



SISTER ACT!

AZRA and ARSHEEN | Were given something they always wanted—
a pretty pink frock and an Indian salwar suit.



Azra and Arsheen are two beautiful and intelligent sisters who live in Hyderabad with their family consisting of their father, Aleem Baig, who works hard on his interior designing business and their mother, a homemaker.

Azra is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Osmania University. She is a gold medallist from Koti Women's College where she did her post graduation. Her academic achievements are extraordinary

especially when you consider the adversities she has faced in life.

Arsheen is a second year B.Sc. student studying nutrition in the Royal College of Hyderabad. She loves participating in sports and drama competitions.

Both sisters suffer from a life-threatening illness. But instead of allowing their illness to thwart their progress, they chose to excel in academics. What struck us as extraordinary is that they used

their understanding of their illness to empathise and provide greater support to others facing similar trauma.

A young Arsheen would often get frightened of the routine blood transfusions that she and her sister had to undergo. She once asked her mother, "Will there be any end to this pain and infection?" However, their mother Abida remained undaunted. She often counselled her daughters that they were no different from other

young girls. They simply had to be a little more careful about their health, hygiene and environment.

When volunteers Sudha and Bhagyalakshmi of Hyderabad division of Make-A-Wish India met these two lovely sisters in the hospital where they had come for treatment, they began by talking to them about their general likes and dislikes. At first, the children were reticent but gradually opened up.

Azra said she loved playing board games with her cousins. Every evening she eagerly watched the popular television show, Son Pari. On inquiring a little more about her future plans, her face shone with hope and she said, "One day I will build my dream home—a lovely villa by the sea."

Arsheen was an outdoor soul who loved extra-curricular activities. She liked playing with her friends outside and also kept up with the latest trends in fashion and style.

The girls admitted that their illness had stunted their growth. Therefore, they sometimes felt awkward in school and around other girls their age. They also felt quite guilty about burdening their parents with the expense of having to compensate for their sadness by buying pretty clothes. A new outfit was always the happiness solution! A smiling Azra told our volunteer that a beautiful Indian salwar suit would do the trick while Arsheen wished for a pretty pink frock,

one that would make her feel like the cute girls in the movies.

The Hyderabad division of Make-A-Wish India immediately set upon the task of getting two fancy dresses for the young lasses. They took their mother into confidence regarding their shopping endeavours to make sure the girls would be pleased with the results.

Finally, the big day arrived. A grand event was organized by the governor's office at Rajbhavan. Twenty other families and our volunteers accompanied the Baig family. The air was charged with hushed excitement.



A SMILING AZRA TOLD OUR VOLUNTEER THAT SHE WANTED AN INDIAN SALWAR SUIT WHILE ARSHEEN WISHED FOR A PRETTY PINK FROCK.



The governor himself was handing out presents. When he called upon Arsheen to receive her gift, she accepted it shyly. She walked down the stage hurriedly and opened her gift and shrieked with joy when she saw her pink frock. She immediately began plans to wear it, hugged her parents and thanked us profusely.

Azra went up next and she was asked to speak a few words. There was quiet courage and determination in her voice. Midway through her speech, she choked on her words as she recounted the numerous medical procedures she had undergone. She spoke of an inner strength that pushed her to do her best, and in doing so, she unknowingly inspired other children to do the same.

Later that day when Azra wore her salwar suit, she confessed, "I have never felt this feminine before." Arsheen pranced about in her dress all day while blissfully ignoring her mother's chiding to save the dress for a special occasion.

The staff and volunteers of the Hyderabad division went home proud that day! However, they took home much more than a sense of pride. The girls had taught them a value of life, a value that made one's daily struggles seem paltry and suddenly no aspiration seemed too big. This wish fulfilment left us with an everlasting impact and gives us hope to live life Azra and Arsheen size!