

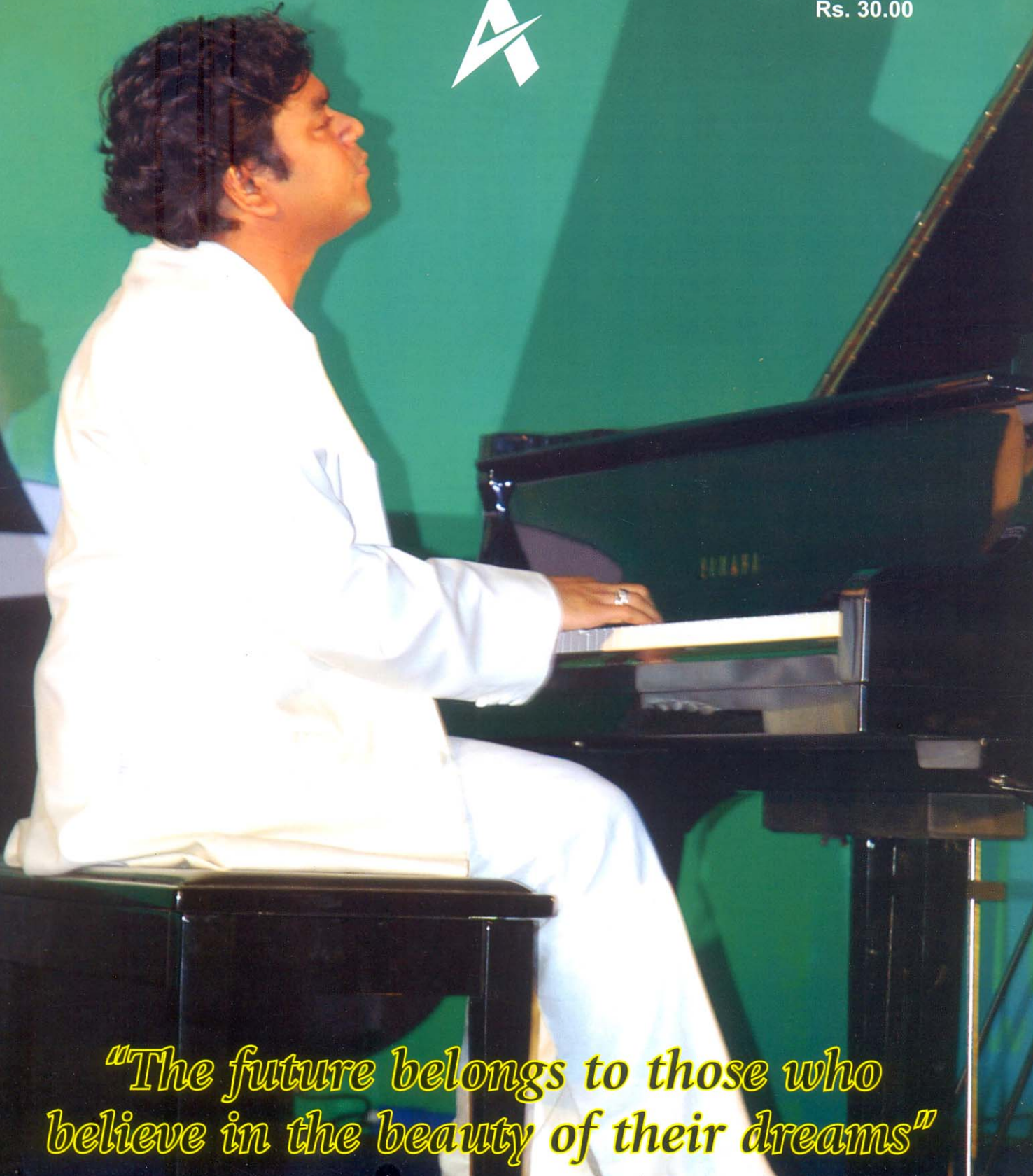
Success &

ABILITY

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"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams"

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Success & ABILITY, India's cross-disability magazine enjoys wide circulation both nationally and internationally, and has a wide readership that includes industrialists, administrators, Indian and overseas Government and Non-Government organisations, libraries, disabled persons, families and the general caring public.

We invite you to take on an advertisement in this pioneering magazine and become a part of this caring group. Publicity to your products or programmes would reap the dual benefits of enjoying a widespread readership and supporting a significant cause.

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From The Editor's Desk

Friends,

We well know that it's always been rather hard to get past the scepticism that surrounds the life of a disabled person. I think this is mainly because we are all generally questioning everything we learn... right from what we read in the newspapers, to what's in our hearts. We have doubts all the time and, every so often, we all lose our way. I do believe that to be fully human is to believe in something or someone, to know that it is possible to face the unimaginable and have the courage to be steadfast in our beliefs and to stand firm — till we manage to find our way home again. This is the kind of stuff that heroes are made of and these are the heroes of this issue — the winners of the CavinKare ABILITY Awards 2007. People who have had belief — in themselves, and in others. We see in them a sense of purpose and along with them, we experience the faith in the beliefs that kept them moving, when it would have been so much easier and ever so tempting to have stayed frozen in despair and just given up. In other words, we begin to experience what they already have, and we begin to have belief in faith... we begin to take a down-to-earth and pragmatic approach to such speculative topics as faith and belief.

