system or both.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Locomotor disability refers to a condition that affects a person's movement of the limbs, joints, spine, or muscles due to congenital conditions, illness, neurological disorders, or accidents. It may involve the loss of a limb, muscle weakness, paralysis, joint stiffness, or reduced mobility that impacts daily activities.

Some individuals are born with locomotor disabilities; others acquire them later in life due to injury, infection, or trauma. Conditions such as cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, amputation, muscular conditions, or post-accident impairments may fall under this category. Challenges often arise not from the body alone, but from inaccessible environments like stairs without ramps, uneven roads, narrow doorways, lack of elevators, or non-adaptive workspaces. When infrastructure is inclusive, participation becomes seamless.

Assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, calipers, walkers, or artificial limbs may support mobility and independence. Rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and adaptive skills training also play a vital role in enhancing functional ability. Independence is not defined by whether someone uses a device it is defined by how they adapt, rebuild, and reclaim agency over their lives. Disability is physical. Incapacity is a perception.



Vishpala, daughter of King Khela, is mentioned in the Rigveda as a warrior who lost her leg in the Battle of the Ten Kings. Fitted with an iron prosthetic by the Ashwini Kumars, she returned to the battlefield on horseback and led her army to victory- a timeless symbol of resilience.

Happy: Becoming More Than the Loss

At the age of ten, Happy lost both his arms in an electrical accident. For three years, he stayed confined within the walls of his home shielded not just by circumstance, but by silence.

Then came a turning point. Watching a child walk to school awakened a desire within him. He chose to step outside, re-enrolled in school, and made a decision that would define his journey: his disability would not become his weakness.

He passed Class 8, 10, and 12. He went on to complete his M.A. and B.Ed. Today, Happy serves as a Deputy Officer at Lovely Professional University.

Many advised him to use artificial limbs. But Happy chose a different path modifying himself, adapting his methods, and building independence on his own terms. He does not rely on support for daily tasks. He lives fully, confidently, and without apology.

In his own poetic reflection, he questions destiny itself:
“Don’t they attain their destinies, who do not have hands?”
His life answers that question.



Happy

A Purple Reflection

Locomotor disability may change the body but it does not diminish ambition, intelligence, or dignity. When individuals discard the label of limitation from their minds, they redefine possibility.

Watch Happy’s film here:



**At the Purple Fair, we celebrate journeys like Happy’s stories that remind us:
Strength is not in the limbs we have, but in the will we carry.**

6. Dwarfism

"Dwarfism" means a medical or genetic condition resulting in an adult height of 4 feet 10 inches (147 centimeters) or less;

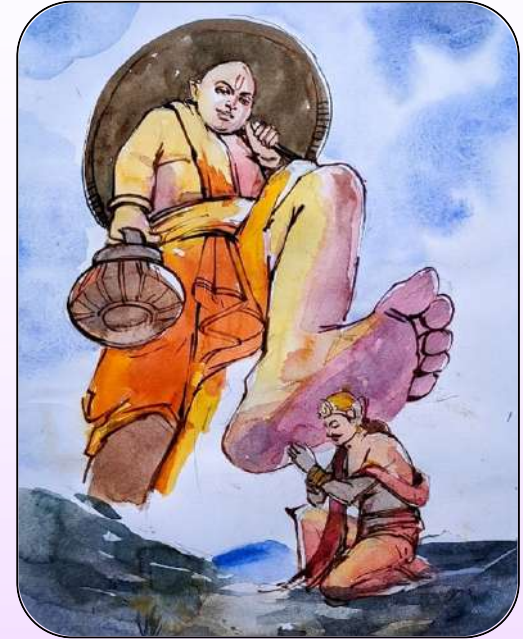
- RPWD Act, 2016

Dwarfism is a genetic condition characterized by short stature. The most common type is Achondroplasia, accounting for nearly 70% of all cases. In India, it occurs in approximately 1 in 10,000 births, and globally about 1 in 25,000.

Dwarfism is not determined by the height of parents. A child with dwarfism can be born to average-sized parents, and parents with dwarfism may have average-sized children. It is a natural genetic variation.

Physically, individuals with achondroplasia usually have shorter limbs while the upper body remains proportionate. The real difficulties often arise not from the condition itself, but from an environment designed without considering height diversity. Chairs without foot support, high bus steps, elevated counters, and inaccessible public infrastructure create unnecessary discomfort. Thoughtful design such as footrests, lower platforms, and inclusive seating can significantly enhance comfort and independence.

Yet, beyond physical barriers, the deeper challenge is societal perception.



Vamana, the fifth incarnation of Vishnu, is known for reclaiming the three worlds from King Mahabali, the grandson of Prahlada, who ruled in Kerala. According to legend, Mahabali visits his kingdom once a year during Onam, while Vishnu guards it in Patal Lok as promised.

Disha Pandya : Redefining her Narrative

Disha's journey is not merely about living with dwarfism - it is about redefining it.

Growing up, she faced laughter and stares in public spaces. But she held close her father's words: "The attitudes and mindsets of the public are your biggest disability. If you believe in yourself, you rise." Those words became her compass.

In 2018, after meeting para-athlete Mark Dharmai, she co-founded The Little People of India, a community that has grown from seven to over 400 members, creating support and advocacy platforms across the country.

Through public engagement and awareness, they show a powerful truth: limitations do not cancel potential. Disha calls for both structural inclusion, simple changes like footrests and accessible seating and a deeper shift in mindset.

Her message is clear:

It is not height that limits a person - it is judgement.

**At the Purple Fair, we reflect on this truth:
Equality is not selective. Inclusion is not optional.
And respect should never depend on stature.**



Disha

A Purple Reflection

Disha's story is about overcoming perception. In a world striving for equality, inclusion is not an act of charity - it is an act of understanding.

Watch Disha's film here:



7. Intellectual Disability

"Intellectual Disability", a condition characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior which covers a range of every day, social and practical skills.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Intellectual Disability is a developmental condition characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour, which includes conceptual, social, and practical skills. It originates during the developmental period and varies in degree from person to person.

Individuals with intellectual disability may take longer to learn, process information, or make decisions. With the right support systems family encouragement, inclusive education, structured workplaces, and patient mentorship they can lead independent, productive, and meaningful lives.

The greatest barrier is not ability. It is expectation.

When society focuses on strengths rather than deficits, individuals with intellectual disability thrive in workplaces, manage responsibilities, and contribute with dedication and sincerity.

Inclusion is not about simplifying tasks. It is about creating opportunity with dignity.



