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# Jagdish Patel

The Visionary



Dr. Bhushan Punani • Nandini Rawal



**Blind Men's Association**

Dr. Vikram Sarabhai Road, Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015 (INDIA).

5 SEPTEMBER, 1997  
(BIRTHDAY OF JAGDISHBHAI)

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Dedicated to

 *Jagdishbhai* 

A humble tribute to your vision, dynamism,  
your ability to inspire, your unflagging  
enthusiasm, your indomitable spirit. Your  
success in creating leaders.

Your acumen and most of all.....

..... Your zest for life

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## *Special Note*

In putting together this publication, our intention is not to deify Jagdishbhai or portray him as a superhuman. We are well aware of his failings, his inadequacies but we are more convinced of his strengths, his gusty zest for life, his adamant desire for change.

The publication seeks to make a note of his undeniable contribution and record it for posterity.

CONTENT	
Chapter	Page
I On the Untrodden Path	1 - 74
II Many Shades of the Visionary	75 - 130
III Thoughts of the Visionary	131 - 184
IV Tributes to the Visionary	185 - 264

# CHAPTER I

## On the Untrodden Path

**Kheda** District of Gujarat is known the world over for its milk and tobacco production. The White Revolution, a brain child of Dr. V. G. Kurien, has its origin in this region. This district is also known for sending the greatest number of *Patels* to all over the United Kingdom, Canada and Africa, for business and trade. Almost every household in the district has a number of family members abroad.

**1928:** Kheda District has a prosperous village called Borsad. On 5 September, 1928, a perfectly normal child was born in the family of Kashibhai Ishwarbhai Patel. The child was named 'Amrut', which means nectar. The child was subsequently renamed as 'Jagdish', which means Lord of the Earth.

Jagdishbhai spent the initial few months at his maternal uncle's place at Virsad, a prosperous village in the same district. He also spent a few years at Nadiad and then moved to Calcutta to join his father.

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### **On-set of Blindness**

The year 1936 witnessed an outbreak of meningitis in West Bengal. Jagdishbhai fell prey to this disease at the young age of 8 years and lost his vision due to paralysis of the optic nerve.

His father, a qualified medical practitioner, contacted the best doctors at that time in Calcutta and spent a lot of money for the treatment of his eldest son, but it was a hopeless prognosis. Jagdishbhai recalls that Dr. B. C. Ray, the most eminent Ophthalmic Surgeon of Calcutta, who subsequently became the Chief Minister of West Bengal, visited the Patel household on a regular basis while charging a princely sum of Rs. 64 per visit. Jagdishbhai later learnt that Dr. Niranjana Sarkar, a leading London based Ophthalmic Surgeon, also lost his eyesight due to meningitis.

As a child, Jagdishbhai prayed almost every day and begged that his eye sight be restored. His mother took a vow before *Baliadev* (God of Smallpox) that she would weigh Jagdishbhai in coins and offer all the coins to God if he regained his eyesight. This desperate plea of a distraught mother did not yield any results.

Ultimately during 1938, the family accepted his blindness as irreversible and sent him to the Calcutta Blind School at Behala, one of the oldest schools for the blind in India, as a day scholar.

Jagdishbhai's quest for regaining eye sight continued till 1962 when he visited Lourdes, a world famous pilgrimage of the Roman Catholic Christians in France, to have a dip in the holy water to regain his eyesight. The world over, there was a belief that if one takes a dip in the holy water, one would recover from any ailment. Jagdishbhai had read an article in the Reader's Digest about this holy place where thousands of people with hemiplegia, paraplegia and other ailments had recovered after the holy dip.

Many thousands of people visit this place, known for the Church of "*Appearance of the Holy Mary*" as they believe that the holy dip never fails. One finds at this place a large number of crutches and wheelchairs which have been left behind by people who have been cured.

Jagdishbhai, on completion of a professional course in London, travelled to Lourdes with the hope of regaining eye-sight. He reached there and to his utter surprise, there were thousands of people who had come from across the world to take the holy dip. A miracle, however, did not happen in Jagdishbhai's case. From this day onwards, he lost all hopes of regaining eyesight and reconciled himself to his blindness.

That day onward, he accepted his loss of sight as an integral and indivisible part of his life and stopped all attempts in regaining sight. In fact, when Sir John Wilson, former Executive Director of the Sight Savers International and Consultant to the United Nations Development Programme arranged eye check of Jagdishbhai with a leading eye specialist of London, he refused to go there. Similarly, when he visited the U. S. A., his sister Dr. Gita Trivedi, a medical practioner herself, wanted him to consult leading eye specialists of that country, he plainly refused to do so.

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### **Lasting Visual Memory**

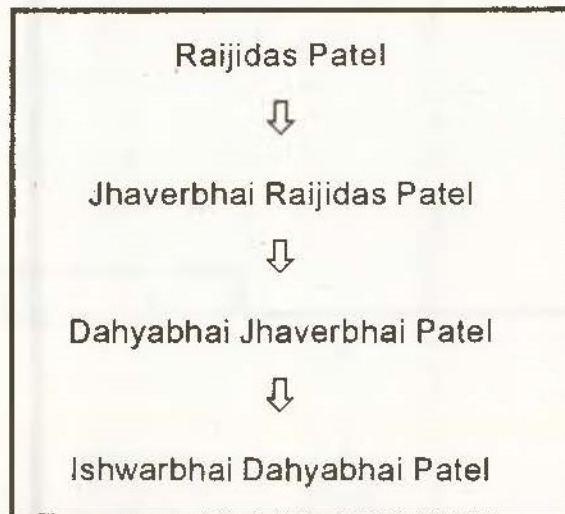
Jagdishbhai remembers only two scenes very clearly from his seeing years. Once while travelling by train from Mumbai to Calcutta, it was very cold, and he started shivering violently. His father thought that a rub down with hot water would thaw him. He ran to the steam engine and brought hot water which gave a lot of relief to him from the biting cold. This scene with a brass pitcher in his father's hand, with steam coming out in a spiral, the large wheels of the engine and the black smoke puffing out, has remained ingrained in his memory even today. This is a scene which is permanently etched.

As a sighted child, he was admitted to a Gujarati school in Calcutta. One day while playing, he hurt his foot and he was carried home with a stream of blood steadily pouring down. His father took stitches and bandaged him. This scene is indelible even after a gap of 60 years. His blindness has retained only these two visual memories. He is, however, unable to recall colours and the surrounding environment of these events.

## Family Tree

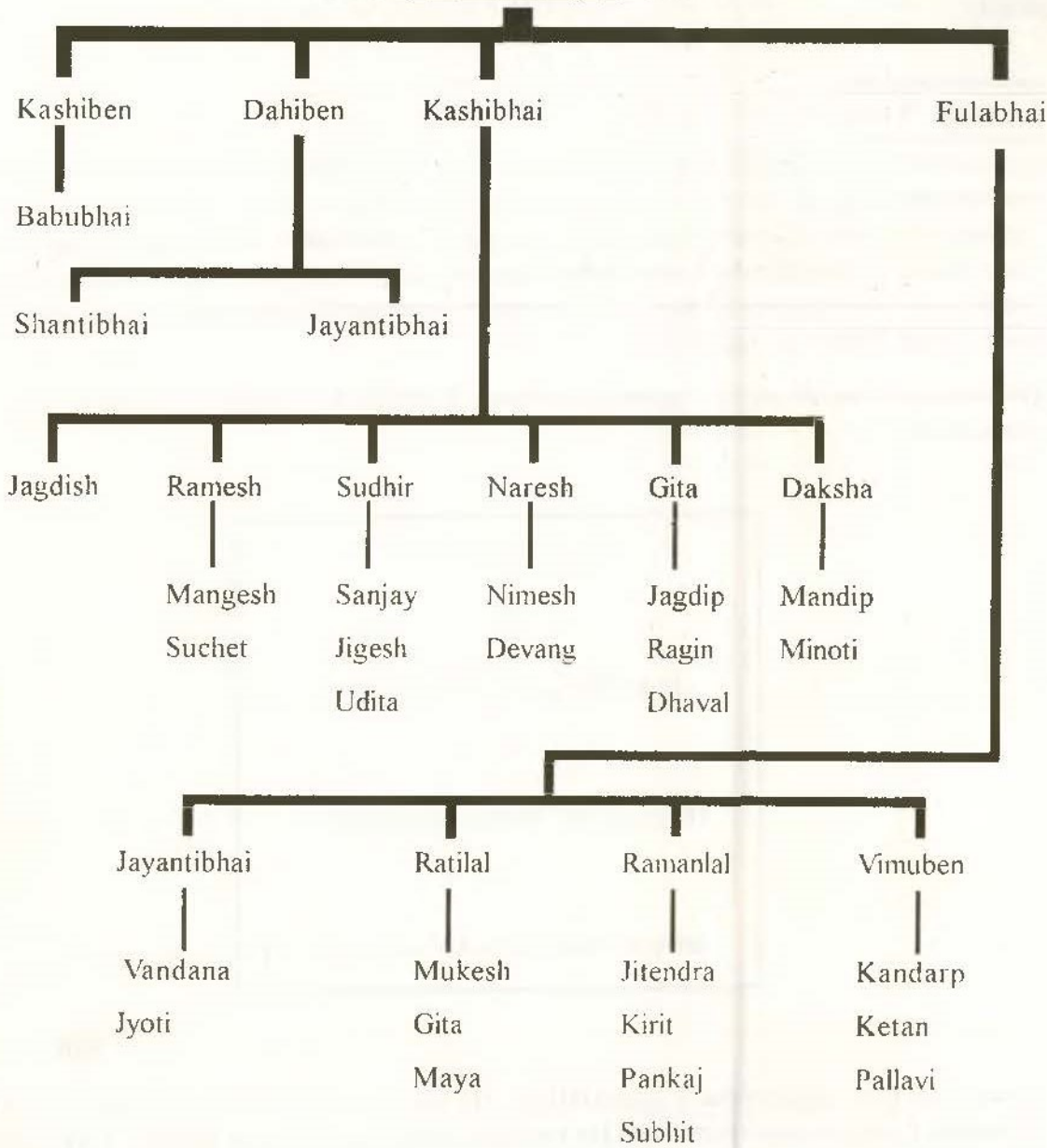
Mr. Sudhir Patel, Jagdishbhai's younger brother worked very hard to trace the family tree all the way up to the fifth generation. The biggest town of Kheda district is Nadiad which has a locality popularly known as Kakarkhad. In the beginning of the 18th century, Raijidas had established this locality. Most of the residents of that locality are descendants of Raijidas. The family tree establishes that he was the great great grand father of Jagdishbhai.

The names of heads of four generations from Raijidas downward could be traced as listed below:



Ishwarbhai was Jagdishbhai's grandfather. He had two sons and two daughters. Dr. Kashibhai Patel was the eldest son. He married Lalitaben of Virsad village. This couple had four sons and two daughters. Jagdishbhai has thus 3 brothers, 2 sisters, 6 cousin brothers and 1 cousin sister as listed below:

Ishwarbhai Dahyabhai Patel







*(a) Jagdishbhai and Nandiniben Munshaw during ICEVI Asian Conference.  
(b,c) Fountain-head of inspiration, Dr. Kashibhai & Smt. Lalitaben - parents of Jagdishbhai*



*Till death do us part, with wife Bhadraben*

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## **Ancestral House**

Most houses in Kakarkhad still belong to the descendants of Rajjidas Patel. As most of the family members have migrated to the U. S. A., Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Baroda, only a few of them live there and they are all retired. The ancestral house of Jagdishbhai bearing house No. 1331 in ward No. 8 of the Nadiad Municipality which originally belonged to Mr. Fulabhai Ishwarbhai Patel, uncle of Jagdishbhai has been donated to the Blind Men's Association. In fact, this house was purchased by Mr. Fulabhai from Mr. Vithaldas Trikamdas on 25 May, 1904 for Rs. 325 only. The only ancestral property of Jagdishbhai's family has been donated for promoting welfare services at Nadiad. To recognize the kind gesture of the family members of Jagdishbhai, the Govt. of Gujarat has granted exemption from the payment of stamp duty on the transfer of the house to the BMA.

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## **Family**

Dr. Kashibhai Patel, Jagdishbhai's father completed his medical education from Mumbai during 1919, the year known for the *Jalianwala Bagh* Massacre. He was very enterprising and in no time, he started his private practice at Kalbadevi in Mumbai. Due to family constraints, he had to leave Mumbai and had to perforce close down his clinic. He then took up a job as Sales Representative.

As he always wanted to establish his own medical practice, during 1928, he shifted to Calcutta, the most prosperous city of those years. He set up his clinic at Lower Chitpur Road in Calcutta. He had an excellent practice and was very popular among Chinese and *Marwadi* patients.

Due to World War II and the fear of aerial bombardments by the Japanese, a large number of Gujaratis decided to leave Calcutta. Dr. Kashibhai Patel also shifted back to Gujarat and started his practice on 9 August, 1942 at Ahmedabad. He died of a heart attack on 26 February, 1961 when Jagdishbhai was 34 years old. His mother, Lalitaben also expired of a heart attack in January, 1967.

As the eldest son, Jagdishbhai had to shoulder the responsibility of managing the complete family. He encouraged his 3 brothers and 2 sisters to continue their education in areas of their choice. He successfully managed the household, earned sufficient money to provide for their education and other expenses of his brothers and sisters. He struggled relentlessly to settle all of them in suitable professions. Bhadraben, his wife, was his faithful supporter in these tragic times.



*Jagdishbhai immediately after blindness*

All Jagdishbhai's siblings are well settled. His brother Ramesh with a Master's in Surgery is the most leading surgeon in Godhra, a town located in Panchmahal district of Gujarat; younger brother Sudhir who used to work for a nationalized bank, is now settled in the U.S.A.; the youngest brother Naresh is also well settled in the U.S.A.; sister Gita is a medical practitioner and is also settled in the U. S. A.; the youngest sister Daksha is happily married and settled in Mumbai.