Determined to find one's particular place in the world is what each one of the winners of these national awards has done. We have Kali Vinod Tiwari, who was determined to spell his independence with tri-wheel scooters and that too way back in 1978, when none had heard of such a thing. And more, he went on to bring mobility and independence to the lives of so many like him. We have Anjali and Neha who have blossomed through supportive parents. They gave their parents the pleasure of watching them spread their wings and soar... standing beside them as pillars of support. Perhaps this is the secret behind Anjali Arora's abiding faith in the goodness of the world, which was her reason to want to become a lawyer and go on to rule the roost in the highest court of the nation, and also the secret behind the brilliant narratives she writes. As for Neha Bansal — no impairment, neck down or otherwise — stopped her from achieving her target: completing Chartered Accountancy in a single stroke and becoming a practising CA as well. Brings to my mind, Henry Ford's thought provoking lines "Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal" Perhaps, at the end of the day, that's every person's private challenge.

There's more... it's easy to throw around adjectives like "extraordinary" or "inspiring", but what does one say to describe the humility, the solidarity and the empathy of a maestro like AR Rahman? His ready acquiescence to perform live on a grand piano as well as take the trouble to personally train two deserving singers to perform alongside him! Difficult to say who was more moved... we the organisers, the girls Heeru and Radha chosen by ARR himself, or the packed-to-capacity audience — quite a few of who had tears in their eyes!

Don't you agree that we all need to celebrate life more... to set our goals in life and our plans of attainment? Everything becomes so worthless otherwise. Unless backed up with action, ideas remain mere ideas. We need to do something about them. We talk of equal partnership and the right to social participation, then we wait for action from others. Why not take it up in our own hands? We dream of a common humanity. And yet, the public rarely gets to see our joyous side. So, here's to life and to beautiful things of life, to singing your song, to indulging and pursuing your beliefs, the perfect rejoinder, to getting comfortable. The fruits of our dreams can be found only when we exercise fulfilling action. No matter what our aim, we have to, every now and then, support them with action. That was the motive behind bringing to the fore people like Tiwari, Anjali and Neha — the winners of CavinKare ABILITY Awards 2007.

Do share your thoughts on this with me.

Jayshree Raveendran



Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster man;
 But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the one who thinks he can.

C.W. LONGENECKER

The winners of

CIVINKARE
 ABILITY
 AWARDS
 2007



The CavinKare Ability Awards 2007
*with lights and glitter
 laughter, glamour and hope
 (and the possibility of a few joyful tears)
 an evening of celebrating ABILITY commenced
 no space or time for sympathy here
 just the belief that when you live a life of dignity
 against all odds*



*you can be recognised
 you can be awarded
 you can be honoured for doing
 what you would have done anyway
 living your life fully with
 what you have know
 trust believe each year 3 people
 masters of their destiny
 eminent people of their fate
 stars amongst a constellation
 of deserving nominees
 each year 3 people are chosen
 they represent the fighting spirit
 that we all need to get ahead
 in a world that often lacks access and equality
 they represent people unwilling to give up
 turn back accept that life is hard and
 there is nothing that we can do
 there is always something that we can do
 and the winners of the CavinKare Ability Award
 have done it
 they have defined what it means
 to succeed while making their mark on their communities
 on their country
 and in our hearts.*

MARGAUX DELOTTE-BENNETT





CM arrives

The tight security arranged for the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi, who presided over the evening, did not deter the vast numbers of people from thronging to felicitate the Cavinkare ABILITY award winners.



Section of the audience



Section of the audience



Rahman speaks

The three award winners, stars in their own right, were joined by AR Rahman, the musical maestro, who played the piano specially for the awards function in a rare public recital. To the delight of his audience, he accompanied two disabled singers who sang numbers composed by him. It was an evening that left an indelible mark on those who were present.

The programme, as usual, was ably anchored by actor Revathy. The special guests of the evening included Kanimozhi, poet and writer, Mohini Giri, women's activist and Leela Samson, Director, Kalakshetra, who were on the jury panel that selected the winners.



Revathy anchoring the show



Anjali Arora



K.V. Tiwari



Neha Bansal

This year saw the fifth edition of the Cavinkare ABILITY awards. This year's Award for Eminence went to Mr Kali Vinod Tiwari of Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, who, in the face of enormous difficulties found innovative solutions for the mobility of the orthopaedically-impaired. The Cavinkare ABILITY Mastery award winner, Ms Anjali Arora from New Delhi, had to fight her way through educational institutions, to realise her goal of becoming a lawyer and that too in the Supreme Court of India. Neha Bansal, the other Mastery Award winner, is a Chartered Accountant based in New Delhi. Though paralysed neck-down while in school, Neha did not lose her confidence and pursued her dream of becoming a self-sufficient Chartered Accountant.



Mr. C.K. Ranganathan



CM's address



Ms. Jayshree welcomes the gathering

In her welcome speech, Ms. Jayshree Raveendran, Executive Director, Ability Foundation, invited the Chief Minister to make possible a State Policy for the Disabled on the lines of the National Policy, to provide disabled people with equal opportunities.