Kalidasa, believed to have lived in the 4th–5th century AD in present-day Madhya Pradesh, is regarded as one of ancient India's greatest Sanskrit playwrights and poets. Legends suggest he once faced intellectual challenges before rising to brilliance. His major works include *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, *Kumarasambhavam*, *Raghuvamsha*, *Meghaduta*, and *Vikramorvashiyam*.

Karishma Kannan: A Life Painted with Determination

Karishma Kannan is a vibrant and multi-talented individual with Down syndrome, a condition that falls under Intellectual Disability. Her life unfolds in colour, movement, and conviction—through art, dance, modelling, and advocacy.

An artist at heart, she paints expressive acrylic canvases landscapes, symbols, and emotions brought alive through instinctive strokes and bold colour. Her art flows from feeling rather than rules.

Karishma is also a confident self-advocate. She has spoken at the United Nations in Geneva on World Down Syndrome Day alongside her sister Kajol. She walks fashion ramps, dances with joy, and runs her own studio where she teaches yoga, Zumba, and movement.

She acknowledges that reading and writing take time but perseverance is her strength. Supported by her close-knit family, she continues to grow, dream, and contribute.

Her message is simple and universal:

“Leave no one behind. All are equal. Believe in yourself. I can. You can. We all can.”

At the Purple Fair, we honour journeys like Karishma’s where art becomes voice and confidence becomes advocacy. Because when we believe, “I can. You can. We all can,” no one is left behind.



Karishma

A Purple Reflection

Down syndrome may influence the pace of learning but it never limits talent, creativity, or courage. With acceptance and opportunity, individuals flourish in their own powerful ways.

Watch Karishma’s film here:



8. Mental Illness

"Mental Illness" means a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs judgement, behaviour, capacity to recognize reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life, but does not include retardation which is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person, specially characterized by subnormality of intelligence.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Mental illness can affect anyone - just like physical illness. Conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety may arise at any stage of life and require understanding, support, and sometimes therapy or medication. Yet, unlike visible illnesses, mental health struggles are often hidden.

Stigma keeps families silent, and many suffer quietly for fear of judgement. Post-pandemic, the World Health Organization has called mental health concerns a "shadow pandemic," underscoring the urgent need for accessible care.

In India, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 recognizes psycho-social disability, and the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 guarantees the right to treatment and decriminalizes suicide affirming that distress calls for care, not punishment.

Mental illness is not weakness. Seeking help is strength.



"The hospital (Asylum) 1063–1069 AD, named Veera Cholesvara Hospital 15 beds it functioned in the Thirumukkudal temple at TamilNadu. Apart from medication and surgery, gardening, pottery, taking care of cows etc., were recommended for the patients."

Shampa & Suchetana Sengupta: Voices of Compassion

Shampa Sengupta, a disability activist living with psycho-social disability, speaks boldly about a truth many hesitate to acknowledge that mental illness deserves the same legitimacy as any physical condition. She believes treatment should be a personal choice -therapy, counselling, medication, or a combination but always rooted in access and dignity. For Shampa, advocacy is not theory; it is lived experience.

Alongside her is her daughter, Suchetana, who serves on a 24/7 crisis helpline. She supports individuals navigating trauma, loss, heartbreak, unemployment, and overwhelming distress sometimes immediately after a crisis, sometimes weeks later when emotions resurface.

The helpline offers three pillars: a compassionate, non-judgmental space; guidance to understand emotional experiences; and direction toward professional support. Calls come from across age groups and professions is a proof that mental health concerns spare no one.

Recently, after an hour long conversation with a man experiencing intense suicidal thoughts, he said, “I don’t want to die right now.” Sometimes, survival begins with being heard. Together, Shampa and Suchetana remind us: empathy can save lives.



Shampa

A Purple Reflection

Mental illness does not diminish a person’s worth. It asks for understanding, patience, and systems that support rather than silence. When society replaces stigma with solidarity, healing becomes possible.

Watch Shampa’s film here:



At the Purple Fair, we honour stories that speak bravely about mental health - because compassion is the most powerful intervention of all.

9. Autism Spectrum Disorder

"Autism Spectrum Disorder" means a neuro-developmental condition typically appearing in the first three years of life that significantly affects a person's ability to communicate. Understand relationships and relate to others and is frequently associated with unusual or stereotypical rituals or behaviours.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects communication, social interaction, and behaviour. It is called a spectrum because it presents differently in every individual each person has unique strengths, sensitivities, and ways of experiencing the world.

Autism is not a disease to be cured. It is a lifelong condition, often genetic in origin, that shapes how a person perceives, processes, and responds to their surroundings.

Some individuals may communicate differently, have deep interests in specific subjects, or experience heightened sensitivity to sounds, textures, or light. With understanding, structured support, and inclusive environments, individuals on the spectrum can thrive creatively, academically, and socially.

Autism is not absence. It is difference. And difference carries its own brilliance.



Varadaraja, a 17th-century Sanskrit grammarian, is believed to have had autistic features and struggled socially in his early years. Despite being bullied, he returned to his studies with renewed determination and later simplified Panini's 3,959 grammar rules into 723 concise rules.

Binayak Ruku: A World Painted in Words

“Namashkar, I am Binayak Ruku.
I love to write. I love to paint.
I love the sounds that crickets make.
And I want to be like everybody else.”

Binayak Ruku sees the world in colour, rhythm, and metaphor. The night sky becomes a plate of sweets; the galaxy transforms into Chhanaar Payesh. Where others see stars, he sees stories.

His books, Binayak Ruku’s Diary and Ruku’s Galaxy, reflect a mind alive with imagination where science is not confined to textbooks but discovered by gazing at the sky. His poetry is playful yet profound, translating constellations into familiar joys.

His mother, Suman, gently reminds us: Ruku is different - but not less. As a parent, her hope is simple that he lives independently, with dignity, among everyone else. Awareness, she believes, is the bridge between isolation and belonging.

Ruku wants to mingle. He wants to write and draw. He dreams of becoming “a doctor for crickets.” In his world, imagination has no limits.

At the Purple Fair, we celebrate stories like Binayak’s where every color, every word, and every heartbeat reminds us: The spectrum is not a boundary. It is a canvas.



Binayak

A Purple Reflection

Autism teaches us that there is no single way to think, feel, or express. Every individual on the spectrum carries a universe within them sometimes quiet, sometimes vibrant, always meaningful.