Naresh feels that after the death of their parents in 1962, Jagdishbhai took the responsibility as a father. Naresh was only in the high school and youngest in the family. He worked hard to be independent as early as possible so that he was not a burden to the family. Jagdishbhai, however, encouraged him to pursue his studies further and provided support for the same. Naresh feels indebted to Jagdishbhai for the encouragement and support he provided during those 10 crucial years.

Jagdishbhai solemnized the weddings of all his siblings. Dr. Ramesh Patel got married in 1962. The wedding reception was attended by Mr. Mehendi Nawaz Jung, Governor of Gujarat, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, leading industrialist, and many other dignitaries of Ahmedabad. Sudhirbhai got married at the BMA campus in 1966. The following year, Dakshaben, Jagdishbhai's sister, got married to Mr. Manmadbhai Patel. Jagdishbhai lost his mother only one month prior to this date and to top the tragedy, Bhadraben's mother died only 4 days prior to this wedding. Despite this dual misfortune, Jagdishbhai went ahead with the original programme. The Mayor of Ahmedabad and the entire top management of the Lalbhai group attended the wedding.

Jagdishbhai arranged the marriage of Nareshbhai, his youngest brother during 1970 which was the last wedding arranged by him at Ahmedabad. The wedding of Gitaben, the younger sister, took place during 1977 in the U. S. A.

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## **Father's Role**

Mr. S. R. Amin, London-based maternal uncle of Jagdishbhai recalls, *"I met Jagdishbhai for the first time during 1948 when he was twenty and we both became good friends apart from being close relatives as well. During his initial years Jagdishbhai used to consult his doctor father for everything he did. The initial years of his blindness were very difficult. With the passing of time, he realized that with his vision, his opportunities are not lost. He started deriving pleasure from helping other brethren"*.

Mr. Amin adds, *"His father played a major role in shaping his destiny. Being an established doctor, his father sent him to Victoria Memorial School for the Blind, Mumbai. There he learnt communication skills as well as braille. As he belonged to a medical family, he found it easier to establish his practice in physiotherapy. His parents and family members enabled him to realize the value of human life. They also inculcated feelings of self-confidence which enabled him to develop his professional relations with a large number of leading personalities of Ahmedabad"*.

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## **Education**

### **1938: Calcutta Blind School**

An Indian Christian, Mr. Behari Lal Shah had established a school for the blind at Behala, Calcutta during 1887. This was one of the oldest schools for the blind in the country. After spending two years at home, Jagdishbhai was admitted to this school in 1938 as a day scholar. He studied there for three years and then left for Ahmedabad. Jagdishbhai fondly remembers his initial days at the school.

According to Ras Mohan Halder, *"This school was founded in 1887 by the late Mr. Lal Behari Shah on his own initiative. In March, 1899 the institution was given a public status, and in 1911 it was registered as society under the Societies Registration Act. The purpose of the school was to train and educate young blind of either sex, from 6 to 10 years for girls and to 14 for boys. The meritorious students were taken up through matriculation examination of the Calcutta University"*.

When Jagdishbhai was a student, of this school, 93 students including 74 boys and 19 girls were on roll here. During his short stay at Calcutta, he developed a very close friendship with his fellow students Madanlal Khandelwal, Shailesh Brother, Amin Abraham, Kaushalaya, Mira, Reba and Saraswati Mistry. Shailesh Brother came all the way to Ahmedabad to meet Jagdishbhai. Madanlal Khadelwal was his host when he visited the United Kingdom during 1961. He could not keep track of his other friends after he left Calcutta.

He also fondly remembers the Principal, Mr. Arun Ghosh and class teachers, Kalidas Babu and Kinkar Babu. During 1939, the school had a total strength of 112 blind boys and girls. The school was one of the oldest and probably the largest in the country at that time. The standard of education was quite good and Jagdishbhai remembers that his teachers were quite strict and believed in class discipline.

### **1941: V. M. School**

As informed by Mr. H. U. Joshi, former Principal of the School for the Blind, Navrangpura, the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind, Mumbai was considered one of the best and most progressive schools for the blind in the country at that time. Mr. Ras Mohan Halder mentions that this primary school with industrial classes had been established on 13 December, 1902. Dr. Nilkanthrai Chhatrapati, a medical professional, was invited to this school as its Principal. He had started a school in Ahmedabad during 1900 and his first step on becoming Principal was to take all his pupils to Mumbai and amalgamate this Ahmedabad school with the newly founded one in Mumbai. Jagdishbhai joined this school during 1941 as a student of the vernacular class.

## **June, 1941: Mehsana School for the Blind**

At that time, there was no school for the blind at Ahmedabad. The Baroda State had established a school for the blind and the deaf at Mehsana. Jagdishbhai was admitted to this school during June 1941 as it was felt that it would be better if he was educated in his home state. Jagdishbhai came in contact with Arvindbhai Vyas, Chandrakant Patel, Shivilal and Jairam. All of these became his life long companions. He remembers his teacher Jaam Saheb even today. He studied there only for 6 months and was shifted back to the V. M. School for pursuing his school education followed by his course in physiotherapy. The Mehsana school was not able to attract many blind children and it was subsequently shifted to Vadodara.

## **1944: V. M. School for the Blind**

Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas recalls that Jagdishbhai passed his vernacular final examination from the V. M. School during 1944 and took admission to the three years course in physiotherapy at the same school. This was the only school in the country offering a course in physiotherapy to the blind.

The physiotherapy course was started by Dr. Desai, father of Capt. H. J. M. Desai, former General Secretary of the National Association for the Blind (India). Dr. Desai had a paralytic attack and realized the importance of physiotherapy. He had read about the unique Course in Physiotherapy for the Blind run by the Royal National Institute for the Blind in London and he wished to replicate the same for India. He was the Principal of the school and took personal interest in initiating and developing this course. This humble person deserves to be given the credit for his far-sightedness, his vision, his uncanny ability to perceive physiotherapy as a viable option for the employment of the blind. When agencies were concentrating on imparting training in making of brooms, brushes, chalk, this gentleman was ahead of his times.

The V. M. School imported braille material from the R.N.I.B., London, subscribed regularly to the monthly and quarterly journals of physiotherapy, and started a course of three years duration. The standard of the course was not comparable to that run by the R.N.I.B., still it was a blessing for the educated blind persons.

Jagdishbhai recalls his physiotherapy teacher, Mr. A. S. Jagos, a qualified Physiotherapist who used to visit the school on his motorcycle in the evening between 5 to 6 p.m. to conduct classes in physiotherapy.

At the V. M. School, Jagdishbhai developed friendship with fellow students Vasudev Dave, Hira Kachhi, Mangubhai Shah and Shantibhai Zhaveri. He remembers two teachers Narandas and Lakshmanbhai very fondly. He also developed good interpersonal relations with the Principal, (Late) Mr. K. N. Jassawala, a well known educationist of the blind and the founder of the National Association of the Instructors of the Blind.

With a total student strength of 60, the school was very popular in the western part of the country. The staff of the school was very liberal and accommodating. In fact, students used to dominate the education as well as hostel activities. Jagdishbhai maintains that he developed his habit of having a nap in the afternoon during his stay at this school. He made a habit of sleeping between 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. He would always wake at 2 o'clock in the afternoon to attend the class conducted by the Principal.

In spite of his penchant for absconding from classes, he was the most popular student. He was always entrusted the responsibility of showing visitors around the school and charming them with his engaging manner. He was also the Editor of *Satya Prakash*, the official publication of the school. While he did not have any flare for instrumental or vocal music, he was a member of the school orchestra. By being a member of this orchestra, he got the opportunity of touring around India!

He was fond of garlic chutney which was not provided in the hostel meals. He cajoled the cook, tipped him regularly and got his stock of his favourite chutney!

Apart from his many friends in the school, he built up friendships with young ladies outside the campus. He remembers his two young friends, Frenny and Dolly, guests of Ms. Rani Khetwala, house mother of the school. Apart from reading lessons to him, Frenny and Dolly would take him to the movies on Sunday, provide him snacks occasionally at their cost. This friendship continued till he left the school during 1947.

Jagdishbhai's academic performance was outstanding. He stood first in the physiotherapy course. While doing his regular studies, he also completed certificate courses in cane-work, tailoring and weaving and scored first position in all these trades. He was the king performer in elocution and debate competitions of the school.

### **1956: Matric**

Along with his private practice in physiotherapy, Jagdishbhai appeared for the Matric examination as a private candidate from the Bharti High School and obtained 57 percent marks. He could appear for this exam only because of the dedicated efforts of Miss Vinoda Kanugo, who volunteered and read to him at four in the morning. As he was a busy physiotherapist by that time, this was the only time of the day that he could spare for his studies.

### **1962: Graduation**

After completing his matriculation, Jagdishbhai joined the Swami Narayan College, Maninagar. As he was very busy with his physiotherapy practice, he would hardly attend the college. He claims that he attended the college only for 2 hours on the first day, managed his attendance, and then prepared on his own. He recalls a volunteer who was a dedicated

reader, Ms. Suhasini of Devasana Pada, a locality in the walled city of Ahmedabad. His prowess in Sanskrit and her reading enabled him to pass his Sanskrit examination with flying colours. Similarly, Daksha Mehta, read out all his papers to him during his graduation. Mr. Jitubhai Trivedi, former Principal of the Secondary School for the Blind taught him logic.

He completed his graduation from the Gujarat University during 1962. Ms. Gita Satia, niece of Bhadraben Satia, helped him in writing the final examination. At that time, only a few blind persons had competed their graduation from this University.

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## **Professional Career**

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### **1947: First Job Offer**

Soon after acquiring his Diploma in Physiotherapy from the V. M. School for the Blind, Mumbai, Jagdishbhai started working in the Massage Clinic of the same School. He worked there for a period of six months and built up a group of clients who were very loyal to him. His first client was one whom he has never forgotten. She was one Mrs. Sabawala and she lived near Opera House. She was so happy with Jagdishbhai's treatment that she gave him a gift of Rs. 500, a princely sum in those days!

Family pressures forced him to return to Ahmedabad. The joys of independence were evident in the city and the textile industry was doing so well that Ahmedabad was known as the Manchester of India. Very few people knew about physiotherapy in those days and as he had no clinic and no recommendation, Jagdishbhai was without work for nearly six months.

When he was at the V. M. School, he had applied for a job at the K. K. Home and School for the Blind, Bhavnagar for the post of a teacher. This school was founded by the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, Mr. Krishna Kumarsingji on 6 January, 1932. When Jagdishbhai was jobless in Ahmedabad, out of the blue, came an offer letter from Bhavnagar. He went for the interview and was offered Rs. 40 per month. Jagdishbhai's shoes that he had worn during the interview cost Rs. 40! He was a man who loved expensive things, loved wearing the best clothes, how could a teacher's salary keep up his expensive lifestyle? He declined the offer and returned to Ahmedabad.



*First Patient*



## 1948: Medico Massage

His father, Dr. Kashibhai, realized his son's potential and felt that he would do well if he had a clinic. He, therefore, assisted him to set up his physiotherapy clinic "*Medico Massage*" at Khadia, a central part of Ahmedabad city on 1 January, 1948. His father who was very fond of him played a very important role in assisting him to establish his practice.

1948 saw a great increase in the number of polio cases and parents of such children came

to Jagdishbhai for massage. His first case in Ahmedabad was Mr. K. K. Thakore, a leading advocate. Jagdishbhai cured him and in gratitude, Mr. Thakore paid Rs. 100 per month. With his first earning, Jagdishbhai bought a radio which became his constant friend and companion. The radio gave faithful service for over twenty years.



*in Medico Massage*

## 1949: Calico Hospital

In 1949, Jagdishbhai's fame as a physiotherapist and the first blind physiotherapist at

that, had spread. He was invited by the Calico Hospital, a hospital started by the largest textile mill of that time. He was offered the post of Honorary Physiotherapist of the hospital.

Jagdishbhai still remembers his first meeting with the textile tycoon, Sheth Shri Ambalal Sarabhai. Mr. K. N. Chhatrapati, brother of Nilkanthrai Chhatrapati, founder principal of the V. M. School for the Blind, Mumbai, took him to meet Shri Sarabhai. Jagdishbhai wore a suit and felt hat and was introduced to the owner of the Calico Mills. Jagdishbhai told Ambalalbhai that he would give him physiotherapy treatment but he would charge Rs. 7 per visit. Ambalalbhai was impressed by this tall and good looking young man who was so confident inspite of his handicap. So started Jagdishbhai's association with Ambalalbhai. He went to the latter's house every morning at 9.00 a.m. and while massaging him, learnt about the intricacies of business and handling of people. This practical training from a genius stood Jagdishbhai in good stead all throughout his life. Ambalalbhai became his anchor and recommended him to the top businessmen of Ahmedabad.

## Home Visits

Soon the good news travelled across the whole city and Jagdishbhai was acclaimed as a leading physiotherapist. He used to start his practice from 5 a.m. and would call it a day only at 10 p.m. His clients included:

- Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, leading Industrialist of Ahmedabad
- Ms. Bhartiben Sarabhai from Sarabhai family
- Ms. Sarladevi Sarabhai
- Ms. Mrinalini Vikram Sarabhai, leading Danceuse
- Ms. Anarkali from Sarabhai family
- Mr. Harshvadan Mangaldas, former Chairman, IIM, Ahmedabad
- Ms. Kanchan Gauri Harshvadan Mangaldas
- Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, doyen of the "Lalbhai" textile group
- Mr. Inderjit Chimanlal, a Textile Mill Owner
- Mr. Chinubhai Naranbhai, a Textile Mill Owner
- Mr. Dungaji Daruwala, a well known Weaving Master
- Mr. Mahendra Chimanlal, a Textile Mill Owner
- Mr. Ramesh Kapadia, Manager, ICI
- Mr. G. L. Sheth, former Home Secretary
- Dr. Sumant Shah, a leading Cardiologist
- Mr. K. K. Thakore, a leading Advocate

### 1951: Association of Natwarbhai Patel, a blind Physiotherapist

Natwarbbai, a life-long companion of Jagdishbhai recalls "*In the first encounter itself, I found Jagdishbhai a very impressive person. By that time, Jagdishbhai was a well established and a very famous Physiotherapist. I had the distinction of assisting him as Physiotherapist in his Medico Massage clinic from 1965 to 1976. I parted company after he discontinued his flourishing practice and decided to devote himself completely to the development of the Blind Men's Association. At that stage, I was always planning to migrate to the U. S. A., hence we decided to close our Medico Massage Clinic. In fact, whatsoever proficiency I have achieved in physiotherapy, it is mainly due to his encouragement, guidance and support*".