Mr.C.K. Ranganathan, CMD, Cavinkare Pvt. Ltd., said, "The people we saw today chose to overcome their disability with attitude. Most people, who are fully functional harbour doubts, which I think are more of an impediment than a physical shortcoming".

The Chief Minister, in his speech, admitted that the evening's function had moved him deeply. He said, "We have awarded Anjali, Neha and Tiwari, who showed the light to others. Today it is three people, but there are lakhs of others who need to be recognised." He called upon more corporates to chip in and do their bit for the disabled, and assume more social responsibility in catering to the needs of disabled people.



AR Rahman playing solo

The anticipation in the air was palpable as the evening of the 5th CavinKare ABILITY Award approached. Every award function is special – but this one was extra special; AR Rahman, the heartthrob of music lovers around the world would perform live in public for the awardees and our distinguished guests. On his piano he would accompany two disabled singers- Heeru Chandnani and Radha Roy - specially invited to sing for the occasion. In a rare comment he told Ability Foundation, “This is the second time I’m participating in the function. I just had to be here. We tend to see only the disabilities. I wanted to spot talent in two people. I wanted to train the virtuoso in them. I am a big fan of Italian singer Andre Buchelli, who is blind. You never see his disability when he sings. He is so much better than the “normal” people struggling to sing.”

He added, “What is internal is more serious than what you see externally. Everything inside me believes their talent is

focused beautifully. They deliver better than “normal” people. In India there are loads of people like Buchelli and I wanted to spot at least two of them.” When asked if he would get the evening’s performers to sing for him in movies, he said enigmatically, “Let’s see.”



Surreal Performance!

HEERU CHANDNANI performed alongside AR Rahman on the evening of the glittering CavinKare ABILITY awards nite. She and Radha Roy were the only two short-listed by the maestro himself, from amidst the dozens of hopeful professionals who sent their CDs on request. We met them twice – before and after their performance and asked a few questions. Here are their answers.

Heeru, tell us about yourself.

I am from Bengaluru, I have done my Masters in Psychology from Mount Carmel. I now work with IBM Resource Deployment in Bengaluru.

How and why did you take up singing?

I am trained in Western classical music, both vocal and piano. I have finished Grade 8 in music from the Royal School of Music, London. I have performed along with a group of blind singers. I have also done a couple of solo shows in



Heeru Chandnani

Bengaluru. Though I had always wanted to make a career in singing I didn't know how to go about it.

How did you get this opportunity?

Mr. M.C. Roy of SRVC (an organization in Kerala) spoke to me about this programme. Then I got a call from Ability Foundation asking me to send some CDs of my performance. I didn't have any, so Mr. Roy sent a couple of CDs that he had. Two weeks later I got a call from Ability Foundation and Mr. Rahman spoke to me and asked if I could practice a couple of songs! I received a CD with the songs and I practised singing them.

You must have been thrilled to hear from Mr. Rahman himself! What do you think about him?

Oh yes! He is really good. He has made some brilliant music. I have heard most of the Hindi songs and a few Tamil songs that he has composed music for. I find the Tamil songs more appealing, though. In the one or two minutes I spoke to him on the phone I felt that he was a down-to-earth person.

Do you see this opportunity as a step further in your singing career? Do you think this will make a difference in your life?

I feel that getting a show with Rahman is a God-sent opportunity. I am singing two songs with him and I am hoping to get a break with this show.

What do you know of Ability Foundation and their work?

I know them as part of my work in IBM. I had also appreciated their placement wing. I also wanted to apply for the CavinKare



Heeru receiving memento from AR Rahman

ABILITY Awards, but having gone through the profiles of the previous winners, I felt I hadn't done enough. I have to do a lot more before I can think of being nominated. The Foundation seems genuine in its mainstraming work, especially the employment opportunities that they provide reach a good number of people. I would also like to thank Ability Foundation for giving me this opportunity.

Tell us about your work in IBM. Do you have a cultural group there?

I lead a cell for persons with disabilities in my organisation. I am the central point of contact and get internal calls from



AR Rahman and Heeru

disabled employees all over India. We frame policies for persons with disabilities. The most recent one was to provide company transport for disabled employees. We don't have a cultural group in IBM. Also, work leaves no time for the same. I teach in a Music School over the weekend and am also part of a choir. We practice every Sunday and perform once in three or four months.

What methods of studying did you incorporate during your education and music lessons?

Somebody would read aloud for me, I would listen to tapes and memorise. In college computers were of immense help. During exams I made use of a scribe. As for music lessons, my teachers were wonderful and devised new methods to teach me. I learned Braille notations to get familiar with the Theory of Music.

What would you like to ask Mr. AR Rahman when you meet him?

I would request him to give me opportunities to sing songs that suit my voice.

I caught up with her after her performance. Congratulations! How do you feel now, after this wonderful performance?

(Her face beaming with a big beautiful smile) On top of the world! Both Rahman and Rasheed (the guitarist) were brilliant. Their music was simply wonderful. One automatically gets into the mood. The choice of songs was so appropriate to create this atmosphere, each different from the other yet blending with each other. It helped to bring out the best in me!



