बिल्कुल आपकी तरह
Just like You
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Class of 2013 -14
William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India

लेखिका - एंजला कोहामा
Written by Angela Kohama

संकलन एवं चित्र - कोको वोनेगुट
Edited & Illustrated by Coco Vonnegut

�नुवाद - गायत्री शर्मा और मेघना रावत
Translated by Gayetri Sharma & Meghana Rawat
**About the American India Foundation:**

The American India Foundation is committed to catalyzing social and economic change in India and building a lasting bridge between the United States and India through high-impact interventions in education, livelihoods, public health, and leadership development, with a particular emphasis on empowering girls and women to achieve gender equity. Working closely with local communities, AIF partners with NGOs to develop and test innovative solutions and with governments to create and scale sustainable impact. Founded in 2001 at the initiative of President Bill Clinton following a request from Prime Minister Vajpayee, AIF has impacted the lives of more than 2 million of India’s poor and aims to reach 5 million by 2018. Learn more at www.AIF.org.

**About the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India:**

The William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India builds the next generation of leaders committed to lasting change for under-privileged communities across India, while strengthening the civil sector landscape to be more efficient and effective. The Fellowship has 331 Fellows and 154 partners.
Growing up in Kolkata, my parents used to take my brother Rama and I to visit family in South India. Sometimes we would visit my great-uncle’s village on the banks of the Cauvery river which flows through Tamil Nadu. His youngest son – and therefore my uncle – who was more an older cousin by age, was both hearing and speech impaired. The first time Rama and I met him, we were at a loss on how to communicate, a little embarrassed and may even have tried to avoid his company.

But Uppuli, as he was affectionately known, would have none of it. With his bright eyes and hand gestures he would engage us in long conversations, which would often end in peals of laughter. No words needed to be said. We communicated at a level beyond that which words could convey. Uppuli would wake us up very early in the morning and take us to the fields to pick and eat fresh cucumbers with a pinch of salt for our breakfast. We would then go swim in the river, which was just a small stream before the water was released from the dam upstream. He would drive a bullock cart around those village roads as if it was Formula 1 circuit. There was not a thing about the village and village life he did not know, no problem in the home he could not fix. His inquisitive bright eyes, smiling face and zest for life were unbelievable. For Rama and me, those were magical days and we were always sorry to leave.

But this was in the 1950s. Uppuli’s disabilities precluded him from being admitted to any school or get a job beyond tending to the home and his parents. He never showed any resentment against what fate had bestowed on him. He was always upbeat, curious to know everything, leaving no doubt in my mind that Uppuli was capable of much more. At that time in India it was not to be. But in the India of today we have to find each and every way to assimilate the disabled – I too prefer differently-abled – to be part of, and indeed, active contributors to the community.

I am therefore particularly pleased that AIF’s William J. Clinton Fellowship Class of 2013-14 is presenting these moving and uplifting stories of inclusion of the differently-abled in society. Angela, Coco, Meghana, and Gaytri are to be congratulated for putting this compilation together to share with you. The problems that arise for the differently-abled, especially when they are young, start with non acceptance by other young people.

During those few summers on the banks of the Cauvery, Uppuli taught me to include him in my life and enrich it in the process.

Sridar Iyengar
Chair of the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India
American India Foundation
What is an intellectual disability?

Intellectual disabilities affect your brain. Children with intellectual disabilities need more time to learn, more time to make decisions and sometimes need help solving problems. They are capable of learning and smart, they just learn at a different pace.
Shakshi’s Story
Shakshi is eight years old. She goes to school in Mumbai. She is very smart and gets good grades!
There is a government school next to Shakshi’s house. But, Shakshi has to go to a school very far away. It takes one hour to get there!

साक्षी के घर के पास एक सरकारी स्कूल है, पर साक्षी जिस स्कूल जाती है वह बहुत दूर है। वहाँ पहुँचने में उसे एक घंटा लगता है।
Shakshi’s school is only for kids with disabilities. All of Shakshi’s classmates have a disability. Her classmates are good at many things – playing, drawing, singing, jumping... Shakshi has many friends at her school.
Shakshi has an intellectual disability. This means her brain works a little bit differently. Since her brain is a little bit different, sometimes Shakshi needs people to talk to her in a different way, or needs things to be repeated.
साक्षी उस सरकारी स्कूल में जाना चाहती है जिस में उसके पड़ोस के सारे बच्चे जाते हैं। साक्षी ने अपने टीचर से कहा, “मैं अलग स्कूल में क्यों जाती हूँ? मेरे पड़ोस के सारे बच्चे तो मेरे घर के पास वाले स्कूल में जाते हैं। मुझे भी उसी स्कूल में जाना है।” एक दिन साक्षी की टीचर ने सरकारी स्कूल में फोन किया, “अच्छी खबर है साक्षी तुम सरकारी स्कूल का दौरा कर सकती हो।”