Watch Binayak’s film here:



10. Cerebral Palsy

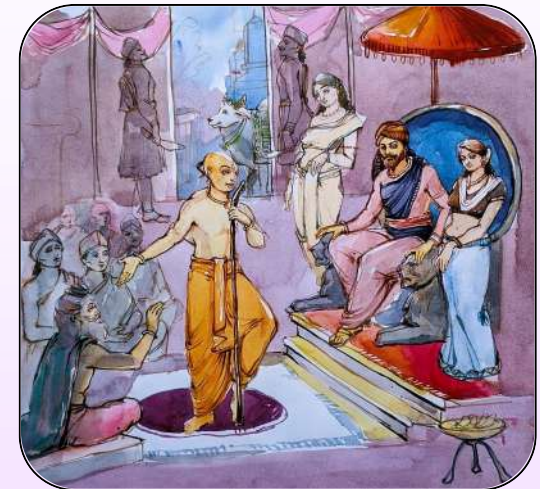
"Cerebral Palsy" means a Group of non-progressive neurological condition affecting body movement and muscle coordination, caused by damage to one or more specific areas of the brain, usually occurring before, during or shortly after birth.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a neurological condition caused by damage to the developing brain, usually occurring before, during, or shortly after birth. It affects movement, posture, coordination, and sometimes speech, vision, hearing, or cognition. Cerebral palsy is not a disease and it is not progressive, but its presentation varies widely from person to person.

Cerebral palsy exists on a broad spectrum. Some individuals walk independently, while others use wheelchairs. Some communicate through speech, while others rely on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Some require lifelong support; others live independently, work, parent, and lead organizations.

Early intervention, therapy, and assistive technology can significantly enhance mobility and independence. Environmental accessibility and inclusive education play a crucial role in participation. With the right support systems, individuals with CP can pursue education, careers, sports, and the arts. The real barriers are often architectural and attitudinal not physical. Inclusion begins when we focus on ability, not assumption.



When **Ashtavakra** entered King Janaka's court, people laughed at his distorted body and gait. He responded that he had expected seekers of truth, but instead found those judging by appearance. Realizing his wisdom, King Janaka became the disciple of the young boy with cerebral palsy.

Jeeja Ghosh: Finding Voice, Claiming Space

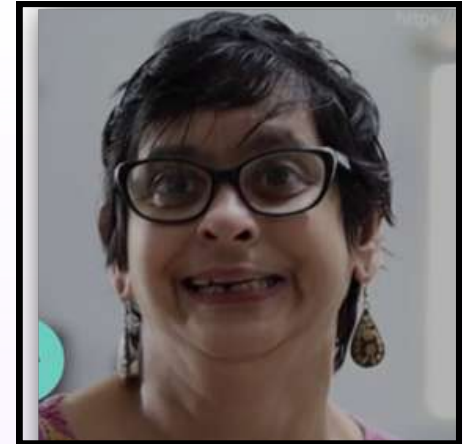
“I am Jeeja Ghosh, and I am a person with cerebral palsy.”

Jeeja’s journey has been one of navigating spaces shaped more by barriers than by disability. Born in Kolkata and educated at La Martiniere, she moved from a special school to a mainstream one where infrastructure was limited classrooms on upper floors, long distances, no accessibility. What made the difference was people. Her teachers and peers fostered a culture of inclusion that protected her from discrimination within school walls.

Speech remained a challenge. Early on, people struggled to understand her. Today, as a professional and trainer with Enable India, she begins sessions with clarity: “If you don’t understand me, stop me and ask.” In that invitation lies inclusion.

Jeeja explains cerebral palsy as a spectrum diverse, varied, and deeply individual. She is a professional, a mother, and an advocate who has faced mockery outside institutional spaces but chose not to withdraw.

Her life reminds us: disability is not the barrier exclusion is.



Jeeja

A Purple Reflection

In Jeeja Ghosh’s journey, we learn that inclusion is not charity, sympathy, or tolerance. It is listening, adapting, and believing.

Watch Jeeja’s film here:



**Purple Fair honours voices that speak differently
but speak truth.**

11. Muscular Dystrophy

“Muscular Dystrophy” means a group of hereditary genetic muscle disease that weakens the muscles that move the human body and persons with multiple dystrophy have incorrect and missing information in their genes, which prevents them from making the proteins they need for healthy muscles. It is characterised by progressive skeletal muscle weakness, defects in muscle proteins, and the death of muscle cells and tissue;

- RPWD Act, 2026

Muscular Dystrophy (MD) is a group of genetic conditions caused by the absence or deficiency of essential proteins needed for healthy muscle function. Over time, voluntary muscles become weaker, affecting movement, mobility, and sometimes respiratory strength.

Individuals with Muscular Dystrophy may use wheelchairs, oxygen support, or other assistive devices. While the condition affects the body progressively, it does not diminish ambition, intelligence, or aspiration.

In countries where accessibility is inconsistent, physical barriers often become the greatest challenge stairs without ramps, narrow entrances, limited lifts. Yet when environments are inclusive, participation becomes natural.

Muscular Dystrophy is not a limitation of dreams.
It is a different rhythm of movement.



The Bhagavata Purana narrates that Krishna and Balarama met **Kubja (Trivakra)**, a maid servant of King Kamsa who was physically bent and struggled with movement. Touched by Krishna's grace, she offered him sandalwood paste. Krishna then gently lifted her chin and pressed her feet, straightening her body.

Maitri Shah: Powered by Purpose

Maitri describes her condition as a protein deficiency that weakens her voluntary muscles, requiring the use of a wheelchair. At times, recovery from illness has meant oxygen support. She admits it is “not an easy ride,” especially in a country where accessibility is not guaranteed. Yet psychologically, she refuses to be defined by it.

She studied in a regular school and later pursued engineering, supported by teachers and friends who encouraged her to participate fully even in sports. A chess player with multiple trophies, she also paints, attends music concerts, and embraces life with enthusiasm.

Today, alongside her friend Suvam, she co-founded Mind Assets, a venture focused on creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities based on merit. Her vision is ambitious - using technology to generate thousands of jobs.

For Maitri, challenges are universal. Some journeys take more steps than others but progress is always possible. With support, courage, and the willingness to seek solutions, she believes barriers can be redefined or simply removed.



Maitri

A Purple Reflection

Muscular Dystrophy may weaken muscles but it strengthens resolve. When accessibility meets ambition, possibility expands.

Watch Maitri's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we celebrate journeys like Maitri's where determination rolls forward, and no barrier is final.

12. Chronic Neurological Conditions

Chronic neurological conditions are defined as long-term, often incurable, disorders originating in the nervous system that cause, or are marked by, frequent recurrence.