Anuja Dinesh

ANUJA DINESH

RADHA ROY, a wheelchair user, the other singer to perform with AR Rahman at the Awards, greeted me with a shy smile. She was clearly overwhelmed by the fact that she was going to share the stage with Mr. Rahman and was breathless with excitement! As she sang a song from the movie "Kyun Ki" I was captivated by her beautiful voice. No wonder Mr. Rahman had a special word of praise for Radha. Here's my tête-à-tête with her.



AR Rahman, Radha Roy and Rasheed

How do you feel about singing with Mr. AR Rahman?

When I heard that Mr. AR Rahman had liked my voice and that I was selected, I was spellbound. It is a thrilling, exciting, dream-come-true experience for me. Mr. Rahman is one of the top music directors and when he asked me about performing with him in Chennai, I was literally jumping for joy!

I had only three days to practice and I have been practising for almost 8 –10 hrs each day. I feel privileged and obliged for getting this opportunity.

How and why did you take up singing as a profession?

I was born and brought up in Kolkata. I finished my BA in

Political Science (Honours) at the Loreto House College. I realised my potential for singing when I was selected to perform at a musical concert in school. My voice was appreciated by one and all and I started learning music. I have been training in light classical music from Ustad Sarfaraz Ahmed Khan, son of Padmashree Ustad Fayyaz Ahmed Khan of the Kirana Gharana. When I went to Mumbai for treatment (I have Insulin Resistance syndrome that resulted in Secondary Muscular Degeneration), I happened to meet Salman Khan through a friend. That was the turning point in my career. Salman Khan introduced me to music director Himesh Reshmmiya and “Kyon Ki” happened. I got an opportunity to sing the title track for this Hindi movie along with Udit Narayan.

Do you see this opportunity as a big step forward in your singing career?

To be a good playback singer is my desire and ambition and I am hoping that this association with Mr. Rahman will be a significant milestone in shaping my career.

Tell us about your family.

My parents have been my pillars of strength and my mother is the guiding light in my life. She insisted that I complete my education and she was also the one who didn't bat an eyelid when we had to take the decision to move to Mumbai from Kolkata for pursuing my career in singing.



Radha Roy



Radha Roy receiving memento from AR Rahman

Loreto House College, where I did my graduation, is one of the most prestigious and disabled-friendly colleges in Kolkata. My college understood my disability and provided me with a lot of help. Teachers would come home to help me catch up with my studies and the principal was also very cooperative. I was also

awarded a Certificate of Merit for commendable effort and personal courage by the University of Calcutta. My being a wheelchair user has never been a barrier for me to achieve what I have always dreamt of.

With Mr. Rahman playing the grand piano, Radha sang “Tu Hi Re” from the movie “Bombay” and “Jiya Jale” from the movie “Dil Se” during the Awards celebration. She surely won the audience’s heart by singing a few verses in Tamil as well. I quickly caught up with her as she was leaving the stage. Still overwhelmed by the experience, perhaps, but Radha stopped to answer my question...

What did you think about the CavinKare ABILITY Awards function?

I had not heard about Ability Foundation before and I think that it is a great initiative in India. The awards evening is a very high profile event and a real eye-opener. The arrangements are excellent. I still find it difficult to believe that I performed with AR Rahman!



Padma Naveen

I thank Ability Foundation and Mr. AR Rahman for presenting me with this wonderful opportunity to perform at the awards function.

PADMA NAVEEN

Making

MISSION-MOBILITY

a reality

Speaking

to Kali Vinod Tiwari is a humbling experience. He has had a great deal to grumble about, if he wanted to. A soft-spoken man who switches back and forth between Hindi and English when he talks, KV Tiwari is the son of a schoolteacher in Unnao – a small town near Jhansi. He lost the use of his legs when he was three. He studied Hindi, Sanskrit and English, and intended to become a priest, but was obsessed with one great theme in life. Movement. The ability to straddle spaces on his own. This meant everything to him. “I thought, *Mere ko chalna hai,*” he said, *I need to move.*

The hinterlands of Uttar Pradesh are not rich in opportunity. To be disabled, when you live in these hinterlands could mean losing what little margin of opportunity there is. In any event, you would be most unlikely to think too much about fixing other people’s problems.

Mr. Tiwari started a furniture shop with his brother, learning to be a fabricator. He learned auto and scooter repair too, and sold his inheritance – a small piece of land his father bequeathed to him – so that he could start a workshop with the proceeds. “First I had to make a vehicle for myself,” he said. His first vehicle, customised and adapted for his disability, was built in 1978, well before such vehicles became common. The UP Governor, who was in Kanpur for World

Disability Day, inaugurated the vehicle. The publicity that went with that brought in letters from physically disabled people around the country and that led to Mr Tiwari making an important connection. “I realised that my difficulty was everybody’s difficulty.” It started Mr



KV Tiwari receiving award

Tiwari down the road he’s followed for nearly thirty years. A road that he has dedicated his life to. One workshop couldn’t exactly be used for mass production, and the business wasn’t exactly going to rake in money – but Mr Tiwari felt it was worth it.