Shakshi wishes she could go to the government school next to her house. All of the children from her neighborhood go there. “Why do I attend a separate school? All the other kids in my neighborhood attend the school next to my house. I want to go to that school,” Shakshi often says to her teacher. One day, Shakshi’s teacher called the government school. “Good news Shakshi! You can visit the government school.”
The next day, Shakshi went to the government school. Her neighbor said to Shakshi, “Come sit next to me!” In class, they read one of Shakshi’s favorite books.
When they finished the book, the government school teacher asked questions. Shakshi didn’t understand the questions. Her teacher at the Special School would write the questions on the board so that Shakshi could read them several times. Shakshi raised her hand. “Can you write the questions down, Ma’am?”
The teacher wrote the questions on the board. Shakshi read them once... twice... three times. Then she understood. “Do you know the answer, Shakshi?” asked the teacher. Shakshi answered all the questions correctly. After class, the government school teacher said, “I am surprised that you read this book in the Special School. Come back tomorrow!”
Shakshi went back the next day......and then the next! The government school teacher discovered that Shakshi could learn in the same classroom as all of the kids in the neighborhood, with some small changes. Now, she writes all of her questions on the board. Now, Shakshi attends the government school. She gets good marks and has many friends. She enjoys being with the other kids. Shakshi’s parents are happy she attends a mainstream school. Shakshi’s disability is just one small part of what makes her special. She is a kid too, just like you.
What is a physical disability?
A person with a physical disability moves differently. Sometimes this means they are missing parts of their body, or that the muscles of their body function differently. Sometimes these people use wheelchairs, crutches or other tools to help their movement.
Sanjay's Story
This is Sanjay. He lives in a village in Gujarat. All the boys in the village like cricket and playing outside. Sanjay likes those things too.
All kids in Sanjay’s village are unique. Some are tall, some are short, some are fat, some are thin, some have short hair, and some have long hair. Sanjay was also born different. He was born without arms.
Sanjay’s parents never let him to go to school. “Stay inside!” said his mother. When he was little, Sanjay learned to hold pencil and write with his feet. No one taught him. He taught himself. At first, Sanjay’s writing was crooked and large. Now he can write better than many people in his village.
One day, Sanjay’s friend Deepak poked his face into Sanjay’s house. “Come play cricket with us Sanjay!” Although Sanjay couldn’t hold the bat, he was an excellent runner and often ran for the slower kids, earning more runs for the team.
“I wish you could come to school with us,” Deepak told Sanjay as they walked back home. “Me too,” said Sanjay. “Why don’t you sneak out and try?” said Deepak. Sanjay agreed, and they formed a plan to sneak him out of the house the next morning. All the kids cheered when their friend Sanjay met them the next morning to walk to school.
When the teacher came and saw Sanjay in the classroom, he frowned. “Sanjay, you can’t learn here. You won’t be able to write or turn the pages of the book. How will you eat lunch?” Sanjay didn’t get up. “Let me try”, he said. “Let him try!” the rest of the kids echoed. The teacher frowned. “You have one day,” he said. Sanjay sat next to Deepak. Deepak turned the pages of Sanjay’s book. When it was time for Sanjay to write, he sat on the floor next to his desk to write with his feet. His teacher was shocked and watched Sanjay complete the lesson in the same amount of time as the other kids.
That evening, the teacher walked back home with Sanjay. He spoke with Sanjay’s parents, who were angry that Sanjay went to school. He told them that with a few changes, such as letting Sanjay sit on the floor, it was very easy for Sanjay to learn at school. “Sanjay is welcome to come to school every day,” said the teacher. “He’s smart!” Sanjay’s parents were embarrassed by Sanjay. However, hearing this teacher speak about Sanjay’s intelligence made them realize that Sanjay could learn with the other children.
From that day, Sanjay woke up early and walked down the hill to school to learn, just like everyone else.
What is schizophrenia?
Schizophrenia is a type of mental disability. People with schizophrenia see things that nobody else can see, hear things that nobody else can hear, feel things that nobody else can feel and smell things that nobody else can smell. These are called hallucinations, and can cause people to act in ways you don’t understand. People with schizophrenia also have trouble sleeping, partially due to “night terrors” or intense, scary hallucinations.
Bhavika’s Story
Bhavika is in 12th standard. She attends a private school in Kolkata. Bhavika has always loved to read the newspaper. She wants to go to college to be a journalist.
One day, Bhavika was eating dinner out with her friends. A man with a hat stopped to talk to her on the street. “What do you want?” Bhavika said. Bhavika’s friends all looked at her with bewilderment. “Who are you talking to?” they said. Bhavika looked back and the man was gone.
Over the next couple of months, more and more people talked to Bhavika. Nobody else could see these people. Bhavika made a new friend named Pinky, but nobody could see her. “Pinky is real,” Bhavika told her friends. “She smells like jasmine,” she insisted to her mother, who was confused when Bhavika spoke with Pinky at dinner. “There’s nobody here, Bhavika,” she said.
भाविका की माँ और दोस्तों ने सोचा कि भाविका पर किसी भूत-प्रेत का साया है। भाविका के स्कूल के प्रिंसिपल ने उसके माता-पिता से सम्पर्क किया और कहा "भाविका अजीब ढंग से व्यवहार कर रही है।" भाविका की माँ उसे अस्पताल ले गई जहां डॉक्टर ने बताया भाविका को खजिल मानसिकता (स्किजोफ्रेनिया) जो कि एक प्रकार की मानसिक बीमारी है। डॉक्टर ने बताया "कभी-कभार कुछ लोग, खास कर युवा वर्ग कुछ ऐसी चीजें देखते हैं जो वास्तविकता में नहीं होतीं। वह हर बार नई-नई बातें सोचते हैं। अक्सर ऐसे लोगों को ध्यानपूर्वक कोई भी काम करने में मुश्किल होती है।"