Chronic neurological conditions such as Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) and Fibromyalgia affect how the brain perceives pain. Often triggered by injury or illness, these conditions alter the nervous system's response, making even mild touch, light, sound, or movement intensely painful.

CRPS may begin after something as simple as a fall. What appears minor externally can evolve into severe, persistent pain, swelling, sensitivity, mobility challenges, fatigue, and cognitive difficulties such as "brain fog." Fibromyalgia similarly involves widespread pain, heightened sensitivity, and exhaustion.

These are largely invisible disabilities. Medical scans may show little. Blood tests may appear normal. Yet the pain is real. There is currently no definitive cure but symptoms can be managed through a combination of physiotherapy, psychotherapy, occupational therapy, medication, lifestyle adaptation, and supportive care.

Living with chronic neurological conditions requires pacing, planning, and profound self-awareness. It is not about giving up it is about learning a new way to move through life.



In Indian mythology, the **Moon (Chandra)** married Prajapati's 27 daughters but favored only Rohini. Proud of his beauty, he ignored advice to treat them equally. Angered, Prajapati cursed him to lose his radiance.

Seeking refuge at the Somnath temple, Chandra prayed to Lord Shiva. Though the curse could not be removed, Shiva transformed it allowing the Moon to wane and then regain his light.

The waxing and waning of the Moon thus symbolizes cycles of decline and renewal much like the fluctuating nature of chronic conditions.

Manju Sharma: Adapting with Strength

Manju once worked as an air hostess active, independent, always on the move. A simple fall inside an aircraft changed everything. What began as swelling and pain soon intensified. Light overwhelmed her, touch caused discomfort, sounds felt intrusive, and fatigue blurred memory and speech. After years of uncertainty, she was diagnosed with CRPS and Fibromyalgia an invisible disability acquired at thirty.

The journey was not only medical, but emotional. She lost her job and had to relearn mobility, balance, and even speech during episodes of brain fog. Over time, she adapted choosing softer fabrics, using sunglasses and noise cancelling headphones, relying on cushions and a motorized wheelchair when fatigue peaks.

Beside her is her sister Anju, who is Deaf their bond reflecting strength across visible and invisible disabilities.

Today, Manju speaks of balance: pacing herself, planning her days, and finding joy in music, cooking, reading, and quiet creativity. She says she is “living with it” not defeated, not diminished, but adapting.



Manju

A Purple Reflection

Chronic neurological conditions remind us that not all disabilities are visible. Pain does not need proof to be real. Inclusion means believing, supporting, and accommodating even when symptoms are hidden or non-apparent.

Watch Manju's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we honour stories like Manju's stories that teach us: Strength is not always loud. Sometimes, it is the courage to rise each day & begin again.

13. Specific Learning Disabilities

“Specific Learning Disabilities” means a heterogeneous group of conditions wherein there is a deficit in processing language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself as a difficulty to comprehend, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations and includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and developmental aphasia.

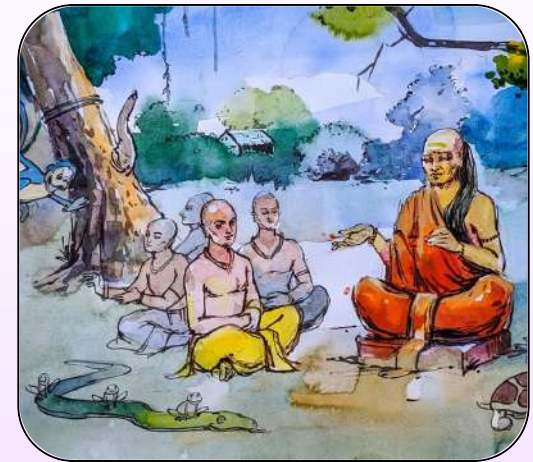
- RPWD Act, 2016

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) are neurodevelopmental conditions that affect how a person processes information related to reading, writing, spelling, or mathematics. Common types include Dyslexia (difficulty with reading), Dyscalculia (difficulty with numbers), and Dysgraphia (difficulty with writing).

A student with SLD may struggle to organize thoughts on paper, complete tasks within standard time limits, or maintain concentration in structured settings. With remedial education, extra time in exams, structured strategies, and emotional support, they can perform exceptionally well.

SLD does not reflect low intelligence it reflects a different learning style. Early identification and intervention make a significant difference in confidence and academic growth. Assistive tools like audiobooks, spell-check software, and visual organizers can enhance independence.

Encouragement from teachers and families strengthens resilience and self-belief. When learning differences are understood rather than judged, students with SLD thrive in their own unique ways.



Panini, once said to struggle with reading and spelling, defied predictions about his ability to learn. He went on to create a highly scientific and structured grammar for Sanskrit, laying the foundation for phonetics, phonology, and morphology. He is regarded as one of the greatest grammarians in history.

Asharao Doshi: Learning Beyond Labels

Asharao Doshi, a 22-year-old student at SNTD Women's University, lives with Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, and ADHD.

Diagnosed in primary school, she faced bullying and, at times, a lack of understanding from educators. Focusing on tasks was difficult. Sitting still in class felt almost impossible. Organizing thoughts into structured written answers was exhausting. But she did not give up.

Through four years of remedial education, she developed strategies to navigate her learning differences. In college, she receives accommodations such as extra time during exams. Though eligible for a writer, she often chooses to write independently owning her journey with confidence.

Her classmates and family form a strong support system. They assist when needed, without judgement. They never equate learning differences with lack of intelligence.

Asharao's message is clear: "Having a Learning Disability doesn't make a child different. They just need a little more help." And when that help is provided, they don't just cope they thrive.



Asharao

A Purple Reflection

Specific Learning Disabilities remind us that learning is not one-size-fits-all. When classrooms adapt, when teachers believe, and when peers support, barriers dissolve.

Watch Asharao's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we celebrate minds that think differently because difference is not deficiency. Sometimes, all it takes is a little more time, a support, & a lot more belief.

14. Multiple Sclerosis

“Multiple sclerosis” means an inflammatory, nervous system disease in which the myelin sheaths around the axons of nerve cells of the brain and spinal cord are damaged, leading to demyelination and affecting the ability of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord to communicate with each other.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic neurological condition that affects the central nervous system the brain and spinal cord. It occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks the protective covering of nerves, disrupting communication between the brain and the body.

MS presents differently in every individual. Symptoms may include muscle weakness, fatigue, vision disturbances, speech difficulties, mobility challenges, pain, bladder and bowel dysfunction, and temperature sensitivity. Some forms, such as Primary Progressive MS, gradually worsen over time.