He also wanted to create awareness on the issue of disability – and the fact that

it could be coped with. Soon after, Mr Tiwari decided to launch a rally from Kanpur to Delhi. It had five vehicles, all customised in his workshop, all driven by disabled people. The rally was organised, but Mr. Tiwari found he couldn’t find anybody to flag the riders off. They weren’t expected to succeed, and the VIPs weren’t too keen on being

CVINKARE
ABILITY
AWARDS
FOR EMINENCE

associated with a losing cause! Finally a minister did turn up, the rally was successful, and an impressed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sent a minister to receive the rallyists at Delhi. In 1982, Tiwari organised a race of customised vehicles for the disabled, from Kanpur to Lucknow. In 1984, he won a National Award, and in 1985...

Mr Tiwari carried on building his customised vehicles for the disabled. The numbers produced were small but his work was driven by a vision, and profit did not matter much.

"I had a dream," he told us, "that disabled people should also be able to own and drive vehicles. The families of disabled people were always scared to let them out of the house, in case they got hurt. I had to teach the public that disabled people could come out, and work, without fear."

Every vehicle was designed carefully to fit the specific requirements of a disabled individual. He began research and development work – an accomplishment to devise ways of working with the many disabilities that he saw around him. Soon, news about this remarkable little place in Kanpur began to spread, and the workshop began receiving orders from around the country.

In 1990, Mr. Tiwari went on an epic journey to almost every corner of the country. He drove his customised vehicle, on India's dangerous highways, through fourteen states. As he travelled, word spread, and crowds of locals waited to see him in the cities he visited. As the press publicised what he was doing, Mr. Tiwari discovered a few important things.

"There is no access for disabled people. Most government offices, even courts do

not have access. Are these not made for us? It is difficult to go to banks to withdraw money. We cannot go to parks in the evening. We go to a restaurant, and find we cannot enter. Why doesn't anyone ever think of us, even once? When a disabled person needs to meet a District Magistrate, he is made to wait at the gate, a very long distance from the door of the office. You have to understand, it is difficult for us to move over that distance. Why can't they allow us to wait inside? Is it such a problem?"

"I went to the Rajiv Gandhi memorial.



Mr. Tiwari

They did not allow me inside on my vehicle. So I said, all right, please give me a wheelchair, or at least help me inside, I cannot walk properly. They refused that also. Rajiv Gandhi's mother did something for me, she recognised me, and so I wanted to pay my respects to this man. Are these things meant only for people like you?"

Mr. Tiwari, a gentle, earnest man, is roused to uncharacteristic bitterness when he talks about the government. "When V.P Singh was UP Chief Minister,

**CAVINKARE ABILITY
EMINENCE AWARD
given to
KALI VINOD TIWARI**

Overcoming mountain-high obstacles of being paralysed waist down by polio and coming from an economically weak section of society, he realised the importance of independence and mobility.

He set up his own steel fabrication enterprise and pioneered the development of the auto tri-wheeler, at a time when this was unheard of, spurring on hundreds of others to independence, changing lives of countless other mobility-impaired people and making it his life's mission to wake up society to see the capabilities of people with disabilities.

He also launched sensitisation drives, held exhibitions, formed clubs and organised rallies and races that covered 14 States across the country, paving the way for a wonderfully inclusive society.

His story is one of true grit and determination and a source of inspiration to many.

a lot was promised. When he left the chief-ministership, everything stopped. They told me that the file could not be found. By this time, V.P Singh had become prime minister. I petitioned the PMO three times. Each time, they sent my request back to the UP Government, which did nothing.” He paused, and added, “Others will not help us. We need to help ourselves.”

Mr Tiwari has practised what he preaches. He took a loan for his workshop, and to this day, he says, he has received no assistance. “We do it for our own satisfaction,” he explains. His workshop has produced around 800 vehicles, and his research and development work has led to nearly 50 different designs, and prototypes to accommodate people with varying disabilities. Every design takes into account the nature of the disability of the individual user; the brand and design of the original vehicle that the user would like to buy before he has it customised; the availability of trained mechanics for a particular vehicle where the customer lives; and a dozen other considerations.



Mrs. Mohini Giri hands over the citation

His latest project involves the creation of a vehicle that can be folded, and transported easily. The design was born of his own personal need: Mr Tiwari found that when he travelled by train around the country, he couldn't take his vehicle with him – which meant that moving around railway platforms became a painful and difficult exercise. The new vehicle will fold and stow away easily in the luggage space beneath train seats, making it easy to travel with. The first prototype is expected to be ready by July this year. Tiwari's children Mallika and Mukund – who grew up watching their father fight his own disability – have joined forces with him. Mallika Tiwari helped design a scooter for people who have no arms, and won a national award for the design, presented to her by a very appreciative President Kalam. Mallika has also won an innovation award from Intel. Mukund Tiwari developed a multifunctional physiotherapy mobility system, under his father's guidance, which went on to an exhibition abroad.

And then, there is the woman behind the man with an interesting story.

Mrs Rama Tiwari was working with spastic children in Bengaluru when she first read about him in a newspaper article. She boarded a train, turned up at his doorstep “and asked me to marry her,” he recalled, smiling awkwardly, while she sat beside him and beamed at us. Mrs Tiwari has given him support for decades, something he is deeply aware of.

When Kali Vinod Tiwari received the C a v i n K a r e ABILITY award for Eminence on the night of March 4th, he made an acceptance speech. He began that speech very simply: “I learned very early on, that movement is life,” he said. Mr Tiwari has built his life around that premise. He has also pursued his other goal – that of raising awareness about disability. As he moves towards this objective, one thinks of the more than eight hundred lives he has touched with his small workshop – and how much more he will be able to achieve in his journey.