His life-long companion Natwarbhai not only assisted Jagdishbhai in his profession, he also encouraged and supported him to initiate services for blind persons. Natwarbhai clearly remembers and narrates the initiative of Jagdishbhai, "*My first encounter during 1951 brought me so close to him that we decided to establish a Recreation Club for*

*the Blind in 1960. This Club was the first milestone in the long journey that Jagdishbhai took. The ultimate triumph of the quest was the formation of a large conglomerate as the Blind Men's Association. I, however, never played any active role in the administration of the BMA. While Jagdishbhai was busy establishing and managing his blind welfare activities, I handled his professional activities. In fact, I was handling three-fourth of his work load in physiotherapy".*

### **1960: L. G. Hospital**

As he had already become a very popular physiotherapist, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation invited him to join as Honorary Physiotherapist at the L. G. Hospital, Maninagar. At this hospital, he came in contact with a large number of medical professionals. He also had the opportunity of handling a large number of poor patients who could have never afforded a visit to his private clinic. After a while he was appointed as a part-time paid physiotherapist. He continued in this post till he retired at the age of 60 years in 1988 after his service for 28 years.

### **1964: Approved Physiotherapist**

The Employee State Insurance Corporation appointed him as an approved Physiotherapist. All members of the ESIC who required physiotherapy could avail it from Jagdishbhai's "*Medico Massage*" clinic. This arrangement brought in a stream of patients requiring physiotherapy, massage etc. and continued till 1973 when Jagdishbhai decided to close his private practice due to his increasing and active involvement in blind welfare activities.

### **1966: Gulab Bai Hospital**

He was appointed by a leading charitable hospital situated at Relief Road, a main business area of Ahmedabad, as Honorary Physiotherapist for a period of 2 years. As he could not cope up with his hectic schedule, he relinquished charge in 1968.

### **1971: Blind Physiotherapists Association**

Mr. Anil Patel of Junagarh approached Jagdishbhai with a request to establish an association of blind physiotherapists. Jagdishbhai, immediately convened a meeting of all the blind physiotherapists of Gujarat. All the members decided to establish the "*Blind Physiotherapists Association*" with Jagdishbhai as the founder President and Mr. V. K. Vithlani as the Secretary. For the convenience of the Secretary, the headquarters of the Association was kept at Rajkot. Jagdishbhai subsequently relinquished his charge as President during 1973. Vithlani, however, continued as the Secretary till his death during 1995. Vithlani very fondly remembered his first interaction with Jagdishbhai which gave a new meaning to his life and career.

The Blind Physiotherapists Association has remained dysfunctional and in a dormant

condition for many years. Jagdishbhai is now planning to convene a meeting of its members to rejuvenate and reactivate it. Most members are depending upon Jagdishbhai to give it a healing touch.

### **1976: Curtain Drawn**

After a very lucrative, well established and roaring practice as the most leading Physiotherapist for 28 years, Jagdishbhai decided to wind up his practice to devote his full time to blind welfare and such developmental activities. He decided to close down his both "*Medico Massage*" clinics at Khadia as well as Relief Road. He also dissociated from the insurance corporation. He transferred his occupancy rights of the basement of the N. L. Trust building at Ratanpole, Relief Road, which housed his clinic, to the Blind Men's Association. The BMA in turn established its first showroom "*Handika*" for selling various products manufactured by the blind and disabled persons in this same basement.

He, however, continued his attachment with the L. G. Hospital, but he started devoting his full time towards developmental activities. During his visit to L. G. Hospital, his life time secretary, Mr. Ramchandra would also accompany him to read his mail, plan correspondence and do other developmental work. Thus the L. G. Hospital, during the last 11 years, was more of his mobile office.

His retirement on 5 September, 1988 from the L. G. Hospital was an end to an exciting and lucrative career as a well known Physiotherapist.

### **Professional Achievements**

Jagdishbhai is proud of his professional background. He considers his private practice as an important ingredient of his success. It was during his regular discussions with Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, doyen of textile and chemical industry, that Jagdishbhai learnt table manners, etiquette, general principles of administration and learnt the value of time. He learnt to maintain his timings and to be punctual. He also understood the importance of personal grooming, proper presentation, sophistication and appropriate dressing etc. Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai played an important role in helping to build up Jagdishbhai's private practice in physiotherapy. He introduced and recommended him to his family members, friends and other leading industrialists of Ahmedabad. Mrs. Mrinalini Sarabhai and Mr. Harshvadan Mangaldas were introduced in this manner.

Jagdishbhai was always happy in taking up complicated cases where the possibility of success was remote. He loved challenges and taking risks. He derived great satisfaction whenever he treated a difficult case and achieved encouraging results. He proudly recalls the case of Mrs. Lilawati Shirish Badshah who fell down from the fourth floor of her house. She was rushed to L. G. Hospital, Maninagar with at least 18 different fractures of varying complexities. Dr. Nanubhai Desai, Superintendent of

the hospital referred the case to Jagdishbhai for physiotherapy treatment. He gave her passive as well as active exercises for 12 months at a stretch. Lilawati recovered completely and had no residual problems. For a person whose prognosis was poor and chances were bleak, Mrs. Badshah lived a fully participative and functional life.

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## **Craze for Cars**

As a student, Jagdishbhai always dreamt of owning a car. His burning desire was to earn well, live a life of comfort and to own a car. After starting his private practice during 1948, he started saving with the objective of owning a car.

His mother, Mrs. Lalitaben was also very keen on fulfilling his desire. She withdrew Rs. 1800 during 1950 from her life time savings and purchased a second hand Austin car for Jagdishbhai. His happiness found no limits and he decided to visit his clients in this car.

He changed to Hindustan-10 during 1951, to Baby Austin during 1952, to Hindustan-40 during 1955 and to Desotto car in 1965. Till 1967, due to financial constraints and family responsibilities, he could manage to purchase only second hand cars. He borrowed Rs. 18,000 from the Blind Men's Association and purchased a new Standard Car during 1967. This was beginning of his owning a new car which he maintained thereafter,

He purchased a second car during 1971 for the use of Bhadraben. He went on to a new Ambassador car during 1978 which he used till 1983. His brother Naresh Patel, Non-resident Indian settled in the U. S. A. gifted him a new Ambassador car purchased during 1984 under deemed export scheme.

To keep pace with changing time, he shifted to Maruti 800 during 1987. He, however, shifted to a comparatively bigger and more expensive NE-118 car during 1989 which he is using till date. He, however, wanted to own Ceilo, a luxurious and expensive car.

Through his career span of 35 years, he owned a variety of cars. For him, owning a car is essential. His quest for a better and more sophisticated car still persists---

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## **Wedding Bells**

### **1951: First Encounter**

Bhadraben Satia comes from a leading Jain family of textile traders. As per the Gujarati tradition, the suffix 'ben' is added to her name. Her uncle Mr. Chandubhai Satia was President of the Maskati Market, the biggest wholesale textile market of Ahmedabad. She and most of her family members participated in the Indian Independence Movement. Fair, delicately built, with long flowing black tresses, she met Jagdishbhai for the first time

in 1951 at his clinic "*Medico Massage*" at Khadia. She was appearing for an interview for a job at the Light House for Blind Girls. As the salary for the post was very low at Rs. 100 per month, Bhadraben declined the offer.

After a few days of their first meeting, Bhadraben took her younger sister Indira, who got injured, to Jagdishbhai for physiotherapy treatment. She took her sister daily to *Medico Massage* for one month for this purpose. She started helping Jagdishbhai by reading the newspapers, letters and other material. Their acquaintance deepened into friendship, they realized that they shared a mission and a vision and they decided to get married.

Bhadraben's family follows *Jainism* and was one of the well known families in Ahmedabad. Her parents had great hopes of her marrying a textile tycoon, as the textile industry at that time was dominated by *Jains*.

When she informed her family that she wanted to marry a person who belonged to another caste and who was blind, they were aghast. They cajoled, threatened, emotionally blackmailed her and ordered her to stop meeting Jagdishbhai.

Bhadraben remained very firm and expressed her strong desire to go ahead with the wedding. Usha, wife of Mr. Prafulbhai Vyas, a close friend of Jagdishbhai acted as the messenger and letter carrier.

### **1958: Wedding Ceremony**

Both of them remained firm in their commitment and much against the wishes of both families and society, they got married on 25 April, 1958, at the home of Mrs. Vinodini Nilkanth, a progressive social worker. Mr. Gattubhai Dhruv, President of BMA, Raja Pandya, Ushaben Vyas, Daksha Patel, Vinayak Amin, Jagdishbhai's uncle and Ramesh Patel, Jagdishbhai's brother attended the ceremony which was performed as per *Arya Samaj* rituals.

They made a striking couple - a tall fair, handsome man and petite girl with delicate features. The bride wore a simple, handspun cotton saree, no jewellery - so rare a sight in India. This unique and unconventional wedding became the talk of the town for days on end.



*Wedding Ceremony*

Bhadraben's family refused to accept the wedding. Mr. Chandubhai Satia, her uncle played a very significant role in prevailing upon the family to accept this wedding. The family, was left with no choice than to accept the wedding within a few weeks.

Jagdishbhai brought Bhadraben to his residence at Maninagar. His mother showed a certain amount of resistance as Bhadraben belonged to a different religion and caste. As other family members including Jagdishbhai's father accepted the marriage gladly, Bhadraben found easy acceptance in the Patel family over time.

The most revered and popular saint and social reformer of Gujarat, respected Shri Ravi Shankar Maharaj was the first person who visited Jagdishbhai's residence and blessed the newly married couple. His visit, in a way, was his implied consent to this inter-caste and inter-religion wedding. While blessing, he advised Bhadraben, "*Always be prepared to sacrifice without any expectation of any gains from society*". Bhadraben always acted upon this advice.



*Just Married*

On the second day, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai, textile tycoon of Gujarat, invited the newly married couple to his residence and blessed them. Vinodaben Desai, Secretary of the Light House for the Blind Girls, extended her fullest cooperation and even provided new clothes to Bhadraben who had left her house empty-handed. (Late) Mr. Vinayak Amin, Jagdishbhai's uncle and Income Tax Commissioner also supported this wedding and advised other family members to accept it.

After a tumultuous beginning, they settled down in their lives and started planning new programmes for the blind. They mutually decided not to have children and thus devote themselves totally to the welfare of the blind

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## **His Life-long Mission**

Jagdishbhai has won the unique distinction of establishing and developing a large number of blind welfare organizations in Gujarat and elsewhere. He inspired and initiated schemes

for establishing such organizations and enriched them with the active participation and involvement of local persons who were hand-picked for the cause. Most of these organizations are need based, encompassing available resources and functioning for the social and economic rehabilitation of the disabled. These organizations have become models for other agencies.

### **1947: Foundation of BMA**

A historical meeting of a few leading blind persons was convened at Surat in October, 1947, immediately after India attained independence, under the presidentship of a well known blind barrister and the founding father of Blind Men's Association as well as the National Association for the Blind, Mr. Rustomji Meherwanji Alpaiwala. Mrs. Tehmina Alpaiwala, Mr. Balwant Bhatt, Mr. Kanak Trivedi, twin brothers Kanti and Shanti Shah, Mr. Siraj Basrai, Mr. Mangulal J. Shah, Dr. T. K. Modi, Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas and Jagdishbhai participated in the meeting. They all unanimously resolved to establish the Blind Men's Association under the leadership of Sardar Dawar T. K. Mody, a leading lawyer of Surat.

Dr. Vyas maintains that it was in this historic meeting in which Jagdishbhai also actively participated that the Blind Men's Association was born which ultimately became a vanguard in the movement of developing blind welfare services in India. The founding fathers of this movement decided to convene the first provincial conference for the blind at Mumbai during 1948 under the chairmanship of Mrs. Lilawati Munshi, wife of Mr. Kanhayalal Munshi - a renowned novelist under the auspices of the Blind Men's Association. The first All India Conference for the Blind was organized by this group in Mumbai. This conference resulted in the formation of the National Association for the Blind which is today a premier national level blind welfare and development organization in the country.

### **1950: BMA Ahmedabad**

By 1950, the Blind Men's Association which was founded at Surat in October, 1947 got fragmented into three independent organizations, one each at Ahmedabad, Pune and Mumbai. Jagdishbhai, one of the founders of the Surat BMA, founded Blind Men's Association at Ahmedabad on 4 April, 1950 with no office premises and no staff. Since its inception during 1950, Jagdishbhai has been its Founder General Secretary and the guiding spirit. The first President of the organization was Mr. Nagardas Arjundas Chavda, a blind person. He had gained good reputation in the field of music.

Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai donated a house at Kameshwar Ni Pole in the heart of the walled city of Ahmedabad. Jagdishbhai along with other members of BMA started the Maganbhai *Kendra* (Centre). All the members of the Association met every Saturday night and Sunday morning. They used to contribute for the expenses of this Centre themselves.