MS is unpredictable. It is often invisible. And it is lifelong. There is no definitive cure yet, but treatments, rehabilitation, lifestyle adaptations, and strong support systems help individuals manage symptoms and sustain quality of life.



Bakhtiyar Khilji, a 12th-century Turkic invader, was reportedly treated for illness by Acharya Rahul Sri Bhadra of Nalanda. Later, he ordered the destruction of Nalanda University, and its great library burned for months, though some manuscripts survived in Tibet and China.

Swarnalata J: Living on Her own Terms

“I can still smile. I can still think. I can stand up for myself even though I am sitting.”

Swarna Lata J from Coimbatore lives with Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. Diagnosed in 2009, she was initially paralyzed from the neck down, with her vision and speech affected. Though she regained partial mobility, the progressive nature of MS has gradually reduced her physical independence. Today, she lives with constant pain and fatigue, relying on support for most daily activities. Yet her identity extends far beyond the diagnosis.

Swarna is a singer, short-story writer, polyglot, and winner of Mrs India Beauty Pageant South 2018. Alongside her husband, Dr. Guru Prasad, she co-founded the Swarga Foundation in 2014, working in rehabilitation, accessible travel, counselling, and inclusion.

She challenges stereotypes boldly especially the myth that persons with disabilities are asexual or without desire. Disability, she insists, does not erase femininity, beauty, or strength. A mother, advocate, and leader when Swarna sings, her voice rises stronger than any limitation.



Swarnalata J

A Purple Reflection

Multiple Sclerosis may slow the body - but it cannot silence spirit. When purpose outweighs pain, and humour coexists with hardship, resilience becomes radiant

Watch Swarnalata's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we celebrate voices like Swarna's voices that remind us:

Strength is not always in standing tall. Sometimes, it is in sitting strong and still shining.

15. Speech and Language Disability

“Speech and language disability” means a permanent disability arising out of conditions such as laryngectomy or aphasia affecting one or more components of speech and language due to organic or neurological causes.

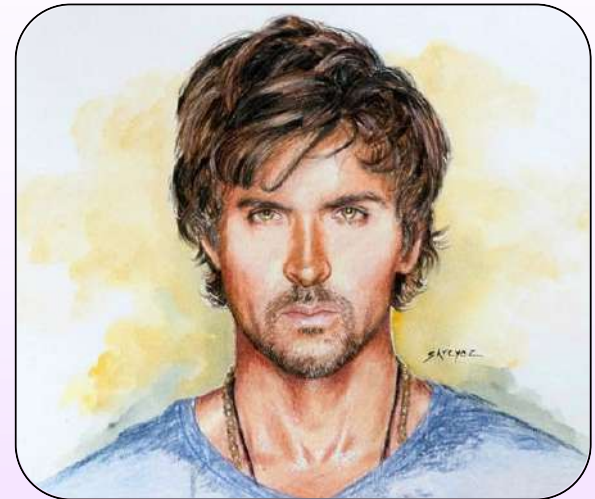
- RPWD Act, 2016

Speech and Language Disability includes a range of communication differences such as stammering (stuttering), lisping, aphasia, and other speech disorders that affect fluency, clarity, or expression.

Stammering, for instance, may involve repetitions, prolongations, or blocks while speaking. It can be influenced by neurological, psychological, or environmental factors. For many individuals, early trauma, stress, or adverse childhood experiences may intensify speech disfluency.

Communication differences are often misunderstood. A stammer is not a lack of intelligence. It is not a lack of confidence. It is a difference in rhythm.

The real challenge is not speech itself but impatience, interruption, mockery, and exclusion. Inclusive communication requires listeners to slow down, wait, and value content over fluency. Speech diversity deserves space, dignity, and acceptance.



Hrithik Roshan, now one of Bollywood's biggest stars, once struggled with stuttering as a child. Through intense practice and speech therapy, he overcame his speech disorder and built a remarkable career through determination and hard work.

Puneet Singhal : From Barriers to Enterprise

Puneet from Delhi lives with a speech and language disability - he stammers.

His childhood was shaped by domestic violence, emotional distress, and bullying, which made him withdrawn and hesitant to speak in public. In a corporate banking job, when he once asked to host a team meeting, he was told there wasn't "enough time" for him. That moment became his turning point. He founded Ssstart with three 'S's reflecting how someone who stammers might say "start." It symbolizes not hesitation, but a new beginning.

Through workshops in schools, colleges, and workplaces, Ssstart promotes acceptance of diverse communication styles. Puneet's message is clear: stammering is not a deficiency, but a difference. His mantra, "Haklao Magar Pyaar Se" (Stammer, but with love), encourages people to embrace their voice with humour and confidence.

Today, he stands on stages and speak with pauses, with repetitions, but always with purpose. He once decided the world would listen. Now, it does

At the Purple Fair, we celebrate voices like Puneet's voices that remind us:

It's not about how smoothly we speak. It's about what we have the courage to say.



Puneet

A Purple Reflection

Speech does not have to be fluent to be powerful. When we learn to listen with patience and respond with respect, communication becomes truly inclusive.

Watch Puneet's film here:



16. Thalassemia

"Thalassemia" means a group of inherited disorder characterized by reduced or absent amounts of hemoglobin.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Thalassemia is a genetic blood disorder in which the body cannot produce adequate or healthy haemoglobin. In severe forms, such as Thalassemia Major, individuals are unable to generate sufficient blood on their own and depend on regular blood transfusions to survive.

Without timely transfusions, the body becomes weak, pale, and unable to function. For many, transfusions are required every two to four weeks. However, transfusion is only one part of the journey.

Repeated transfusions lead to iron overload in the body. While iron supplements are beneficial for most people, excess iron becomes toxic for someone with Thalassemia. To prevent organ damage, patients undergo iron chelation therapy often involving long, slow infusions overnight through a pump.

Thalassemia is not contagious. It is inherited. India has one of the highest numbers of carriers globally, making awareness and premarital screening crucial. Early testing can prevent future complications and reduce new cases through informed family planning. Blood donation plays a lifesaving role. For individuals with Thalassemia, donated blood is not charity it is survival.



Thalassemia is a group of diseases that affects the body's capacity to produce red blood cells and hemoglobin. Popular faces like **Amitabh Bachchan** and **Jacky Shroff** are thalassemic

Imran Mohammed: Purpose in Every Beat

Imran is 37 years old and lives with Thalassemia Major.

Born seemingly healthy, he began falling ill within months. Pale, weak, and constantly unwell, his family searched from doctor to doctor before receiving a diagnosis at a time when awareness was limited. Today, every fifteen days, he goes for a blood transfusion. Without it, his body would gradually shut down basic activities like walking, brushing his teeth, or even standing would become impossible. But transfusion comes with its own cost.