Rahul Nayar



Winning strides

RAHUL NAYAR

T H E

PuRSuIT

of happyness

Injury lay-off – well, it's quite a common term in sports. Any player who gets seriously injured will find it tough coming back to the game with the zeal and power that he had previously. There are of course, a few exceptional cases in which some of them bounced back with vigour and vengeance. Andre Agassi has done it many times in his career but Monica Seles lost an astounding career because of an injury from which she could never recover her original style of play. When star players struggle to regain lost time and form, a girl from our national capital made an exciting comeback from a point where there was no hope at all. Hope, confidence, determination – we need more synonyms for these words when it comes to describing Neha Bansal.

THE INITIAL SETBACK

Neha was a normal girl-next-door until she was 13, when something happened to change her life. She was playing with her brother and was running after him when suddenly she experienced severe pain in her neck. She looked for help, and as she couldn't handle the pain she lay down there. Her family thought it was a headache. She began to throw up. The local doctor took an MRI and told them it was a rare disease and asked them to take her to a hospital. All this while Neha was completely conscious and could see what was happening to her. In fact that was the only thing she could do. She lost her ability to speak and all movement below the neck. After about two to three days her voice came back and she felt some sensation in her right arm. She had to stay in bed for nearly one and a half years. Her biggest regret at that time, she says, was that she had to miss the school trip to Singapore & Malaysia. Subsequently she gained movement in her right arm, but life seemed to have closed a door on her education. "I was too shy to wheel into the school premises," she says.

LEARNING

Mrs. Usha, Neha's Principal at Lakshman Public School wouldn't hear of it. She told Neha to take her Xth Board exams, though she had missed nearly one and a half years of schooling. "If you don't take the exams now, you'll be sitting with your juniors," the kind Principal warned her.

GOVINKARE
ABILITY
AWARDS
MASTERY



Neha Bansal receiving award

Mrs. Usha sent her teachers to Neha's residence to coach her. Neha cleared the exams with ease. She says emotionally,

"I owe it to her". Will other Principals take note?

The Plus 2 classes, however, posed the

**CAVINKARE ABILITY
MASTERY AWARD
given to
NEHA BANSAL**

Despite being rendered a tetraplegic at a very young age she allowed neither disability nor other trials and tribulations to stand in the way of achievement.

Displaying a strong resolve that revealed a spirit that is indomitable to obstacles, she resolutely pursued her dream of becoming a Chartered Accountant insisting on writing this demanding examination independently and obtaining the all-India 10th rank. She practises a demanding profession as Chartered Accountant regardless of needing help for most rudimentary actions.

She remains the epitome of that rare never-say-die spirit and leads the life of an extremely successful woman of substance.

age-old problem. The classrooms were on the third floor and the school didn't have elevators. Mrs. Usha shifted the classes to the ground floor and later built a ramp directly to the third floor to help people like Neha. Neha took Commerce as her major and wrote the exams herself taking extra time. She was the school topper in both XI and XII standards.

PROVING HER WORTH

Getting into a college of her choice was the next hurdle. Her marks cleared the cut-offs for top colleges in Delhi, but no one was willing to have a wheelchair user joining them as a student. Neha continued her hunt for a seat and God sent another angel Mrs. Raghavan, Principal of Gargi College, Delhi gave her admission. Here too, her classes were in upper floors but the Principal arranged classes in the seminar hall, labs, sometimes in the park, even on staircases when the halls were not free.



Receiving the citation from Ms. Kanimozhi

Neha deserves a bow for this effort. What an amazing girl! My friends and I bunked classes when we were provided with A/C classrooms! She completed her B. Com and then took her CA Inter exams. She cleared it in the very first attempt with an All India Rank of 48. This is stupendous! She went on to clear her CA Final exams in the first attempt with an All-India rank of 10. She remembers her professors Mr. Ajay Jain and Mr. Vinod Gupta for their lectures during her CA



Winner's acceptance speech

classes and she also says that they were an inspiration for her.

REWARD AT LAST

Though Neha is a Chartered Accountant with an excellent rank, she didn't receive any offers from companies. Not because they did not have any vacancy but because they did not have the courage to recruit her. INMACS India Limited gave her the confidence by taking her in. "You could be a "normal" person with a negative approach to life," said Neha at the press conference prior to receiving the award.

Readers, kindly see the Oscar nominated Will Smith movie "The Pursuit of Happyness" based on the true-life story of

millionaire stock broker Chris Gardner. Chris Gardner rose from rags to riches not because of luck but because of his hard work, perseverance and a never-give-up attitude. There's a striking resemblance between him and Neha in the above mentioned qualities. So what are the Sanjay Leela Bhansalis and the Govind Nihalanis doing? They've got a wonderfully inspiring script in hand now.

Yet, Neha's pursuit of excellence continues...

G. RAMAKRISHNAN

The **LAWYER** with a **VISION**

Anjali was perfectly sighted until age 12 when a sudden fever resulted in the deterioration of her eyesight. Three cornea operations and three years later, Anjali Arora became completely blind.