### **1952: National Association for the Blind (India)**

The NAB was established on 19 January, 1952, by a resolution of the First All India



Conference on Work for the Blind held in Mumbai. Jagdishbhai was one of the organizers of this Conference. It was registered as a Public Charitable Trust under the Mumbai Public Trusts Act 1950 (Bom XXIX of 1950) on 12 May, 1953 and also registered as a Society under Indian Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on 21 July, 1954.

In 1952, the NAB had no funds, no office of its own, and no staff. Today after 44 years, it is recognized as the foremost national organization working for the welfare of the visually impaired in India. Its financial strength as on 31 March, 1996 is depicted below:

*Table:*

**Financial Strength of the NAB**

S.N.	Item	Rs. in Millions
a.	Trust Funds	24.23
b.	Other earmarked funds	48.66
c.	Immovable properties	15.35
d.	Investments	47.06
e.	Movable assets	6.39
f.	Expenditure (1995-96)	18.72
g.	Budget (1996-97)	37.49

Jagdishbhai has always been elected as one of seven Secretaries of the NAB (I) for every triennial term through an election process. In his term during 1993 to 1996, he could not attend most of meetings of the Managing Committee as well as Executive Committee of the NAB (I), he has been once again elected as Secretary of for the term 1996 to 1999.

He has served as Chairman and Member of number of committees of the NAB. He was appointed Secretary of the NAB Rural Activities Committee on its inception during 1982. He was elevated as Vice-Chairman during 1984 and then as Chairman during 1990. As he is based at Ahmedabad, the Central Coordinating Office of the NAB RAC is located at Ahmedabad since its inception during 1982.

**1954: Light House for the Blind Girls, Ahmedabad**

Jagdishbhai with the financial support of Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai established a centre exclusively for blind girls at Memnagar village near Ahmedabad. He became the founder Secretary of the Centre. During these days, Jagdishbhai was also preparing for his matriculation examination. He used to visit the Centre regularly for learning English from Manju Chacha, uncle of Mrs. Vinodaben, another Founder Member of the Centre.

The Light House is now a well-run special school imparting education and vocational

training to about 200 blind girls. It also provides hostel facilities to blind girls pursuing higher education. Jagdishbhai who was instrumental in establishing the Centre had to part company in 1966 due to certain inter-personal conflicts.

### **1956: Recreation Club**

All the members of the Association decided to establish a Recreation Club for the blind. The first six members of the Club included Jagdishbhai, Arvind Vyas, Praful Vyas, Nanalal Kanabar, Ochhavlal Shah and Nagardas Chawda. Praful vyas worked as Secretary of the Club. Ochhavlal used to prepare tea and snacks etc. By 1960, the membership of the Club increased to 13. The new members included Biharilal Shah, Jaggabhai Darji, Chinubhai Shah, Chinubhai Patel and Giriraj Shankar Gaur.

The activities of the Club included chess, playing cards and reading braille books. Ms. Ranna Patwari, daughter of Mr. Prabhudas Patwari, a well known social worker, used to read news to the members of the Club. There was no radio in the Club and television had yet not been introduced. Thus listening to newspaper was the only mode of receiving daily news.

Jagdishbhai was very popular among the members. He used to read foreign braille literature and share the latest information with them. He also used to narrate success stories of blind persons in other parts of the world. During 1961, the Recreation Club was closed down.

### **1958: Prisoners Transcription Project for Braille Circulating Library**

Mr. Kevin Carey, former Overseas Director of the Sight Savers International, U. K., in one of his letters written in 1995 remarked that he was busy developing an innovative project on production of braille material with the help of prisoners in London. What Kevin was developing as innovation in the nineties, Jagdishbhai had introduced and perfected in 1958!

Jagdishbhai embarked upon a new concept of involving the prisoners of Sabarmati Central Jail at Ahmedabad for embossing of braille books. He approached Mr. Rustom K. Anklesaria, Superintendent of the Central Jail with this thought. Mr. Anklesaria, a very enthusiastic and devoted Parsi gentleman immediately gauged the potential in this thought and supported Jagdishbhai. The first of 10 prisoners were taught braille during 1958 and within a few weeks braille books were available to blind readers in Gujarat. The Jail Authorities even allotted a room, popularly known as "*Braille Barrack*", granted permission to BMA to station one staff in the jail, and accepted the project as an official project.

Encouraged by the performance of prisoners and consistent efforts of Jagdishbhai, the Jail Authorities decided to provide proportionate remission from Jail sentence against embossing of braille books. While the organization pays an honorarium of Rs. 60 for 100

pages embossed, a remission of 1 day is given for 45 pages embossed. One of the prisoners is also providing services as *Johdar*, a responsible person. He is paid an honorarium of Rs. 90 per month for his services.

Even today, the *Braille Barrack* exists. The organization has placed Manubhai Barot, a blind person, for teaching braille and coordinating braille book production on a regular basis. So far, the prisoners of Sabarmati Jail have embossed 15,000 braille volumes for the C. N. Braille Library.

### **April, 1958: Beginning of Life-long Trio**

Kanubhai lost his vision in the month of May 1952 due to vitreous hemorrhage while pursuing his M. Sc. (Research) in Bio-chemistry. He had to discontinue his higher education as he could not perform laboratory experiments and could not manage a writer for his thesis on the subject, "*Ascorbic Properties of Vegetables & Fruits and Seeds of *Celetrus Peniculatus (Mal-kangdi)**".

As he lost all hopes of completing his education and pursuing any meaningful profession, he took recourse to meditation. He followed the preaching of *Shankracharyaji* of Jagannth Puri. During 1952 to 1957, his only pursuit was meditation, yoga, *mantras* and following the preachings of his Guru. Due to intuition from within, Kanubhai wanted to meet Jagdishbhai. Smt. Shushilaben M. Thaker, Kanubhai's sister-in-law, traced the address of Jagdishbhai and took Kanubhai to him during early April, 1958. His first encounter was at the *Medico Massage* - physiotherapy clinic of Jagdishbhai at Golwad, Khadia.



*Kanubhai A. Thaker*

When Kanubhai approached Jagdishbhai, the latter was treating patients. As Shushilaben had already given Kanubhai's case-history, Jagdishbhai started teaching braille to him in the first meeting itself. Kanubhai, in the first encounter itself, experienced in Jagdishbhai a great dynamism, rationalism and desire to do something for his blind brethren. The latter had a seemingly impossible dream to establish an institution on the lines of Shantiniketan for the blind.

Kanubhai saw in Jagdishbhai an outstanding person who could achieve anything he desired. So far, his profession of physiotherapy was concerned, he had a deep knowledge and great affection towards his patients. His patients were attracted because of his result-oriented and successful treatment.

During subsequent meetings, Jagdishbhai, through discussion and narration of successful

case studies, developed self-confidence in Kanubhai. The outcome of the discussions held in the Recreation Club, was a group decision to establish a centre for those adult blind who were devoid of any kind of education or rehabilitation. Kanubhai learnt from Jagdishbhai that there was a lack of such opportunities due to ignorance and negative attitude of the parents as well as a deep-rooted social stigma toward disability.

Jagdishbhai encouraged Kanubhai to establish a centre for the adult blind. He entrusted to him the complete responsibility of establishing such a centre. By this time, Bhadraben Satia, a lecturer at S. L. U. College for Women had come in contact with Jagdishbhai and Kanubhai and had subsequently married Jagdishbhai. She had an ardent desire to do some meaningful social work. She supported Kanubhai in this task of establishing the Adult Training Centre for the Blind during 1960, which over the next 40 years emerged to be the largest and economically viable on-the-job training centre for the blind.

Kanubhai was reborn after his meeting with Jagdishbhai. That meeting transformed him from a passive life as a meditator to an active educator of the blind. He along with Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben formed an ever-lasting trio on the Managing Committee of the BMA. His association with Jagdishbhai grew from strength to strength over 40 years. It had turned out to be a life long association. Kanubhai was reckoned to be one of the most leading educators of the blind, promoter of residential education for the adult blind as well as integrated education of blind children.

Kanubhai left for his heavenly abode suddenly and unexpectedly on 8 March, 1997 at 9.30 p.m. The Times of India, Ahmedabad edition published the following news item "*In the City Today*" column:

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### **Hail, Kanubhai**

*"The inmates of Blind Men's Association (BMA) would never forget 45-year-long dedicated services of 68-year-old blind Kanubhai A. Thakar, who died here last week. For BMA, Kanubhai was a persistent hard worker who had totally devoted his life for the welfare and rehabilitation of blind people.*

*Kanubhai, a bachelor, became blind at the age of 23, when he had to appear in the post-graduation examination. Undeterred by the blindness, Kanubhai joined BMA and relentlessly worked for the blind. Interestingly, he retired way back in 1988 as the Principal of the Secondary School for the Blind. But his love for the betterment of blind could not separate him from the institute. He already had two heart attacks; that did not keep him away from BMA work.*

*Even after retirement, Kanubhai continued to work full time honorary Director (Education) for BMA till the end without earning anything. On the contrary, he donated Rs.*

30,000 to BMA for increasing the facilities for the blind people. From every month's salary, he used to donate small amounts to blind students to enable them to meet routine expenses.

*Kanubhai who had won prestigious R. M. Alpaiwalla National Award for outstanding contribution to the welfare and rehabilitation of blind, was instrumental in setting up a school for the adult blind. His dedication to the blind people is evident from the fact that on 8 March, the fateful day, he worked till 8.30 p. m. in BMA and went home where he died due to severe heart attack".*

### **1959: Beginning of Braille Reading and Writing Competition**

Mrs. Rehmat S. Fazelbhoy, a well known educationist of the blind and a fund-raiser, met Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben during 1959, when she had just entered the field of blind welfare as a teacher of blind children. She recalls, *"Their welcome was warm and sincere and their enthusiasm in their projects for the blind was infectious"*. She could not help feeling that with this kind of dedication and devotion, to their self-chosen vocation, the complex for the blind at Ahmedabad would develop into one of the finest projects in the country.

With her newly acquired diploma for teaching the blind children, she felt that she knew everything there was to know about how the little ones should be taught and cared for. After a patient hearing about her ideas and how she proposed to implement them. Jagdishbhai remarked, *"You are talking like a 'Mother Superior'. Many things which you have just said may be good for England but they will not work in India. Very soon you will learn how to use this knowledge for our children who live in poor conditions and, in many cases, whose parents are quite illiterate."*

How right he was and how fruitful this first encounter turned out to be! She found herself totally unsuited to teach in a school for the blind for two main reasons. Firstly, there was the language barrier for she could not speak or communicate in any of the regional languages. Secondly, she found that much of the energies of the school committee members as well as the staff were utilized in raising funds to keep the school going rather than in educating the children who were in their care.

She, therefore, turned her energies in different directions. In every project which she wanted to implement, it was Jagdishbhai whose opinion she sought and valued. The first unusual project she started was a braille reading competition for children in schools for the blind in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Jagdishbhai's participation was enthusiastic. He motivated all the schools for the blind in Gujarat to join the programme and, for the first time a large contingent of children from Gujarat came to Mumbai to meet and compete with their peers from Maharashtra.

So enthusiastic was his approach to this new idea that, two years later, he hosted the first All India Braille Reading Competition at Ahmedabad in which 200 children from all over India participated.

### **1960: Adult Training Centre for the Blind**

Bhadraaben recalls that Rajpal, a 25 year old, congenitally blind orphan and a beggar by profession, came to Jagdishbhai's *Medico-Massage* to meet him in 1956. He was very enthusiastic and wanted to give up begging and live a life of dignity and respect.

He felt very happy to meet Jagdishbhai who was earning almost Rs. 5,000 per month and was by then Ahmedabad's leading Physiotherapist in the city. He considered Jagdishbhai as a role model and symbol of great achievement.

Impressed by Jagdishbhai's achievements, Rajpal started visiting the Recreation Club almost daily. He used to tell stories, sing songs and play the *Dholak*. The members decided to dissuade Rajpal from begging. The major question was his survival.

Already the N. S. D. Industrial Home for the Blind was founded on 1 April, 1917 at Mumbai for imparting on-the-job training in weaving, cane-work, wire-work, cardboard box making and knitting string-bags to the adult blind. Jagdishbhai had already observed the functioning of this centre. The plight of Rajpal encouraged him to replicate such an experiment at Ahmedabad. The members unanimously decided to start the Adult Training Centre for the Blind. The President of the Blind Men's Association, Mr. Jaikrishna Harivallabhdas also supported the idea. The Centre was registered as a Public Charitable Trust under the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950 and a Society under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1862 on 30 December, 1965.

Jagdishbhai borrowed Rs. 1,000 from his kind-hearted father, Dr. Kashibhai Patel. With this initial capital, the group purchased a set of one dozen cups and saucers, one stove and other such items. Mr. Ochhavlal very generously donated one bag of wheat. Bhadraaben recalls that they used to visit each and every shop in the grain market to solicit donation of grain etc. Mr. Arvind Sahiba, President of the Grain Merchants Association used to help in this endeavour.

Along with Rajpal, Shivaji Patel, Mohan Sitapara and Ramji Prajapati joined the Centre as the first batch of trainees. Handloom weaving and braille writing were introduced as the first activities. Mr. Mavji Macwana joined as the first Instructor of the centre.

*Recognition of the Government:* Jagdishbhai approached the Director of Social Welfare, Govt. of Gujarat to grant recognition to the Centre. The Department carried out inspection and granted the certificate of recognition on 1 June, 1961 which reads as follows:

*"This is to certify that the Adult Training Centre for the Blind and the Sheltered Workshop for the Blind situated in Maganbhai Kendra, Raipur and managed by the Blind Men's Association, Ahmedabad is a grant-in-aid institution of this department".*

Subsequently, the Department also recognized the Adult Training Centre for the Blind (Hostel) for providing boarding and lodging facilities to 275 blind persons. The Department provides grant-in-aid for the staff salary of the hostel and kitchen staff, admissible expenses and meals expenses of Rs. 225 per inmate per month.