Iron accumulates in his body, requiring nightly chelation therapy. From 10 p.m. to morning, an infusion pump slowly administers medication as he sleeps an invisible battle fought in silence. And yet, Imran chooses rhythm over despair.

He raps. He jokes. He speaks openly about pain without turning it into tragedy. His life is not a tearjerker it is a routine built on resilience. He urges two things: Get screened for Thalassemia. Donate blood regularly. Because somewhere, someone like him is waiting for that unit of blood to live another fifteen days. Life, for Imran, is a mix tape some tracks heavy, some loud, but always playing.



Imran

A Purple Reflection

Thalassemia teaches us that survival is often collective. When one person donates, another lives. And when families screens, generations are protected.

Watch Imran's film here:



At the Purple Fair, we honor stories like Imran's stories that remind us: Sometimes, the beat that keeps life going is someone else's heartbeat.

17. Hemophilia

"Hemophilia" means an inheritable disease, usually affecting only male but transmitted by women to their male children, characterized by loss or impairment of the normal clotting ability of blood so that a minor wound may result in fatal bleeding.

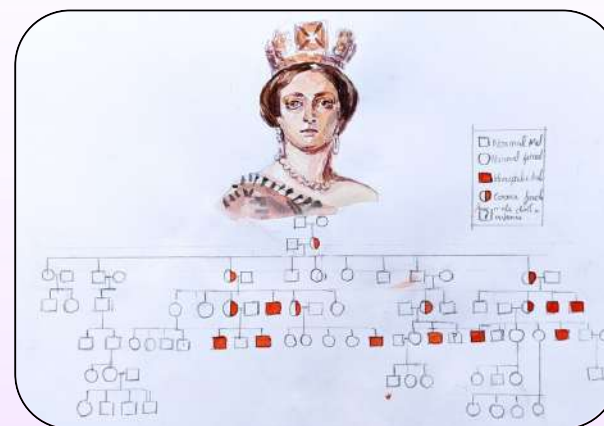
- RPWD Act, 2016

Hemophilia is a genetic blood disorder in which the blood does not clot properly due to the absence of specific clotting proteins called "factors." In Hemophilia A, Factor VIII is deficient; in Hemophilia B, Factor IX is deficient.

When a person with hemophilia experiences injury sometimes even without visible trauma - bleeding may continue for a prolonged period. Internal bleeding, especially into joints such as elbows, knees, and ankles, is common and can lead to severe pain and longterm joint damage. Hemophilia is not contagious. It is inherited.

In India, approximately 1 in 5,000 individuals are affected by Hemophilia A, and about 1 in 20,000 by Hemophilia B. Treatment involves replacing the missing clotting factor through infusions. These factors may be plasma derived or recombinant. In many government centres, access to factors has improved, though awareness and availability still vary.

Hemophilia is manageable. But unpredictability defines it.



Hemophilia figured prominently in the history of European royalty in the 19th and 20th centuries, **Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert**, of the United Kingdom, The presence of hemophilia B within the European royal families was well-known, with the condition once popularly known as 'the royal disease'. The sex-linked X chromosome bleeding disorder manifests almost exclusively in males

Chetan Motiwaras: With Steady Perseverance

Chetan works as an editor a profession that demands precision and long hours. But hemophilia does not follow deadlines.

During a crucial project, his elbow began bleeding internally. He worked late to finish the task, yet missed a 9 a.m. presentation the next day. The question came quickly: “You were fine yesterday what happened today?” That moment highlighted the lack of awareness.

Living with Hemophilia A (Factor VIII deficiency), Chetan depends on clotting factor infusions from specialized centres like K.E.M. Hospital essential for survival, much like insulin for diabetes.

His childhood meant missed school days, swollen joints during exams, and avoiding outings out of fear. Even employment brought hesitation from employers who assumed unpredictability meant unreliability.

Hemophilia affects more than the body it affects opportunity. Yet Chetan continues with resilience, advocating awareness, early diagnosis, and understanding.

Life may be unpredictable but courage is constant.

At the Purple Fair, we honour stories like Chetan’s stories that remind us:

Awareness is the first step toward acceptance. And acceptance makes room for ability.



Chetan

A Purple Reflection

Hemophilia teaches us that not all bleeding is visible and not all strength is loud. Inclusion means understanding that some lives operate on a different rhythm, one shaped by medical necessity and quiet endurance.

Watch Chetan’s film here:



18. Sickle Cell Disease

“Sickle Cell Disease” means a hemolytic disorder characterized by chronic anemia, painful events, and various complications due to associated tissue and organ damage; "hemolytic" refers to the destruction of the cell membrane of red blood cells resulting in the release of hemoglobin.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a hereditary blood disorder in which red blood cells become sickle shaped, blocking small blood vessels and reducing oxygen flow. This can cause severe pain, infections, fatigue, anemia, and longterm organ damage.

There are two categories:

- Sickle Cell Carrier (SCC): One affected gene, usually mild or no symptoms.
- Sickle Cell Disease (SCD): Two affected genes, leading to significant health complications.

SCD is genetic, not contagious. Common symptoms include yellowing of the eyes, recurrent fever, chronic anemia, and painful crises. Complications may include bone damage, enlarged spleen, gallstones, and the need for blood transfusions.

Though not easily curable, SCD is manageable with medication like hydroxyurea, regular monitoring, and lifestyle care. Early screening and genetic testing especially before marriage are vital to reducing transmission. India has launched a national mission to eliminate SCD by 2047 through large scale screening and awareness. Often invisible, Sickle Cell Disease carries a profound impact.



Sickle cell disease is a genetic disorder affecting hemoglobin in red blood cells. It is more common in **India's tribal populations**, where the sickle cell trait offers some protection against severe malaria, helping the gene persist in the population.

Lalit Kishor Pargi : Living Beyond the Pain

For 34 years, Lalit has lived with Sickle Cell Disease. He was diagnosed late - at the age of 16 after years of unexplained illness and pain. Before awareness was widespread, doctors struggled to identify the cause. In Class 12, when his haemoglobin dropped dangerously low and he became unconscious, he was finally diagnosed at Apollo Hospital.

From 2005 to 2011, he endured frequent pain crises and blood transfusions. Over time, complications developed a vascular necrosis in his hips and shoulder, gallbladder stones, and chronic fatigue. A hip replacement lies ahead. Yet Lalit chooses resilience over resignation. He continues to travel, manages his medication carefully, and advocates strongly for screening before marriage. Before his own marriage, he ensured his wife was tested determined to prevent hereditary transmission to the next generation.

