

Different Bodies & Different Minds: Disability Studies & Neurodiversity Research

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Disability Studies and Neurodiversity scholarship in India is emerging and evolving. Our team has focused on the themes of care, autism, learning disabilities, women with disabilities, advocacy, and accessibility through qualitative research. Dr. Shubha's research on care and autism advocacy has explored the experiences of mothers of autistic children that highlight the everyday practicalities of parental advocacy, and more specifically, during the COVID-19 pandemic, capturing the interdependence between autistic adults and their parents. Her research has also entailed a critical inquiry into the curative practices in autism and narratives of families involved in such processes. Further, her research with autistic self-advocates has underscored the concepts of masking, vocabularies of expressions, and the nitty-gritty of doing advocacy.

Dr. Shubha organized an international conference on 'Rethinking Questions around Neurodiversity, Intellectual Disability and Care' in 2024 at IIT Hyderabad. More recently, she organized and curated a one-of-a-kind inclusive art exhibition- "Accessible Aesthetics: Art for All," at the State Gallery of Art in collaboration with Maqaam Foundation in March 2025. This was part of the project 'Inclusion and access in the context of disability art: A nexus between research, praxis and advocacy in India' supported by the Fall 2024 Researchers in the Global South Grant from the Society of the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). This exhibition was unique in its integration of art, accessibility, and research through patchwork ethnography that aimed to understand the mechanics of enabling 'access' at different levels and the diverse expectations and connotations associated with the term 'inclusion' for disabled artists, the public, viewers, and different kinds of participants.



Chetan's ongoing doctoral research focuses on the experiences of young adults with learning disabilities (dyslexia/dysgraphia/dyscalculia/dyspraxia) in the higher education context and how HEIs with disability centers support students with diverse learning needs.

It also includes comics-based research where the themes are conveyed through single-panel comics and additionally incorporates a participatory framework with workshops involving dyslexic self-advocates. Chetan's project "How do you see us? and how can you see us? A creative participatory research dissemination project on disability and neurodivergence in India" received the Fall 2024 Researchers in the Global South Grant from SPSSI, Division 9 of APA.

Illustrating the experiences of students with learning disabilities in higher education: Comics-based representation of fieldwork findings

Snippets from a comics-based representation of research article by Chetan S V published in Anthropology and Education Quarterly in 2024.

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Abstract
Comics-based /arts-based research is increasingly employed in anthropology and other social science disciplines. As part of my ongoing doctoral research

ILLUSTRATION 1 Dealing with the invisibility of learning disabilities. This panel is a digital remake of a panel from an artwork I did in 2021 while in college about showing the time I spent in the exam hall. It's a student in a classroom setting, who is a student with a disability in a classroom setting. The student is sitting at a desk, and the teacher is standing next to them. The student is looking at a sign that says "Disabled with the invisibility of dyslexia".

ILLUSTRATION 2 Making the invisible more visible through advocacy, awareness, and sensitive alternative scenarios to illustration 1. In this image, the college authority is sitting in Room 202 in a digital class showing time 05:20 in the college exam center. The officer came and a table for the student says, "So, here is my dyslexia certificate for the exam," and the officer says, "I'll make all possible arrangements for extra time and question paper reader. Let me know if you all the best," to which the student says, "Thank you." Below are a few questions—Can you let me know what your college more inclusive? and what does support mean to you?

This involves the co-production of 'zines' with participants about the research findings and lived experiences in English, Hindi, Telugu, and Kannada, aimed at increasing awareness about learning disability. Priyasha's master's research explored the lived experiences of disabled mothers in India, examining the balancing act they perform- proving their capacity as mothers in an ableist society while simultaneously redefining motherhood on their own terms. Priyasha is also a Research Assistant for a University of Amsterdam-funded project exploring the anthropology of intellectual disability in the Global South. In all, our research on disability and neurodivergence embraces critical, intersectional, and social-justice lenses to foreground different realities through qualitative methodologies. Our research hopes to shape our sensibilities and policies informed by disabled and neurodivergent voices. More importantly, our research practices embody care, self-care, kindness, and an acknowledgment of crip-space time.

FALL 2024 RESEARCHERS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH GRANT RECIPIENTS



- Left to right:
- Annet Shaju (CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, India)
 - Elizabeth Thomas (CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bangalore, India)
 - Chetan SV (Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, India)
 - Sabrina Paiwand (London School of Economics)
 - Shubha Ranganathan (Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, India)



Neurodiversity in the Majority World

Meet our speakers

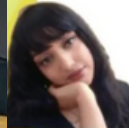
Vocabularies of inclusion: How Autistic voices in India are reframing personhood

Shubha Ranganathan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad. Her background is eclectic and interdisciplinary, having been trained in psychology but drawing on ethnographic approaches to questions around health, gender, and disability.



How do Neurodivergent Therapists Engage with Social Justice?

Anna Maria Jacob is a public mental health researcher and writer with OCD, based in Bangalore, India. As a researcher, she is engaged with projects studying the rehospitalisation of psychiatric patients, impact of arts based interventions for gender violence prevention, and suicide prevention among young people.



Sheffield Hallam University

Dr. Shubha was invited to speak at the Neurodiversity in the Majority World organized by Afro-Asian Critical Psychology and Sheffield Hallam University in July 2024

[1] Dr Shubha Ranganathan, Associate Professor

[2] Chetan S V, PhD Scholar

[3] Priyasha Choudhary, Alumna (Batch 2021-23), MA Development Studies, Dept of Liberal Arts



Image from the Exhibition of the Madhubani Paintings