### **1960: Blind Welfare Organizers Association**

Jagdishbhai invited all the leading workers and organizers in the field of blind welfare for a State Level Convention organized at Kameshwar Ni Pole, official head-quarter of the BMA. Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas of Mumbai, Mr. Bhikhabhai Shah and Mr. Nanalal Kanabar of Rajkot and many other workers attended the convention. Gujarat was bestowed a separate statehood on 1 May, 1960. The convention was organized immediately after that to attract attention of the state authorities. The participants resolved to approach the Govt. of Gujarat for evolving the grant-in-aid code for extending assistance to blind welfare organizations.

Jagdishbhai was always dynamic and forceful in his approach with the State Government. He was instrumental in getting heads of all disabled welfare agencies to combine together to have negotiations regarding salary code, procedure of release of grants. Due to this cooperative stance, Gujarat is the first state to have a standard code for Grant-in-aid. NGOs and the State Government have a very good equation and healthy respect for each other.

Through the efforts of Jagdishbhai, Anantbhai Shah of Bhavnagar, other members of Viklang Sanstha Sanchalak Sangh and Mr. R. K. Shah, former Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare, Govt. of Gujarat has evolved and adopted the most liberal Grant-in-aid code for the disabled welfare organizations. The staff of the disabled welfare organizations are entitled to almost all the benefits available to other government employees.

### **1960: C. N. Braille Circulating Library**

The Chhotalal Narsidas Braille Circulating Library which is housed in the building donated by Sheth Mr. Indubhai Dahyabhai in the memory of his late father Mr. Dahyabhai Maneklal Shah has a pride of place in Gujarat. The Braille Library has proved to be an invaluable gift to its blind members. It has more than 15,000 volumes ranging from educational text books, novels in Gujarati literature and books on general reading etc.

The members of this library who come from different parts of India are secure in the fact that almost all aspects of knowledge can be obtained through the books available here. Every year, 400 blind members, who availed the library services free of charge, helped

themselves to this store house of knowledge. Braille books are mailed to the houses of blind readers all over Gujarat.

Rajnikant P. Patel with a Certificate Course in Library Sciences joined the library in 1973 when the library had only 6000 volumes. Before that Kailashben and Purnaben Jhaveri had provided their services for developing this Library. Late Ramanbhai Andhariya, a blind person provided his services as a proof reader in the library. The library used the services of blind persons and the prisoners of the Sabarnmti Central Jail for producing the braille books using braille slates. Ramanbhai used to proof read these books and then put them in the library.

*Braille Library for Children:* The Lions Club of Ahmedabad (Main) supported a section in the Library for the blind children during 1989. The section known as *Lioness Club of Ahmedabad (Main) Children's Library* has acquired 600 volumes. It has enrolled 10 organizations for the blind and 25 individual blind children. This section provides story books and books on general knowledge to blind children.

*Expansion of Library:* As the library building is packed to capacity, the organization constructed one more floor during 1996 to expand the library services. This section is named as *Lioness Karnavati Smt. Ruxmaniben Deepchandji Gardi Braille Documentation & Research Centre*. Shri Dipchand Gardi, a well-known philanthropist, provided a donation of Rs. 3 lacs and Lioness Club of Karnavati raised another Rs. 2 lacs for this purpose.

### **1962: Land for Campus**

Jagdishbhai invited Major Bridges, Director, American Foundation for the Overseas Blind, now known as American Foundation for the Blind for a visit to Ahmedabad. A public function was organized in the ATIRA Auditorium. This visit generated a lot public interest and awareness about the services for the blind in the U.S.A.

Encouraged by this visit, Mr. Mehendi Nawaj Jung, Governor of Gujarat, paid a visit to the Maganbhai Kendra at Kameshwar ni Pole which housed all the activities of the Blind Men's Association. It is reported that Mr. Jung himself had a blind friend. Therefore, he took interest in services for the blind. He assured all assistance of the State Government to the organization for promoting services for the blind.

Jagdishbhai wanted to encash this opportunity and requested the Hon'ble Governor to allot a piece of land for constructing a building for the organization. A number of prominent citizens including Mr. Arvind Buch, President of the Ahmedabad Textile Labourers Association, Mr. Arvind P. Sheth, a known printer, and Mr. Arvind Sahiba, President of the Ahmedabad Grains Merchants Association supported the idea. Bhadraben followed up the matter with the District Collector and officials of the Revenue Department.

Ultimately, the BMA was allotted 5,759 square yards of land near village Vastrapur.



This plot of land accommodates the present head quarters of the BMA and other institutional programmes. This piece of land was cleared as "Non Agriculture" land on 14 March, 1962 by the City Deputy Collector, Ahmedabad.

*Additional Land:* The Ahmedabad Education Society, a leading educational society of Ahmedabad allotted 3038 square yards of land to the BMA at a nominal rate of Rs. 10 per square yard through deed of conveyance on 28 January, 1966. With this addition, the BMA till that date had acquired 8797 square yards of land. Shri Arvindbhai, Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben worked very hard for acquiring these adjoining plots of land. The Deed of Conveyance was signed by three of them on behalf of the organization.

*Land for New Campus:* A news item appeared in Gujarat Samachar, a leading daily newspaper of Ahmedabad, that according to Government Notification, the BMA would be provided land near Vastrapur village for promoting services for the blind. Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben followed up this matter. On 7 June, 1973, the Government of Gujarat allotted 4840 square yards of revenue-free land to the organization. On this plot of land which is 700 meters away from its Central Campus, the organization has established the *BMA Lioness Karnavati Hostel for the Blind Women*; and the *C. N. Kinariwala CIDA Asian Rehabilitation Training Institute*.

*Additional Land for Campus:* As the organization was expanding its services during the 70s, it required additional land for constructing a building for the recording studio. It once again approached the Ahmedabad Education Society with a request to allot 2,000 square yards of land. The Society allotted this land on 3 September, 1982 at a Government approved nominal rate of Rs. 75 per square yard. With the acquisition of this land, the total plot size of the campus increased to 10,797 square yards.

The organization has recently made an application for the allotment of revenue-free 25,000 square yards of additional land near village Vastrapur

### **1963: First Building**

The Lions Club of Ahmedabad decided to donate Rs. 25,000 for the construction of the first building in the Vastrapur campus. Mr. Arvind N. Lalbhai who subsequently became the President of the BMA motivated this donation. This building was completed during 1964 and hostel and schools were started in this campus. Bhadraben recalls that the campus was isolated and there was no metal road. They had to pass through shrubs and traverse muddy roads to reach the campus



Fortunately, the campus of the Indian Institute of Management was taking shape at that time only. Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, eminent nuclear scientist and institution builder used to visit IIM to monitor progress of construction of buildings. He used to meet Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben and always inquired about the progress of construction etc.

This building today houses the Cama Secondary & Higher Schools for the Blind, Adult Training Centre School for the Blind, Principal's office, staff room and the central store. This building is the centre of learning of the BMA.

### **1963: Braille Periodical 'USHA'**

Praful Vyas observes that Jagdishbhai was very popular among his blind friends as he used to read lot of published material, listen to radio and gather information from his patients and share the same with his friends. He also used to write a column on blind welfare services for Gujarat Samachar, the most popular local daily newspaper. To share such information with other blind persons who were not able to reach him personally, Jagdishbhai started a quarterly newsletter in Braille.

The earlier copies of the newsletter were produced on braille. With the establishment of the H. N. Makim Regional Braille Press, the copies were produced in the braille press. This was a very popular newsletter among the blind readers. During 1979, its name was changed to *Pratibha* and it was printed in Gujarat as well as English ink-print and Gujarati Braille. The English edition was distributed to readers all over the world.

*BMA Newsletter*: As the Registrar of Newspapers, declined to register the name "*Pratibha*", the name was once again changed to *BMA Newsletter* during 1987. It is published every quarter in English and Gujarati in ink-print and in Gujarati braille and distributed to its readers all over the world. The Ministry of Welfare provides grant-in-aid for its publication under the Central Scheme of Assistance to Organizations for the Disabled.

### **1964: National Association for the Blind - Gujarat State Branch**

By the early sixties, the National Association for the Blind (India) was the country's most premier non-governmental voluntary organization. It had also acquired the status of a national organization. It entrusted the responsibility of nomination of Indian delegations to a number of international conferences and world assemblies.

Jagdishbhai was the one of the Members of the Executive Committee of NAB (I). As NAB (I) was planning to expand its activities at the national level, its Executive Committee decided to establish State Branches all over the country. The first State Branch for West Bengal was established at Calcutta. However, this was not much functional. The NAB (I) decided to establish the Gujarat State Branch during 1964. Mr. Mehendi Nawaj Jung, Governor of Gujarat inaugurated the Branch on 25 October, 1964 in the premises of the Blind Men's Association.

Jagdishbhai has been the Founder Honorary General Secretary of the Branch since its inception. The Branch has played a significant role in the development of services at the grass-root level. The first project launched under the Branch was establishing an Employment & Placement Services with the financial assistance of the head-quarter during 1967. Oliver and Nandubhai Panchal were the first Placement Officers appointed by the Branch.

The Ministry of Finance has recognized the Gujarat State Branch under section 35 AC of the Income Tax Act, 1961 for the Assessment Years 1997-98 to 1999-2000. It would enable the Branch to extend an incentive to the donors in terms of 100 percent exemption from the income tax.

### **1964: Secondary School for the Blind**

Jagdishbhai was always keen on promoting education of blind persons. During the early 60s, there was no provision for secondary or higher secondary education for blind students in Gujarat. As a student of the Calcutta School for the Blind, he had learnt that the Calcutta University was conducting matriculation examination of the meritorious blind students.

Jagdishbhai with the help of (Late) Kanubhai Thaker started a pilot project of conducting private classes for the Music Teachers of the Blind for imparting them secondary level education. The first batch of 5 students appeared for the secondary level examination as private candidates through Bharat Secondary School Khadia for the secondary board examination. Thanks to the keen interest of Mr. B. V. Bonde, Principal of Bharat Secondary School as well as Mr. Bhanot, Chairman of the Secondary School Examination Board that this unique arrangement could be possible. As Mr. Bhanot had a blind niece, he was very sensitive to the needs of the blind.

During 1963, Mr. Badlani, Director of Secondary Education paid a visit to the organization and showed his satisfaction with its progress. Jagdishbhai inquired whether it was possible for the Department of Education to grant recognition to the organization to run a Secondary School for the Blind. Mr. Badlani took personal interest and granted recognition to such a school for the first time in Gujarat. The school started admitting blind students for standards VIII to XI.

Mr. Jitendra M. Trivedi was promoted as Principal of the school. The first final examination for the secondary level was held during 1967. The school achieved 100 percent result during its first year itself. The school has always achieved 90 percent or higher results. Due to agitation of select school staff which coincided with the widespread *Navnirman* Movement, the school was closed during 1974.

### **Higher Secondary School for the Blind**

(Late) Kanubhai Thakar took over as Principal of the School and re-started with fresh

recognition during 1975. He also managed recognition for the Higher Secondary School for the Blind during 1976. As Kanubhai himself was a science graduate, he took the lead in starting the science stream for the blind students.

Encouraged by the achievements of this school, Navrangpura School for the Blind, Ahmedabad; Govt. School for the Blind, Junagadh; School for the Blind, Amreli, and K. K. School for the Blind also applied for and got recognition for imparting secondary level education to the blind.

*Vocational Stream:* BMA took the lead in initiating a Stenography Course under the Vocational Courses Scheme of the 10+2 stream from the academic year 1989-90. Jagdishbhai always felt that blind persons can be trained in almost every trade with some adaptations. The BMA standardized the Gujarati Braille Shorthand system with the collaboration of the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun as part of a research project. The students of this course have passed with flying colours and proved Jagdishbhai's words. Yahya Sapatwala, a blind person learnt braille shorthand and used it with effect for taking down notes. He completed his post-graduate and is currently doing his Ph.D. under the guidance of Mr. Kumarpal Desai, a noted literature. Yahya is one of the many blind persons who have completed their stenography course and are pursuing brilliant career.

### **1967: Music School for the Blind**

One of Jagdishbhai's close associates, Praful Vyas encouraged him to impart training in music to the blind students. The first batch of 11 students appeared for *Prarambhik to Madhyama* during 1961. Slowly and steadily, number of aspirants started increasing and the organization felt the need for establishing the Music School for the Blind from the academic year 1967-68. In the first batch, 66 blind students joined the school. The school was granted affiliation by the *Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal* on 5 February, 1971.

Jagdishbhai motivated Ratilal M. Solanki, a blind person with Diploma in Music from the M. S. University, Vadodara to join the school as Music Teacher. Subsequently, Baldevbhai D. Prajapati, with the same qualification joined the school as teacher. Then Chaturbhai B. Patel, also with the same qualification, joined the school as Teacher and has continued ever since. Satyanarayan R. Tiwari completed *Sangit and Siksha Visharad* joined the school as Band Master subsequently.

The school provides training in music upto *Shiksha Visharad* level which is recognized by the Gandharva School of Music, Miraj, Mumbai. This school enables trained blind persons to get jobs as music teachers or be self employed. The school taps the musical potential of blind students and helps them to blossom into professional musicians.

Jagdish Mehida, a student of this school, who completed *Visharad*, joined the M. S. University Faculty of Music and completed Master of Music. He joined the IPCL

School as Music Teacher. He is earning Rs. 12,000 per month. Similarly a large number of other students completed Bachelor of Music as well as Master of Music and pursued suitable career in teaching of music. Piyush Dave, Aljibhai and Jayant Vyas who completed *Visharad* from the school are now Radio Artists. Natwar Solanki and Urvis Mehta have already released their audio cassettes. Similarly, Kutubudhin Moraswala runs his own music group. 11 blind students of the 1996-97 batch have lent their voice and played musical instruments for producing public awareness cassettes for *Jan Kalyan*, a leading non-governmental developmental organization. The blind students of the school are very popular as folk singers and musicians and they are in great demand during the *Navratri Garba Festival*.