“This is manageable,” he says. “We can live well with it.” Though he has stopped playing cricket to protect his enlarged spleen, he has not stopped living fully. He understands his limits and adapts. His message is clear: Know your genotype. Get tested. Spread awareness, not the disease.



Lalit

A Purple Reflection

Sickle Cell Disease reminds us that some battles are carried quietly within the bloodstream. Awareness, testing, and responsible choices protect future generations

Watch Lalit's film here:



**At the Purple Fair, we honour stories like Lalit's stories that show:
Strength is not the absence of pain. It is the courage to live well despite it.**

19. Multiple Disabilities

“Multiple Disabilities” (more than one of the above specified disabilities) including deaf blindness which means a condition in which a person may have combination of hearing and visual impairments causing severe communication, developmental, and educational problems.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Multiple Disabilities refer to the coexistence of two or more disabilities in an individual, which together create unique and complex support needs. This may include combinations such as visual impairment with intellectual disability, hearing impairment with visual impairment (deaf-blindness), or other developmental and physical conditions.

Each individual with multiple disabilities experiences the world differently. Communication, mobility, sensory processing, and learning may require highly individualized approaches. Education systems, therapies, and family support play a crucial role in unlocking potential.

The focus is not on limitation but on layered strength.

When given the right environment, adaptive teaching methods, and patient encouragement, individuals with multiple disabilities can flourish in extraordinary ways.



Irattai Pulavar, meaning “**The Twin Poets**,” were 14th-century brothers from Chola Nadu, one blind and the other lame. Supporting each other physically and creatively, the blind brother carried the lame one, while together they composed poetry extempore, completing each other’s verses. Accompanied by the melody of the Yazh, they created numerous tanippatala and composed Ekambaranatharula in praise of the Saiva shrine at Kanchi.

Ritvik Rajan: A World Tuned to Music

Ritvik Rajan was born with total visual impairment. As his parents say, he was “born with music.” At just one and a half years old before fully developing speech he began singing Bollywood songs with remarkable accuracy. Alongside visual impairment, he also faced developmental challenges, and formal schooling options were limited, leading to years of homeschooling.

Music became his bridge to the world. His mother developed innovative ways to teach him recording lessons blended with melodies he loved and guiding him patiently through structured practice. Formal training began at age ten. Ritvik went on to complete Visharad in Hindustani Classical Music with distinction, earn certifications from Trinity College of London, and receive prestigious awards.

Today, with over 3,000 stage performances in India and abroad, Ritvik is both performer and teacher, mentoring students through online and offline classes. When asked if he has a soothing voice, he smiles: “Yes, I have dynamics.”

Music is his language. His independence. His boundless world.

**At the Purple Fair, we celebrate stories like Ritvik’s stories that remind us:
Even without sight, one can make the world listen.**



Ritvik

A Purple Reflection

Multiple disabilities may present layered challenges but they also reveal layered resilience. When families believe, when systems adapt, and when passion is nurtured, barriers dissolve into possibility.

Watch Ritvik’s film here:



20. Acid Attack Victims

"Acid Attack Victims" means a person disfigured due to violent assaults by throwing of acid or similar corrosive substance.

- RPWD Act, 2016

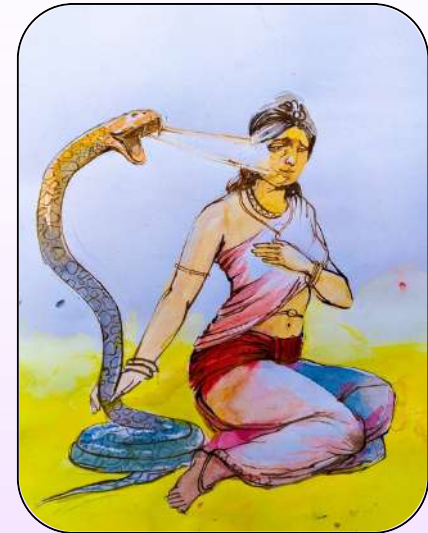
An acid attack is a violent crime in which corrosive acid is deliberately thrown most often on women and young girls with the intent to disfigure, punish, or control. In many cases, it follows rejection of marriage or romantic proposals.

The damage is immediate and severe. Acid burns are fourth degree burns, penetrating deep into skin and tissue. The face, neck, chest, and hands are most commonly affected. Without immediate first aid, injuries can be life threatening.

Acid attack is now recognized under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 as a specified disability in India. Following a landmark Supreme Court judgment in 2013, the sale of acid was directed to be regulated, and survivors were entitled to compensation and medical support.

Yet, beyond law, survivors continue to battle reconstructive surgeries, prolonged legal fights, social stigma, and economic exclusion.

This is one disability that is entirely preventable. It is not fate. It is violence



This image symbolically represents an acid attack, using the **venomous snake as a metaphor**. Driven by hatred and anger, such attacks disfigure women and cause lifelong physical and psychological trauma. It highlights a grave social evil and the permanent disability faced by acid attack survivors.

Pragya Prasun: From Survivor to Changemaker

Pragya's life changed twelve days after her wedding. While travelling by train at 2 a.m., a man whose proposal she had rejected threw acid on her as she slept. She spent seventeen days on a ventilator and over three months in a government hospital, undergoing multiple grafting surgeries and losing vision in one eye. In 2006, when she searched for guidance, there was almost no information available. But survival gave her purpose.

In 2013, she founded the Atijeevan Foundation, supporting survivors with medical guidance, access to reconstructive surgeries, counselling, and rehabilitation. She later launched a social enterprise to train survivors in sewing and handicrafts restoring financial independence and dignity.

Pragya also advocates for skin donation, highlighting how one donor can save up to three lives. When her online KYC was rejected because she could not blink one eye, she pushed for more inclusive biometric norms. Today, she is an activist, wife, and mother of two her humour intact, her spirit unwavering.

Acid changed her appearance. It did not define her identity.

At the Purple Fair, we honour stories like Pragya's stories that remind us:

Scars may change the skin, but they cannot erase strength.



Pragya

A Purple Reflection

Acid attacks are accidents and acts of deliberate control and revenge. Prevention lies in regulation, education, and raising children to respect rejection and gender dignity.