Bhavika’s mother and friends thought she was possessed by a demon. Her principal contacted her mother. “Bhavika is acting strange,” he said. Bhavika’s mother took her to the hospital. The doctor told Bhavika and her mother that Bhavika has developed schizophrenia. “Sometimes people, especially young people, start seeing things that are not there. They think in new ways all the time. Sometimes it is hard for people with schizophrenia to concentrate.”
Bhavika’s family met with the principal. “Bhavika should drop out of school and attend a special school or get a job,” he said. Bhavika was devastated. She had to go to school, to graduate and become a journalist! The principal was afraid that she was possessed by demons, despite the fact that Bhavika and her family brought the doctor’s note.
Bhavika’s family went to the Special School. There, they met Neeta, a teacher who lives with schizophrenia. “I’ll never be a journalist now,” Bhavika told Neeta. “You are going to be just fine,” Neeta told Bhavika. “You are just as smart and capable as ever. I will help advocate for you and help you learn to concentrate again at your government school!”
Neeta took Bhavika and her family back to the local government school. The principal agreed to let Bhavika attend school again if Neeta was there to help. Neeta helped Bhavika learn to concentrate on the lessons in class. Neeta spoke with Bhavika’s teachers so that Bhavika could leave the room if she felt overwhelmed.
Bhavika passed 12th standard and was accepted to study journalism at a university in Kolkata. Sometimes her hallucinations interrupted her studies, but often she was able to concentrate and learn from the lesson. Because Neeta believed in her, Bhavika is now a budding journalist!
About Us

Angela Kohama specializes in inclusive international development with a focus on special education policy and policy implementation in South Asia. Angela has experience working on the ground in India in multiple schools for people with disabilities, in inclusive classrooms in the U.S. and in independent living centres for adults with disabilities, including creating program material for USAID’s “Building an Inclusive Development Community” project at Mobility International USA. Her career includes work with international NGOs such as Mercy Corps, HIV Alliance and the Community Aid and Sponsorship Program. As a William J. Clinton Fellow, Angela manages grants and programs at Shaishav, a grassroots NGO in Gujarat. She holds a Bachelor’s degree with Honors in International Development from the University of Oregon, with minors in Special Education and Religious Studies, and was a 2012 US Department of State Critical Language Scholar. At present she is a candidate for a Master’s Degree in Public Administration at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, where she plans to create innovative project design techniques to help practitioners include people with disabilities in the development process.

Dana “Coco” Vonnegut has worked in India in the development sector in education and livelihoods initiatives, and as a 2013-14 AIF William J. Clinton Fellow for Service in India. Coco utilizes illustration as a means of storytelling and community building at the intersection between Indian nationalism and popular images in public spaces. She has captured the oral histories of communities in Gujarat and Rajasthan through fieldwork with NGOs NYSICCSI and Khamir. Coco has dual Bachelor’s degree with High Honors and Excellence in Asian Studies and Art & Art History from Colgate University. She is a 2013 US Department of State Critical Language Scholar, Upstate Institute Fellow, and winner of the Henrietta Wagner Award from Colgate University for portraying the dignity of mankind through art. Coco is currently pursuing a Master’s degree at Columbia University’s Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies.
Gaytri Sharma is an experienced development professional specializing in agriculture and the environment, including organic farming. She is currently at Jagori Grameen, a grassroots organization based in Himachal Pradesh, where she has worked for more than a decade. During this time, Gayri has been instrumental in establishing livelihood sources for farmers through eco friendly practices, and has written two books on vermin compost and traditional method of seed storage and seed preservation. Gaytri has also worked for women empowerment and youth development, including training and mentoring community youth and village panchayats on issues encompassing adult literacy, national legislation such as the RTI Act, worker rights and the rights of farmers. Gaytri holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Indira Gandhi National Open University and is currently a candidate to pursue a Master’s degree in Development Studies at Azim Premji University with a goal of educating orphans and developing livelihood opportunities for women.

Meghana Rawat is a member of the 2013-14 AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship class, where she works with women and livelihood aspects in unorganized labor forces with a special focus on their technical and soft skill development in partnership with Purbanchal Maitri Development Society. She is an experienced communications professional, having worked in fashion and technology communications, taught communications in mid-level institutes, and volunteered with National Social Services to assist visually impaired students. Meghana’s interest lies in uplifting primary education, teaching and utilizing her communications skill for social development. In her career, she hopes to enhance the role communications can play towards achieving transparency and realizing impact. Meghana obtained a Master’s degree in Communications specializing in Public Relations and Marketing from University of New South Wales, Australia.