During 1967 to 1997, about 1219 students appeared for various examinations, 95 completed *Visharad* and 35 of them completed *Shiksha Visharad* from the school.

### **1 August, 1967: NAB P. N. M. Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, Mount Abu**

Through the generous gift of a bungalow and three acres of land given by Smt. Khorshed Gharda to the National Association for the Blind in memory of her two sons Pheroze and Noshir at Delwada Road, Mount Abu in Rajasthan, a rehabilitation centre for providing need based services to the newly blind was established. The Committee of Management constituted Mr. Arvind N. Lalbhai as Chairman, Mrs. Queenie H. C. Captain as Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Khorshed Burjor Gharda, Mrs. Coomi Pheroze Merwanji, as representatives of the donor. The Committee of Management appointed Jagdishbhai and Capt. H. J. M. Desai as Secretaries and Bhadraben Satia as Director of the Centre. Mr. Kantibhai Upadhaya, Babu Ramchandra, Thakur Devi Singh, Parvez Merwanji, Dr. Rajendra Vyas as Members played an instrumental role in establishing this centre. During the initial years, the Centre was managed by Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben from Ahmedabad.

This is the first full-fledged rehabilitation centre for the newly blind in India. It aims at adjusting and orienting the newly blind and those who have no formal training after blindness. The centre trains the adult blind in orientation and adjustment, personal management, personal grooming, orientation & mobility, various handicrafts and vocations.

Just take up this topic with Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben and they will narrate detailed stories of their shifting all the furniture, raw material, food items, staff and even the trainees in their Desotto car. Mount Abu being a small isolated town in those years, they have to put a lot of efforts and maintain the supply line from Ahmedabad. Jagdishbhai served the centre as Secretary from 1 August, 1967 to 30 September, 1988 for almost 21 years. After that he was appointed as Member of the Advisory Committee of the Centre. This has been the only Centre providing rehabilitative services to the newly blind persons in the western part of the country.

### **1968: Technical School for the Blind**

To promote technical education of blind persons, the organization established the Technical School for the Blind for the first time in India. The schools has been recognized and funded by the Director of Technical Education. The examinations are conducted by and the certificates are awarded by Technical Examination Board. It was through the efforts of Jagdishbhai that the Director of Technical Education, for the first time, agreed to recognize technical courses for the blind. The school imparts one year training in various trades viz. general mechanic, electric motor rewinding, carpentry practices, hand & powerloom weaving, cane-work, coir-work and card-board work.

### **1969: Regional Braille Press**

During 1969, the National Association for the Blind Regional Braille Press was established at Ahmedabad. The NAB (I) provided braille embossing machine and stereotypers. The Victoria Braille Press was manufactured during 1942 in the United Kingdom. The NAB Gujarat is still using this out-moded machine. Shankarbhai Patel and Piyush Sanghani assisted Jagdishbhai in establishing the Press. Futarmal J. Porwal, himself a blind person and an ardent follower of Jagdishbhai joined the Braille Press as Manager on 1 October, 1976 on a monthly salary of Rs. 450 per month. Futarbhai has always been a very close associate, companion and follower of Jagdishbhai. He has been successfully handling the Central Scheme of Aids and Appliances since 1981. He has distributed aids and appliances to the needy disabled persons across the State of Gujarat worth Rs. 20 millions.

The Department of Social Defence, Govt. of Gujarat provides 100 percent grant for the maintenance of the staff and for other recurring expenses. The staff gets all other benefits available to employees of the State Government. From the year 1992, the Braille Press has been named as H. N. Makim Braille Press in the memory of Mr. Makim, a blind entrepreneur and close friend of Jagdishbhai.

### **1973: Archana Natvarlal Kinariwala Talking Book Library**

All educational material necessary for the blind is not always available in Braille. This creates a host of problems for blind persons desirous of pursuing higher education. Jagdishbhai took the lead and approached the Ministry of Welfare to provide grant-in-aid for establishing the Talking Book Library. The Ministry sanctioned a recurring grant of Rs. 7,780 and non-recurring grant of Rs. 11,890 for this purpose. The Ministry has been providing the grant-in-aid under the Central Scheme of Assistance to the Organizations for the disabled for the maintenance of the project.

The Vice President of the organization, Mr. Natwarbhai Kinariwala very gracefully contributed Rs. 1,90,000 for the construction of a new building for the library. Smt. Sheela Kaul, former Minister of Social Welfare & Education, Government of India laid the foundation stone on 6 June, 1982. The former President of India, (Late) Giani

Zail Singh inaugurated the project on 12 December, 1985.

The organization imported the latest recording equipment from Studer International, Switzerland for producing audio cassettes of the best quality. During 1989, the Canadian International Development Agency provided a financial support of Rs. 2,70,000 for purchasing recording equipment, cassettes player and the cassettes.

Popatlal J. Solanki joined the project as Radio Engineer and played an important role in initiating the production of audio cassettes. Prabhudas Yadav took over as Radio Engineer during 1978 and developed the recording facilities to the present level. This library is the most well equipped cassette library established by any blind welfare organization in the country.

### **1973: Adult Training Centre (Workshop) for the Blind**

This 'on-the-job' training centre was established to provide transitory employment and 'on-the-job' training to the blind and disabled persons of all categories. In this centre, training is provided in carpentry, general mechanics, motor-rewinding and book winding.

Since its inception during 1973, the objective has been to manage it as a financially viable entity. While the primary objective has been expediting economic rehabilitation of disabled persons, associated objective also has been recovering the complete cost on training through the sale of various products manufactured by the disabled persons.

### **1973: Multicategory Training Centre for the Handicapped**

The Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India had evolved a scheme of extending assistance to multi-category workshops for the handicapped under the Central Scheme of Assistance to the Organizations for the Disabled. Jagdishbhai, as enterprising as ever, submitted his application for grant-in-aid. The Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped was one of the five such workshops in the country which was recognized by the Ministry for the purpose of grant-in-aid. The first installment of Rs. 30,000 for recurring expenditure and Rs. 30,000 for non-recurring expenditure was released vide sanction letter No. F.8/101/73/HW on 22 March, 1974, followed by a grant-in-aid of Rs. 1,00,000 for equipment on 30 April, 1974. In fact, this was the first grant-in-aid from the Ministry to the Blind Men's Association. Since then, the organization has been receiving grant-in-aid regularly every year mostly for the recurring expenditure.

This centre provides on-the-job training in simulated industrial settings. The blind and disabled trainees are selected on the 1st and 15th of every month and given training after their residual abilities, aptitude and dexterity are checked up by a Vocational Counsellor, a Welfare Officer and an Occupational Therapist. The trainees are imparted training in various trades viz. light engineering, commercial design, files & stationery, tailoring, composing, printing and book-binding.

The trainees are imparted training for a period not extending 2 years. They are assisted by the Employment & Placement Services of the organization to get employment on completion of training. During the period of their training, they are paid a stipend in the range of Rs. 300 to 550, depending upon their performance, regularity and progress in training. So far, 980 students have been enrolled in the training centre.

### **1974: Lock-out of the Institute**

Jagdishbhai recalls that 26 April, 1974 was the darkest day in the history of the Blind Men's Association. The Principal of the Secondary School for the Blind, Mr. A. P. Trivedi convened a meeting of the parents of blind students in the prayer hall. The students, parents and staff instigated by the Principal and other voluntary workers decided to launch an agitation against the management. A number of speakers made provocative speeches against the management. The major issues were quality of food, general behaviour of Jagdishbhai and lower salary of staff.

The Vice-president of the Adult Training Centre for the Blind, (Late) Mr. Indrarvadan Pranal Shah, an industrialist and a strong person volunteered to negotiate on behalf of the management but it was of no avail. At that time, the whole of Gujarat and particularly, Ahmedabad was in the grip of the *Navnirman* Movement. The centre of this agitation was L. D. College of Engineering which is just a kilometer away from the organization.

All colleges, schools and educational institutions in Gujarat were closed for over six months. The Government and the then Chief Minister, Chimanbhai Patel had to bow out in the face of opposition.

All those present in the Prayer Hall took a procession to the Department of Social Defence at Lal Darwaja. Blind students of various educational programmes of the organization joined the agitation. In all, about 100 persons went on indefinite fast. The first reaction of Jagdishbhai to this agitation was "*I did not expect so much*".

Praful Vyas confirms that he along with Dhiru Davariya and Nandu Panchal tried to persuade the students not to go on strike but could not succeed. Slowly, most of the students went away home and a number of teachers also followed suit. Thus the number of agitating students and staff was reduced to a small number. At this stage, Shri Ravishankar Maharaj, Reverend Saint of Gujarat and leader of *Navniraman* Movement advised Jagdishbhai to hand over administration of the organization to the Department of Social Defence, Govt. of Gujarat. Honourable Governor of Gujarat, Mr. Vishwanathan also intervened in the matter.

With tears in their eyes, Jagdishbhai, Bhadraben and Nandiniben Munshaw, three Secretaries, handed over administration of the organization to Mrs. Singhla, Director of Social Defence. At this moment of great crisis, Shri Arvind Lalbhai, Nandiniben Munshaw, Manubhai



D. Shah, Bhadraben Satia, Arvind P. Sheth, Indravadan Pranlal Shah, all members of Executive Committee of BMA stood by the side of Jagdishbhai.

This crisis was mainly caused by A. P. Trivedi, Principal of the Secondary School for the Blind and Shrikant Shah, Shankarbhai K. Patel and Vandanaaben Nagarsheth, all volunteers of the organization. The major cause of this agitation was interpersonal conflicts between this group on one side and Jagdishbhai on the other side.

A. P. Trivedi & group however did not take charge of the organization and decided to establish a new organization. They set up a secondary school for the blind named as "Andhjan Uttarmadhyamik Shala" at Keshavnagar, Sabarmati under the auspices of another well-known social welfare organization "Sadvichar Parivar". All the teachers loyal to A. P. Trivedi were accommodated in this school. Even the students who decided to part company were admitted in this school.

The *Sadvichar Parivar* acquired 60 acres of land near village Uvarsad near Gandhinagar, the Capital of Gujarat. It had planned to establish a modern, well equipped and economically viable centre for all categories of disabled. The Keshavnagar school was also shifted to this campus. It also started the technical school for all categories of disabled, a production cum training centre and an agriculture training centre for the disabled.

A. P. Trivedi, who was promoted as Director of the Centre subsequently, left the organization and joined Navodaya school as principal. He virtually left the field of blind welfare for ever.

### 1975: Beginning of Professionalism

Jagdishbhai was always very keen on professionalizing the training-cum-production activities. Hence he brought in Harish M. Panchal, with Diploma in Electrical as well as Mechanical Engineering. He joined the centre as Works Manager with effect from 10 October, 1975. The average sale at that time was Rs. 30,000 a month. He was given the target of increasing the sale to Rs. 10 lakhs per month which he achieved by the year 1977-78. The pattern of growth in sale is reflected below. The sale of the Workshop increased from 3.48 lakh during 1975-76 to Rs. 2.93 crores during 1996-97 which is an increase of almost 82 times.

Table 2

Sales (Rs. in lakhs)

S.N.	Year	ATCB	BMA	Total
1.	1976	3.48	-	3.48
2.	1977	6.14	2.19	8.33
3.	1978	13.52	2.60	16.12
4.	1979	23.15	2.81	25.96
5.	1980	39.01	2.28	41.29

S.N.	Year	ATCB	BMA	Total
6.	1981	53.25	8.70	61.95
7.	1982	65.03	20.07	85.10
9.	1983	65.10	14.04	79.14
10.	1984	44.90	22.67	67.57
11.	1985	60.80	23.54	90.34
12.	1986	79.46	26.46	105.92
13.	1987	82.70	33.39	116.09
14.	1988	91.80	37.57	129.37
15.	1989	141.77	26.97	168.74
16.	1990	158.88	34.33	193.21
17.	1991	150.05	39.01	189.06
18.	1992	180.92	43.53	250.68
19.	1993	207.15	47.64	229.80
20.	1994	182.16	47.54	255.95
21.	1995	208.41	64.42	357.42
22.	1996	293.00	74.42	367.42

The training centre achieved financial viability from the financial year 1978-79 itself. It availed bank loan under Differential Rate of Interest from Dena Bank, Navrangpura Branch to begin with and then from the Bank of India, Memnagar Road Branch over the past decade. It took bank loan for its showrooms from the Union Bank of India. It has maintained its consistent rate of growth over all the years.

Harishbhai was subsequently promoted as Manager (*Training*) and then Director (*Training*). He has been assisted in task by Vithalbhai Patel, one of the oldest employees of BMA, Premjibhai Moradia for the despatch and inspection respectively. Badribhai Patel, Chaturbhai Chauhan, Damjibhai Tank, Kantibhai Jethwa, V. C. Mitra, Jagdish Trivedi, Jayantibhai Suthar, Naranbhai Patel and Sunil Parmar have assisted at the shop-floor level; Bharat Suthar, A. P. Pandya, Shataram Parab and Shashikant Ajalpuria have assisted at the store and purchase level; Mayaben Patel, Dipak Joshi, Rohit Dave, M. Panchal, Atul Patel and Shakuntalaben have assisted in accounts and secretarial work.

### **1983: Handika - A Marketing Outlet:**

The sales turnover of the Workshop has been consistently increasing every year. Till 1983, the major sales were to the government departments, state-run corporations and such other institutional clients. As furniture is an item of household use, there existed a large market for household furniture. To tap this market segment, the organization launched its

marketing outlet, a showroom at Relief Road, in the heart of the city. Mr. Shreyansh S. Shah, Managing Editor of the *Gujarat Samachar* inaugurated the showroom "Handika" on 19 February, 1983.