Such an extreme development could not have been easy for anyone to handle, and it wasn't for Anjali and her family, either. But as Anjali now says, "There is only so long one can brood over a problem. For two weeks after the doctor's announcement, we were all devastated. But by the end of the two weeks, my entire family, that is my dad, mom, elder sister, and I, decided to learn Braille."

Anjali's family has been with her every



Having her say

step of the way since then. From helping her prepare her notes in high school, to helping her prepare for her cases in court, her parents have been her greatest strength in her journey to becoming the youngest visually-impaired woman



Anjali receiving award

advocate, arguing cases in the Supreme Court of India. Anjali operated as a busy, independent lawyer for more than seven years, filing petitions, cross-examining witnesses, presenting counter arguments in several much-publicised cases. She now works with the Airports Authority of India, Delhi, as their Assistant Manager – Law.

For Anjali Arora, her disability has only

proved to be one more obstacle that she had to deal with en route to her dreams. As she says, she may have lost her eyesight, but she never lost her vision.

Anjali believes that the only difference, between herself and a sighted person is in the methods she employs. Her lack of sight has meant that she has had to adopt new ways of getting things done. While in school, Anjali would get her

**CAVINKARE ABILITY
MASTERY AWARD
given to
ANJALI ARORA**

Unfazed by loss of eyesight at a young age Anjali's indomitable spirit and unceasing optimism took her along the path that she had designed for herself.

She allowed neither disability nor other trials and tribulations to stand in the way of achievement.

With persistence and tenacity of purpose, she fought her way to realise her dream of initially becoming a lawyer in the Delhi High Court and then rising to be an attorney at law in the Supreme Court of India.

Seeing in the legal profession a challenge and a source of empowerment she has drafted and pleaded cases in the highest court of the land.

Highly respected for her astute worldview, she is successful both in her position of responsibility at office and her leisure time activity as an enthralling writer.



Holding aloft her citation

classmates, her neighbors or her parents to record the lessons in audio cassettes, by which to study. As an advocate, even as her parents continued to help her with her research, etc.,

she adopted the latest voice technology to get her work done, be more independent and computer savvy.



Congratulations... from Revathy

Besides these external adjustments, the ingredients for Anjali's success have been the same that lie behind every achievement: hard work, grit, determination, patience, and a positive attitude. Her facility with words has got Anjali interested in writing. Her insightful articles, written in lucid prose have been

featured in various magazines. Says Anjali, *"I enjoy my company, both talking to myself and writing. I always write for myself."* So what does CavinKare ABILITY Mastery Award mean to her?

Anjali believes the right message is being sent out to all people – that whether one is disabled or not, success is always recognised. And more importantly,

success is always possible, irrespective of disability.

You just have to be determined enough to find a way; strong enough to believe in your dreams.

Says she: *"I'm realistically optimistic and make positive choices for myself and have a*

positive opinion of others. I live by the values of my family. I accept life with all its flavours – sweet, sour and spicy. I feel I'm a woman of substance and will live life to the fullest. I measure my life and my performance with my past record and not in comparison with anyone."

DARSHANA BAJAJ

Musings of a teenager

The Most Inspiring Moment of My Life

I was really thrilled when I got the call, asking me to volunteer for the fifth CavinKare ABILITY Awards function. The main reason was that I could get to meet God. AR Rahman. But only when I reached there, did I realise that there were things waiting for me than just meeting AR Rahman.

This was an awards function where disabled persons who have achieved so much despite all odds were being honoured. There were three award winners, namely, Neha Bansal, Anjali Arora and Kali Vinod Tiwari. Neha Bansal inspired me a lot that day. This 25-year-old girl won the Mastery Award, 2007. She had got an all-India rank in the Chartered Accountant exam in the first attempt.

She is unable to move her body from below her neck! This was the result of a spinal cord injury when she was in the 9th grade.

This really inspired me because she had achieved something that people with their faculties intact had failed to clear this exam in the first attempt.

All three award winners had to face a lot of difficulties but had never lost their self confidence and their drive to achieve while we, even though we are blessed with everything, still tend to underachieve.

- By DHANYA SRINATH - age 15
Std X, Bala Vidya Mandir School



Dhanya Srinath





An Ode to our Winners...

Not victims

Not martyrs

But makers of their destinies with

gumption and vision

chartering new domains,

new maps of excellence;

fighting battles legal,

societal...

searching within the self

for motivation

looking beyond Self

to take others along...

flowing as a stream

in the mainstream

with

mobility of thoughts

mobility as mission

and nobility of deed

Not victims

Not martyrs

But carvers of destinies

we shared their travails

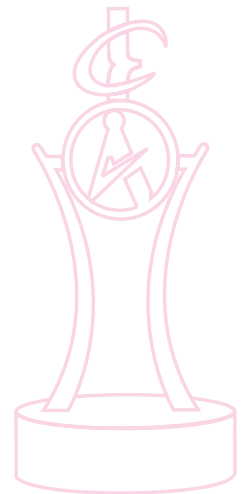
and our hearts tugged

we shared their convictions

and our spirits rose

we feted them

and we felt crowned...



