



CONCEPT NOTE FOR 9TH DHWANI- A SPECIAL FILM FEST 2023 CELEBRATING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The term persons with disabilities (PwDs) is used to apply to all persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. A PwD may be regarded as a person with a disability in one society or setting, but not in another, depending on the role that the person is assumed to take in his or her community. The perception and reality of disability also depend on the technologies, assistance and services available, as well as on cultural considerations.

World over, PwDs have to deal with negative stereotypes from society. PwDs are sometimes considered to be childlike and innocent, and are spoken down to. They are thought of as dependent and incompetent. The stigma surrounding disability is deep and PwDs are branded with derogatory colloquial terms such as blind, deaf, dumb, lame, mad, moron, and senile. In general, disability has been seen as a pitiable condition. The other extreme of such a perception is that a PwD is hailed as an overachiever, overcoming his/her disability/difficulties when he/she achieves something which is deemed “normal” for a non-PwD. This perception of “overcoming” the disability again focuses on the impairments of the person.

Thus, it is the society’s construct of disability which creates barriers for PwDs in addition to their impairments. The binary categories of ability and disability which corresponds to can and can not is deep rooted in the society which drives the way society looks at PwDs. This extreme reaction to disability is reflected in the way the society reacts to PwDs, from the daily behaviour, to the way institutions are built, to the way infrastructures are designed and the way policies are envisioned. It becomes imperative to understand the lived experiences of PwDs so that we can stop looking at them through the lens of either pity or awe. PwDs are humans who are struggling to lead dignified lives participating within their communities just like the rest of us. Excluding them from mainstream society or putting them on a pedestal is a grave injustice to PwDs. Removing the human component from PwDs and making disability the focal point we, as a society have failed to see them as participating and productive members. It is the society’s attitude towards disability which creates barriers for PwDs and prevents them from realizing their full potential depriving the society of their valuable inputs. By building on our experience with disability inclusion and deepening partnerships, we can support a sustainable and inclusive response to disability and Aaina plans to do exactly that through DHWANI.

Aaina through DHWANI A Special Film Fest since 2011 strives to showcase the deeper understanding and connectivity with disability through movies forcing viewers to think of disability at a different level and hoping a change in their mindset and actions in turn. The impact that the films have depends on the way the subject has been dealt with in the movies showcased. The rating criterion of documentaries has promoted a keen viewing of these films by the students of various streams. They think about disability issues at the most basic level and consider non-discrimination and equal treatment of persons with disabilities as fundamental rights. The festival also promotes the inclusion of people with disability. It encourages their participation in every aspect of life, be it education, access to health, livelihood, marriage and so on. The idea of inclusion alleviates the marginalization of people with disability and stresses on the environment and thought process that welcomes participation of all including people with disability.