During 1985, the workshop established its second outlet "Handika-2" at District Shopping Centre, Sector 24, Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat. The third showroom "Handika-3" was established at the Kamdhenu Commercial Centre at Panjrapole, Polytechnic, Ahmedabad. In due course of time, the workshop closed the Gandhinagar showroom due to poor response from the residents of Gandhinagar, who are mainly government employees. The other two showrooms have been performing well which is evident from the sales turnover reported in Table 3. Mr. Pankaj H. Shah, Mr. Vinod Leuva, Vinod Vyas and Jayshree Mehta have played significant role in promoting sales through these showrooms.

*Table 3*

**Sales Performance of Handika (Rs. in lakhs)**

S.N.	Year	Kamdhenu	Relief Road	Total
1.	1983	-	2.67	2.67
2.	1984	-	4.48	4.48
3.	1985	-	8.03	8.03
4.	1986	-	4.09	0.49
5.	1987	-	11.72	11.72
6.	1988	-	19.87	19.87
7.	1989	5.93	13.95	19.88
8.	1990	9.34	17.34	26.66
9.	1991	10.88	13.36	24.04
10.	1992	16.82	16.53	33.35
11.	1993	15.15	14.38	29.63
12.	1994	16.84	14.38	31.22
13.	1995	19.25	20.03	39.28
14.	1996	21.28	20.21	41.49

The outstanding performance of these showrooms establishes that any developmental organization can also compete in the open market provided its products are sold at competitive rates, meet other requirements of the customers and an effective marketing campaign is launched to popularize the same.

**1979: District Branches of the NAB Gujarat State Branch**

To take the services to the grass root level, the NAB Gujarat Branch established its first District Branch at Rajkot on 17 June, 1979. Jagdishbhai inaugurated the Branch and Mr. Pravin C. Dandia, Director (Client Services), NAB (I) was the Guest of Honour. Today it

has 17 District Branches out of 19 districts in Gujarat. Most District Branches have constructed their own buildings. Most District Branches are promoting integrated education and community based rehabilitation. The NAB Rajkot District established its first Taluka Branch on 19 June, 1989 at Gondal. The movement of establishing Taluka Branches could not gain momentum. The net-working has remained confined to the district level only.

The NAB Gujarat State Branch has the unique distinction of having 17 district branches out of the total of 19 districts in Gujarat State. Thus from Banaskantha in the north to Valsad in the South, from Kutch in the west to Sabarkantha in the east, the Gujarat Branch is reaching out to the blind all over Gujarat through a network of active, dynamic and socially conscious District Branches.

During 1997, there were the following District Branches:

- |                      |                     |                  |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. NAB Mehsana       | 2. NAB Sabarkantha  | 3. NAB Rajkot    |
| 4. NAB Surendranagar | 5. NAB Jamnagar     | 6. NAB Bhavnagar |
| 7. NAB Vadodara      | 8. NAB Panchal      | 9. NAB Bhuj      |
| 10. NAB Valsad       | 11. NAB Surat       | 12. NAB Bharuch  |
| 13. NAB Banaskantha  | 14. NAB Gandhinagar | 15. NAB Junagadh |
| 16. NAB Kheda        | 17. NAB Amreli      |                  |

### **1979: Fund Raising Unit**

With increase in complexities and programmes of the BMA, Jagdishbhai realized that a sound financial base was imperative. He decided that a fund raising unit be established on a firm footing and with professional staff, for dissemination of information of BMA and roping in of funds for development. For this, he approached Mrs. Rehmat Fazhelboy, Fund-Raiser par excellence of the National Association for the Blind to help establish such a Unit at Ahmedabad.

The Revenue Unit as it was then called, was set up in 1979 and Jagdishbhai gave invaluable guidance in initiating sponsored events for fund raising. Nautama Shukla, the first M. S. W. to join BMA, took up the challenge of running this unit. The first few events were the School Match-box Competition, Kite Flying Competition and premier shows of movies. Ms. Shreyashi Parikh succeeded Nautama who left for the U. S. A.

Mrs. Vishakha Shroff was one of the first voluntary fund raisers who really succeeded in substantially increasing the fund raising. Her husband, Mr. Mahesh Shroff, was a bank executive and she unceasingly moved around with the new officer, Mrs. Mira Shah, in meeting people for the success of the first mini lottery programme. Mira Shah joined in 1983 and joined hands with Mrs. Shroff in relentless and systematic fund-raising. Mrs. Nandini Munshaw, Secretary, BMA, who had been handling fund raising almost single-handedly now had valiant supporters.

From mere fund collection, the focus shifted to donor participation and choice in the end use of funds. More volunteers like Mr. H. L. Khar, Managing Director, Bahuma Polytex and Mr. N. Madhukar Pai, retired Director, Department of Geology and Mining; came in to galvanize the fund raising efforts. The combined efforts of professionals and volunteers helped the BMA to have a wide and varied donor base.

Mira Shah was deputed to an Asian level Fund Raising Workshop for imbibing new and improved fund raising techniques. The fund raising efforts are now geared at public awareness and participation and more importantly institutional image building.

### **1980: Gujarat State Level National Award Committee**

To promote employment of the disabled persons, the President of India has been giving away three awards annually to the outstanding employers of the disabled and three awards to the most efficient disabled employees. The procedure for selection of these awards includes constituting a State Level Award Committee with the Minister of Welfare as Chairman. The Chairman has been empowered to nominate two prominent experts in the field of rehabilitation of the disabled as non-official members of the committee. Jagdishbhai was nominated as member of the committee during 1980. Ever since he has been member of the State Level National Award Committee.

### **1980: Nutrition Project on Prevention of Nutritional Blindness**

Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas, former Director of the Sight Savers International had initiated Xerophthalmia projects at various locations for the prevention of nutritional blindness. Jagdishbhai also wanted to contribute his mite in this respect. He sought the help of Dr. R. R. Doshi of Chikhodara Eye Hospital for orientation of staff in blending and distributing protein food. Ms. Hansa Punani (nee Trivedi), the then Marketing Assistant was deputed to observe this programme. Within a few months, this programme was launched at various locations.

Ms. Tejal Lakhia, a qualified dietitian from M. S. University joined the organization as Nutrition Assistant. BMA covered a large number of villages around Ahmedabad and provided protein supplement - *Sukhadi* - vitamin A syrup to malnourished children. The Fund Raising Unit launched a campaign of mobilizing public support to this programme. It solicited donation of Rs. 250 for adopting one malnourished child under the project. There was a overwhelming response to this appeal.

As incidence of Xerophthalmia showed a declining trend, the BMA discontinued the project during 1989. Ms. Tejal Lakhia was redesignated as Public Relations Officer.

### **1981: Integrated Education**

Mr. Lallubhai Prajapati, Principal, Smt. M. K. Mehta School for the Blind, Palanpur came to seek guidance from Jagdishbhai about promotion of integrated education of the

blind. He was intimidated in this maiden encounter! At the same time, Jagdishbhai's frankness and boldness impressed him the most. At the outset Jagdishbhai pointed out that come what may, he must initiate the concept of admitting blind students in the regular schools and then wait for results.

Jagdishbhai always wanted to promote integrated education of blind children. In his paper presented during 1980, he emphasized the promotion of integrated education and integrated approach to comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind.

It was, however, during 1981, that the Mehsana District Branch of the National Association for the Blind, with headquarters at Visnagar, initiated integrated education with 2 Itinerant Teachers and 16 blind students with the financial support of the Sight Savers International. The pilot experiment became so successful that today there are 240 blind children under the Mehsana Branch itself and more than 1200 all over Gujarat under different District Branches. Most projects are receiving grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi. This is the largest coverage of blind children under the itinerant mode of integrated education. From 1 April, 1997, the financial support is being provided by the State Government.

The projects on integrated education have already been initiated in various districts including Valsad, Banaskantha, Junagadh, Kaira, Mehsana, Panchmahal, Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Surendranagar and Ahmedabad. The most striking achievement has been adoption of the scheme of integrated education by the Department of Primary Education, Government of Gujarat from the financial year 1996-97. For that year the Government allocated Rs. 75 lacs for the promotion of this scheme.

### **1981: Free Appliances for Disabled Persons**

Under the *Scheme of Aids and Appliances for the Disabled Persons*, the Ministry of Welfare has so far provided assistance of 1,42,00,000/- to the BMA. The Organization has provided aids and appliances to 11,000 disabled persons. Since 1981, all these aids and appliances are made in the Priti Jagmohan Bhogilal National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute. The BMA in the year 1994-95, distributed aids and appliances free of charge, worth a record Rs. 35 Lakh. The camps were held in remote parts of Gujarat like Bhabhar, Meghraj, Bhachau, Dahod, Patdi, Sawarkundla, Bhavnagar. Disabled persons who were dragging themselves on the ground were seen driving away in tricycles or walking away on crutches or on calipers. Disabled people in remote areas learnt about aids and appliances for the first time. It was as if they had found their place in the sun.

### **1982: Nandini Ramesh Gandhi School of Physiotherapy for the Blind**

As Jagdishbhai himself was a very successful Physiotherapist, he wanted to establish a good school of physiotherapy in his native state of Gujarat. The Royal National Institute

for the Blind, London has been running the RNIB School of Physiotherapy for more than 100 years, with the course being recognized by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicines. Jagdishbhai approached the State Department of Education and State Department of Medical Education and Research with a request to grant recognition for such a course. He had to struggle for almost 7 years before he ultimately got recognition under the 10+2 system of Vocational Career Courses from the Department of Education. This was the first recognized course in physiotherapy for the blind.

So far, 110 blind students have successfully completed the Physiotherapy Assistant Certificate course from this school. About 98 percent of these students have been placed in the Departments of Orthopaedics in the Civil or Private Hospitals or have established their private practices in physiotherapy, generally named as physiotherapy centres.

To support this initiative of Jagdishbhai, the Ministry of Welfare extended grant-in-aid, under the *Central Scheme of Assistance to Organizations for the Disabled*, from the financial year 1985-86. The Ministry has been providing a maintenance grant ever since. This is the only school of physiotherapy which has been receiving regular grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Welfare.

This school has been admitting blind students from other states in India. These students have subsequently established practices in Calcutta, Dhanbad, Indore, Bangalore, Pune, Mumbai, Darjeeling, Kalimpong. In the 1996-98 batch, one student has been admitted from Nepal. A request has been received from Ghana for admitting a qualified lady nurse who has recently acquired blindness.

The organization has also conducted three refresher courses for the employed or practicing Physiotherapists with sponsorship received from the National Institute of the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun.

### **1982: National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute**

Whenever Jagdishbhai visited organizations for the blind abroad, he used to collect latest aids and appliances for the blind. He was keen on establishing production facilities for such educational and mobility aids in India itself. With the appointment of Harish Panchal, a qualified engineer, he commissioned a project on development of a braille stereotyper. He also initiated development and production tools and spares for manufacturing a brailer. Both these products could not be manufactured due to very large initial costs involved.

This, however, did not deter him from establishing the Braille Aids Workshop in 1980. During 1981, the BMA introduced development, manufacturing and distribution of various ortho-prosthetic aids and appliances for the orthopaedically handicapped persons, hence the unit was renamed as the National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute (NREI) during 1982. This Unit manufactures and distributes ortho-prosthetic aids and appliances,

rehabilitation appliances and educational and mobility aids for the blind and the disabled. All these appliances are manufactured by the persons with disabilities themselves.

It has done pioneering work in developing innovative aids and appliances such as tricycles for paraplegics, light weight, low cost nylotic calipers, new prosthetic aids etc. These innovative appliances have helped to popularize the use as they are more suited to Indian conditions, made of indigenous material, low weight and supplied immediately.

Due to the efforts of Jagdishbhai, the Ministry of Welfare recognized this project for the purpose of grant-in-aid under the *Central Scheme of Assistance to the Organizations of the Disabled* from the year 1984-85. A known philanthropist, Shri Jagmohan Bhogilal provided financial support to this centre, hence the centre has been named in the memory of his daughter (Late) Priti Jagmohan Bhogilal.

The Centre has exported a variety of aids and appliances to Srilanka, Nepal, Germany, Pakistan, Newzealand and a number of other countries.

The recently enacted Persons with Disability Act, 1995 also envisages provision of appropriate aids and appliances to the disabled persons. With the expansion of CBR programmes for all categories of disabled people, there is tremendous increases in demand for suitable assistive devices. NREI with its infrastructure and production facilities, would be geared up to meet such increasing demand.

### **1982: Bakery & Skill Development Unit for Disabled Women**

These are very few programmes for the rehabilitation of blind and disabled women. Being a disabled woman is a double disadvantage in India and very little is done for their rehabilitation.

Jagdishbhai approached the Gujarat State Social Welfare Board to provide financial support for establishing this unit for imparting training to blind and disabled women in various bakery operations. His idea was that such training would enhance finger dexterity, functional coordination and skill development of the trainees. It would also promote self confidence among them.

The Social Welfare Board gladly sanctioned Rs. 1,81,000 for the bakery shed, equipment and machinery; and Rs. 65,000 for the working capital. With this assistance, the first bakery of its kind in the country was established for the blind and disabled women.

Jagdishbhai then approached the Ministry of Welfare for grant-in-aid under the *Central Scheme of Assistance to Organizations for the Disabled*. The Department of Social Defense evaluated the project and recommended grant-in-aid to the Ministry. The Ministry sanctioned Rs. 23,150 for recurring expenditure of the Unit vide its letter No. 22-4(3) 86-HW-II dated 26 June, 1986. The Ministry has been providing an annual recurring grant since then.



The Unit has effectively proved that woman and that too disabled women can work as productively as their male counterparts. They have proved that women are penetrating into territories which were traditionally dominated by men. Due to sharp decline in enrollment of disabled women for this project, the Unit was discontinued with effect from 1 April, 1996.