Watch Pragya's film here:



21. Parkinson's Disease

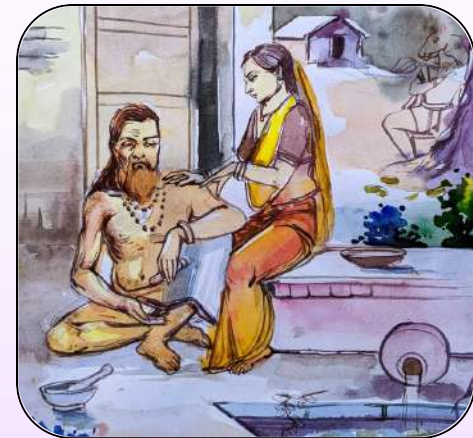
"Parkinson's Disease" means a progressive disease of the nervous system marked by tremor, muscular rigidity, and slow, imprecise movement, chiefly affecting middle-aged and elderly people associated with degeneration of the basal ganglia of the brain and a deficiency of the neurotransmitter dopamine.

- RPWD Act, 2016

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that affects movement, balance, and coordination. It often begins subtly with changes in handwriting, stiffness, tremors, or unexplained pain and gradually influences daily activities such as walking, speaking, and sleeping. Beyond the physical symptoms, Parkinson's also brings emotional and psychological challenges, demanding constant adaptation, patience, and resilience.

While medical science continues to advance through medication, therapy, and surgical interventions like Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS), the true journey of Parkinson's extends far beyond hospitals and prescriptions. It unfolds quietly in acceptance, in family support, in relearning routines, and in choosing to live meaningfully despite uncertainty.

Parkinson's does not define a person. It reshapes life but it does not diminish purpose.



Rishi Chyavana, mentioned in the Rigveda, was an aged and frail sage whose youth and strength were restored by the twin Ashvins through a medicinal preparation known as Chyawanprash. With the devoted care of his wife Sukanya, he regained vitality.

Nishi Singh: A Story of Grace and Grit

Nishi Singh's story is not one of surrender it is one of reinvention.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's later in life, she met the fear and uncertainty with acceptance. With steadfast support from her husband, her anchor and guide she navigated treatment with clarity.

When symptoms began limiting her independence, she chose Deep Brain Stimulation surgery. The demanding journey proved transformative, restoring sleep, stabilizing movement, and reducing medication dependence.

A passionate educator and school leader, Nishi adapted her role and continued to serve until retirement. Even then, she did not step back from life. She became a poet in English and Hindi, a podcaster through Unfiltered Voices, and a mentor who continues to inspire.

Her life reminds us: a diagnosis does not end the story it invites rediscovery.



Nishi

A Purple Reflection

In celebrating Nishi Singh, we celebrate every individual who chooses to live fully not in spite of disability, but with dignity, resilience, and hope.

Watch Nishi's film here:



Purple Fair reminds us that strength often moves quietly but it always leaves a mark.

Words matter. With a little effort and awareness, we can all learn to use kind and respectful language when talking about or writing about people with disabilities. Here are some examples of words to avoid and better words to use instead.

Say This	Not This
Disabled since birth, born with, has a congenital disability	Birth defect, deformity
Person has a disability, lives with/experiences a disability	Afflicted with, suffers from, is a victim of, a burden, stricken with
People with mobility impairment or physical/locomotor disability	Cripple, lame, invalid physically challenged
Person who is deaf, has a hearing impairment, hard of hearing	Deaf and dumb, deaf mute, the deaf person
Person with a disability	Handicapped, challenged
Person who has epilepsy or seizures	Epileptic, fits, spells, attacks
Accessible parking/toilets	Handicapped, disabled parking/toilets
Person with a mental health condition, psychosocial disability	Insane, nuts, mental, crazy, depressive, loony
Person of short stature, little people, person with dwarfism	Midget, dwarfs
Child with a learning disability, or specific learning needs	Slow learner, stupid, dumb, LD kid
Person without a disability, non-disabled	Normal person, able bodied, healthy, abnormal, regular person
Person with a cognitive, intellectual, developmental disability	Mentally retarded, slow, retard
Person who uses a wheelchair, a wheelchair user, uses an mobility device	Wheelchair bound, confined to, restricted to a wheelchair, stuck in a wheelchair

Many misconceptions about persons with disabilities give rise to harmful myths and stereotypes, shaping negative perceptions among non-disabled people. Our aim is to bust these myths and offer a true picture of how people with disabilities live, thrive, and navigate the world.

Myths to Avoid	Facts
People with disabilities are in constant pain and unhealthy	Not all persons with disabilities experience pain or poor health. Disability is diverse, each individual's experience is different
People with disabilities are not sexual	People with disabilities have the same range of sexual feelings, identities, and relationships as anyone else
Accessible toilets and parkings are only for people using wheelchairs	Persons having invisible disabilities also have the right to use accessible toilet/parking, without being questioned or stared at
Living with a disability is inherently brave	People with disabilities are simply living their lives - working, studying, socializing just like anyone else. They learn to adapt and live around their disability
People with disabilities only hang out with their caregivers or other persons with disabilities	People with disabilities have diverse social lives and form friendships, relationships, and connections with people from all walks of life
All people who use a wheelchair cannot walk	Wheelchair use varies depending on individual needs or medical condition or the accessibility of the environment. Many use it to walk short distances or stand
People with disabilities can only perform simple, repetitive tasks or light duties	People with disabilities have a wide range of skills, talents, and qualifications. With the right support and environment, they can thrive in complex, creative, and leadership roles

Tips on interacting with persons with disabilities

- Treat others the way you'd like to be treated. See the person first, not the disability. Relax, just be yourself.
- Not everyone with a disability needs or wants help. Always ask before offering assistance.
- Avoid labels they can be hurtful and demeaning to everyone, including people with disabilities.
- Speak directly to the person, not to their companion, helper, or interpreter.

Here are some ways to interact with people with specific types of disabilities:

- When interacting with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, remember that communication preferences vary. Some may hear partially, lip read, use sign language, or rely on assistive devices. Simply ask how they prefer to communicate.
- When interacting with someone who is blind or visually impaired, always introduce yourself and say when you are leaving. If they ask for help, offer your arm or elbow as a guide, never push, pull or grab.
- When interacting with someone who uses a wheelchair, do not push, lean on, or hold their wheelchair. Try to speak at eye level for a more comfortable conversation.
- When interacting with someone with a cognitive disability, use clear and simple language. Be patient and give them time to process and respond.
- When interacting with someone with a speech impairment, be patient and give them the time they need to express themselves. Listen respectfully and don't try to finish their sentences.



Films around Disability.



Black



Taare Zameen Par



Barfi



Srikanth



Jalsa



Sitaare Zameen Par



Appu Raja



Margarita with a Straw



Yellow



Hichki