MEERA BALACHANDAR

Leaves Of AUTUMN

The atmosphere outside was pleasant, but my mind was perturbed with some nostalgic memories of my school days. I felt very heavy, the sort of feeling one gets when one is down with fever. I decided that I should go to my school and visit my favourite teacher. I'd been thinking of this visit for years but somehow couldn't find the resolve to do it. But that day I was firm. I took my car out of the garage and started driving slowly. Once I eased into the traffic, I began to drive very slowly, perhaps debating whether I really wanted to make this trip. With a touch of amusement, I could see even bicycles overtaking my car. But, I couldn't go beyond that speed. The old reluctance to get to the school? May be!

It was about an hour later, that I neared the school. Everything seemed familiar – the locality, the shops and even the dustbin that used to be at the corner of the road. Memories came flooding, making my car wobble in my thoughts. I parked the car and opened the school gate, stood there and gazed at the building. I could see a lot of kids with gleeful faces. Each seemed to be in a world of his own. For a while, my emotions seemed to have been arrested by this place. I climbed the stairs and reached the third floor. There was the room with my favorite teacher's name on the door. I knocked at the door and entered the room. She was sitting in a chair reading a book. She lifted her face to see me. Her eyes widened in happiness and wonder. She immediately stood up

and came to me. She knew who I was! After twenty long years she could recognize me in a flash! I immediately fell at her feet. It was a spontaneous reaction. She pulled me up; I could see tears in her eyes and tears started to roll from my eyes too. I cannot explain the feeling that washed over me at that time. It was the happiest moment of my life. We sat down to talk.

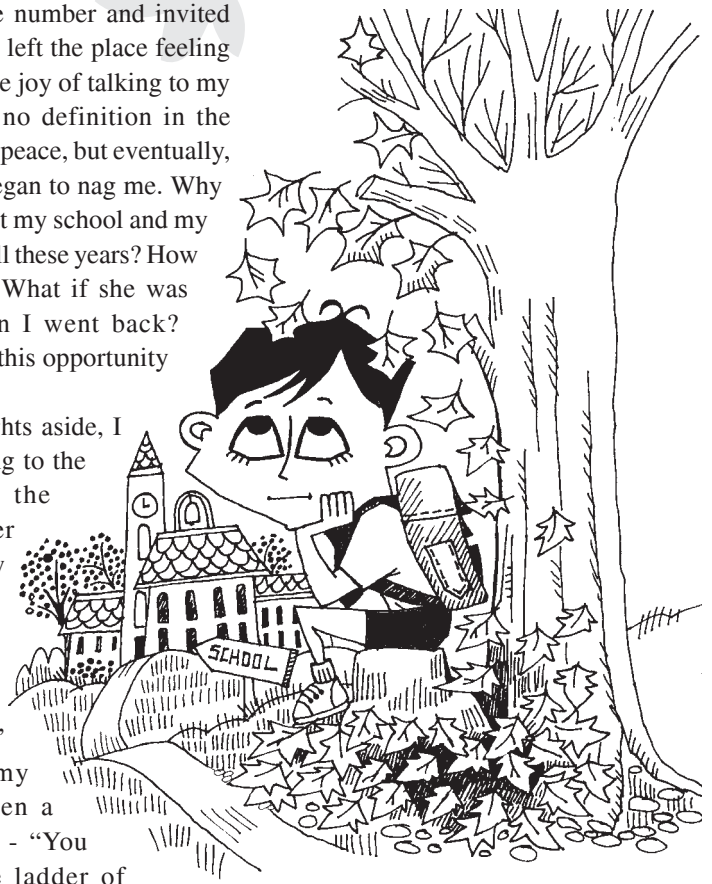
After a long conversation, I gave her my address, telephone number and invited her to my house. I left the place feeling hugely relieved. The joy of talking to my teacher, that has no definition in the dictionary. I felt at peace, but eventually, a few questions began to nag me. Why didn't I think about my school and my favourite teacher all these years? How did I forget her? What if she was untraceable when I went back? What if I had lost this opportunity to meet her again?

Pushing the thoughts aside, I determined to cling to the pleasantness of the visit. I went over what I said, how she responded and how we could both laugh at the "crime and punishment" episodes of my adolescence. Then a thought emerged - "You may be atop the ladder of

success now, but don't forget that it was the teachers who had taught you how to climb it."

A tree never forgets the leaves that fall during the autumn season. Students are like the leaves of autumn. They may be carried away by the winds of fortune, but a teacher will never forget them.

G. RAMAKRISHNAN



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In many ways the first of its kind in India, *Success & ABILITY*, the magazine, with its principal focus on disability, not only informs and entertains but also interests, educates and empowers readers.

It connects the worlds of people with and without disabilities and opens the door to awareness-building, leading to a more informed and enlightened world - a world where people look beyond disability, a society where people are first and foremost people - disabled or non-disabled, only next.

As our readership grows, we want to reach out to more and more people who care - industrialists, administrators, Indian and overseas Government and non-Government

organisations, libraries and the public. We believe you have a right - and an obligation - to know about the issues we bring to you in meticulous detail.

Success & ABILITY is also available in a user-friendly CD format meant for MP3 players.

Each issue of the magazine is a collector's item. The information it brings is well-researched and contemporary, and hence invaluable.

When you read the magazine regularly, you express solidarity to the cause of disabled people. Not only that, you gain access to information that you might not have known where to look for. Subscribe Now!

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