### **1983: Community Based Rehabilitation**

The NAB Gujarat State Branch took the lead in the country in the field of community based rehabilitation by establishing the first such project at Dholka under the close supervision of Mr. Gautam Majumdar, who is known the world over for eye donation. The NAB (I) decided to establish the Central Coordinating Office of the NAB Rural Activities Committee at Ahmedabad under the direct monitoring of Jagdishbhai. All the Coordinators of the Committee have been stationed at Ahmedabad. Jagdishbhai has been Chairman of the Committee since September, 1991.

Till 31 May, 1996, the NAB RAC had coordinated community based rehabilitation project at 111 locations, covering 16,008 villages and 28,178 blind persons. The projects provided services of economic rehabilitation to 8,247; state pension to 7,223 and bus pass to 8,857 blind persons. So far, 1,286 blind children have been enrolled for integrated education. The NAB RAC has provided technical and training support to projects in Malaysia, Malawi, Bangladesh, Kenya and Nepal. These community based rehabilitation projects have the largest coverage of blind persons any where in the world.

In Gujarat, this concept has been successfully implemented at various locations viz. Dholka, Dhandhuka, Patdi, Lakhtar, Kankrej, Patan, Chanasama, Sami, Harij, Viramgam, Sanand, Vijapur, Idar, Vijaynagar, Khedbrahma, Malpur, Prantij, Rapar, Mendarda, Bhesan, Lodhika, Nalakantha, Limbdi, Sayla, Gandhinagar, Daskroi, Dehgam, Dhrangadhra, Valsad, Dahod, Petlad and Kapadwanj.

The projects have already been successfully initiated in various States including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi.

Dr. Iqbal Mohammadi, Past President, Rotary Club of Mahu Gate (3040), Indore explains of Jagdishbhai's contribution to CBR. *"During our first interaction during his field visit to the Mhow Rural Rehabilitation Project, Jagdishbhai gave me demonstration and information about blind welfare which I shall always cherish. Whenever he wrote me letters, he wrote them in a graceful manner"*.

Iqbal provides further details about this visit in these words *"Jagdishbhai always says that never think what a blind person can not do. He can do each and every thing. We kept a musical competition at Mhow. He appreciated the performance of a*

*blind person in playing instrumental music. This incident motivated the blind person so much that he got ready to get the ophthalmic check done, go for eye surgery and to avail other services under the project. This was a sound beginning of the rural rehabilitation project. Encouraged by the visit of Jagdishbhai, we promoted economic rehabilitation as a major component of the project. We identified rope making as an appropriate trade and provided rope making machines to selected blind persons”.*

*“Jagdishbhai advised us to involve the community in every sphere of the life of a blind person. During our visit, we met a blind person who had remained confined to his house for the past twenty years. His immediate problem was solemnizing wedding of his daughter. Jagdishbhai felt that this wedding should be organized by the community”.*

*“The Field Workers also got motivated and collected funds from the local community and organized the wedding with active participation of the community. Thanks to Jagdishbhai, this was a true beginning of our project on social and economic rehabilitation of the rural blind”.*

#### **1984: National Seminar**

The NAB Gujarat State Branch hosted a meeting of State and District Branches of NAB (I) during 1984 at Ahmedabad. The representatives of almost all the State, District Branches participated in the seminar. Jagdishbhai chaired a session on community based rehabilitation. He recommended that each State Branch of the NAB must initiate atleast one pilot project of CBR. He also desired the promotion of integrated education.

#### **1984: Employment & Placement Services**

The burning issue of today is the employment of the blind and disabled. In spite of massive efforts at the state and national levels, employment still continues to be the toughest problem plaguing the rehabilitation scenario.

The State and Central Government have given scholarships and have initiated several modern trades and professional courses, yet the employment of the blind is a major problem. It is thus imperative to boost this process by initiating employment, self employment and rural self employment measures.

Jagdishbhai has always been very keen on promoting open as well as self employment of the blind and disabled. He established the Employment and Placement Services during 1984 with the support of the National Association for the Blind. The Unit was established under the auspices of the NAB Gujarat State Branch and NAB India provided salary grant for the first five years.

Year	Total Employment
1992	56
1993	49
1994	50
1995	61
1996	76
<i>Average</i>	58

### **1984: Awareness Creation, Training and Counselling Parents of Disabled Children**

The BMA implemented this programme funded by UNICEF from 1984 to 1988. 2800 parents having disabled children participated in the programme. The findings of this Project are:

- a. Parents are ignorant about disability and its consequences.
- b. Child rearing practices and management of disability are poor
- c. Much disability could have been avoided or corrected, had parents been counselled earlier.
- d. There are almost negligible services for mentally handicapped children or their parents.

### **1984: Cama Computer Training Center for the Blind**

The idea of initiating a computer training centre for the blind and disabled was conceived during the visit of Jyotindra Mehta, a visually handicapped person.

Jyotindra was sales trainee at the Blind Men's Association when he decided to leave for the U.S.A. during 1978. He completed a computer programming course and joined as junior computer programmer in a commercial company in Rockvile. Encouraged by Jyotindra's achievements, the organization approached the Directorate of Employment & Training, Government of Gujarat. The Directorate very kindly provided recognition to the BASIC Programming and Computer Operation Course, during 1984. However, there was no provision for providing grant-in-aid for purchasing hardware and special adaptations for the blind. To avail/grant in aid for the equipment, the organization approached the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India. The Ministry provided grant-in-aid under the Scheme of Assistance to Organizations for Disabled Persons during 1986-87.

The organization approached the Directorate of Employment & Training for the recognition of the BASIC Programming and Computer Operation Course for the blind and disabled

under the Career Development Courses Stream. The Directorate recognized this course, which is the first course of its kind recognized by the concerned State Government.

The Vice President of the organization, Mr. Jehangir R. J. Cama, very generously provided a donation of Rs. 5,00,000 for establishing this centre. Mr. Naresh Patel and Mrs. Gita Trivedi, brother and sister of Jagdishbhai, donated a braille embosser for promoting training of the blind in computer operations. The Christoffel Blindenmission donated the Versa Point Braille Computer to the centre. The British High Commissioner, Sir Nicholas Fenn who happened to meet Jagdishbhai during an award function in London, donated a braille embosser. The Deputy British High Commissioner, Mr. T. D. Curran, visited the organization and donated the Kurtzweil Reading Machine. With all these equipments, the Cama Computer Training is probably the most well equipped training centre in the country.

The BMA Computer Training Centre has been established with the following objectives:

- Imparting training to the blind & disabled in data entry.
- Imparting training to the blind & disabled in BASIC & Dbase -III +
- Collecting and disseminating information regarding new adaptations in computer hardware for enabling the blind to operate the computer
- Collecting literature and compiling information about the software specially designed for the visually handicapped
- Import of special computer equipment for the blind and disabled and its demonstration
- Providing placement services to the blind and disabled as computer operator and computer programmers.

Nainesh Purohit joined the centre as Programming Instructor. He has played an instrumental role in developing a variety of soft-ware for the organization and imparting training to the blind and disabled persons. His major achievement is training Nirav, a deaf-blind student and helping him to get a job as Computer Programmer with the Gujarat Electricity Board.

### **1985: BMA-IDBI Electronics Training Centre Project**

Jagdishbhai always wanted to promote training of the blind and disabled persons in electronic assembly. The organization approached the Gujarat Industries Development Corporation to allot a plot of land in the Electronic Estate, Gandhinagar. The GIDC allotted 2995 Sq. Mts. of land at the concessional rate of 50 percent on 29 October, 1985.

The organization invited Shri Arvind S. Sanghvi, former Minister of Finance and Planning, Government of Gujarat, to perform the Foundation Laying Ceremony on 23 October, 1985. Mr. Vishnu Panchal, a qualified Engineer joined the project as project Engineer

with effect from 1st August, 1986. The Centre started producing degaussing coils during 1987-88.

The Project was inaugurated by (Late) Shri Shashikant Lakhani, Speaker of Gujarat Legislative Assembly and (Late) Mr. S. S. Nadkarni, Chairman of the Industrial Development Bank of India on 16 June, 1990. The Industrial Development Bank of India donated Rs. 25 lakhs for constructing the building and purchasing the equipment for this project. The IDBI also provided support for the post of Marketing Officer for two years during 1992 and 1993.

At present the Centre imparts training to the blind and the disabled persons in assembly of antennae, production of communication components and other electronic items.

### **1989: Urban Community Based Rehabilitation (UCBR) Project for Aged and Disabled**

The BMA has departed from traditional institutional programmes and decided to foray into the field of grass root, non-institutional, community-based programmes to reach out to a larger number of beneficiaries. While implementing institutional programmes, it was realized that aged disabled were grossly neglected in rehabilitation services. Experience of implementing community based programmes for rural aged and a pilot project for providing services to the aged and disabled in the slums of Ahmedabad city during 1981, popularly known as Home-bound Project, revealed the following:

- Aged persons were the most neglected sections of society
- Break-up of joint family and industrial sickness had resulted in poor living conditions and lowest priority being accorded to the aged
- Aged persons were found to be incapacitated due to rampant ill health, disease and poor nutrition.
- Old age homes were too expensive a solution for a capital scarce country like India
- Health facilities were not utilized to the optimum due to lack of an intermediate agency between the health organization and the beneficiary
- Aged persons need to be involved in community life and be rendered economically self reliant for their acceptance in the family.

The Blind Men's Association thus applied to Helpage International for funding an urban community based rehabilitation programme for providing services of health, hygiene, counselling and economic rehabilitation to the needy aged and disabled. Helpage International and Helpage India funded this five year programme which would cover 30,000 aged and disabled in the slums of Ahmedabad city. The general objectives of the programme are:

- Providing need based services
- General health care
- Cure as well as prevention of disability
- Productive rehabilitation
- Financial support
- Extension of concessions and other facilities
- Social integration
- Development of leadership and of voluntary efforts
- Creating public awareness

The organization incurred an expenditure of Rs. 3.7 millions during 1989 to 1996 in extending services to 21,794 persons. An independent evaluation of the project established that the majority of beneficiaries are in the age group of 65-75 and above, including 62 percent female beneficiaries. The project has successfully given treatment in case of eye ailments, eye check up and cataract surgery. 98.8 percent respondents expressed their satisfaction with the working of the project. As 72.5 percent respondents had received one or other rehabilitation aid, this component has emerged very strong. The organization could mobilize significant local resources for providing better health care and rehabilitative services like aids and appliances, corrective surgeries and other diagnostic surgeries.

J. T. Panchal with the help of B. G. Zhalla and Ramesh Patel as Supervisors, Dilip Shah as Physiotherapist and 9 field workers has been coordinating the programme since its inception during 1989. Dr. Ahshish Divetia, a young Ophthalmologist has been providing his services since the inception of the project.

### **1990: Mental Hygiene Clinic**

This activity supported by the Department of Social Defense, Government of Gujarat under its grant-in-aid programme, was formally inaugurated on 21 May, 1990 at the worthy hands of Shri Pravinsinh Jadeja, Minister of Employment, Government of Gujarat.

The Mental Hygiene Clinic provides services to the mentally handicapped, mentally sick and emotionally disturbed persons, children with learning disabilities and behavioural disorders, children with cerebral palsy, other disability groups with specific needs, parents of disabled children and multiple sclerosis patients.

The Mental Hygiene Clinic aims at survey of target groups, evaluation of handicap, intensive therapy and counselling services improving functional abilities and provision of aids and appliances. Vimal Thawani as Vocational Counsellor and Ushma Das as Play-

room Assistant have been handling the clinic with a team of visiting medical professionals. Jyoti Doshi, Jayshree and Asha Khaitan have also been providing their services in the clinic.

Shri Natvarlal P. Kinariwala, Vice-President of the organization provided a donation of Rs. 2,00,000 to commemorate the memory of his (late) wife Smt. Chandrikaben. Hence the clinic has been named after her.

### **7 September, 1990: LCIF Professional Training Centre for the Blind**

Lion Donald Banker, 1st International Vice-President of Lions Clubs International laid the corner stone of the BMA LCIF Professional Training Centre for the Blind on 7 September, 1990. Lion Rohit Mehta, second International Vice-President, LC1, Mr. Arun Parikh, District Governor, District 323-B were also present on this occasion.

The Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF) has very kindly donated \$50,000 being 50 percent of the cost of construction of the centre. The centre has housed the professional courses namely Computer Programming, Telephone Operating, Stenography and Physiotherapy, Mental Hygiene Clinic and the project on the Multi-handicapped Visually Impaired Children. The new and well planned building has lecture rooms as well as rooms for practicals. More importantly, all these courses are housed under one roof.

### **26 January, 1991: Lioness Karnavati Hostel for the Blind and Disabled Women**

Lion Dilip Shah, Multiple Council Chairman, District 323-B performed the Bhoomi Poojan of the Lioness Karnavati Blind Women's Hostel at 9.00 a.m. on 26 January, 1991. This hostel is built on the land of the Blind Men's Association and is fully funded by the Lioness Club of Karnavati.

H.E. the Governor of Gujarat, Dr. Sarup Singh inaugurated the Hostel at 11 a.m. on Monday 1 July, 1991. Lion Arun Parikh, Immediate past District Governor of Lions District 323-B graced the occasion as Guest of Honour.

Jagdishbhai has always advocated that construction of a hostel was imperative if fruits of rehabilitation were to permeate to the blind women residing in far off areas. At this juncture, when BMA was planning for funds for this hostel, the Lioness Club of Karnavati came in with their proposal of giving funds for such a hostel. It was the realization of a very precious dream and BMA is grateful to Lioness President Urmila Kalantry and her Club for giving a donation of Rs. 21 lakhs for this hostel and this can be seen in the beautiful building that has come up due to this joining of force.

This hostel is more than a mere hostel - it is a place which has enabled blind women to stay and avail of training which will help to harness their potentials and give a new meaning to their lives. This hostel is initially providing lodging and boarding to 50 blind

women and will, over a period of time, increase its capacity to accommodate 200 women. BMA is trying to provide a home away from home for these blind women by having facilities of recreation and training. Blind women residing here are able to pursue professional courses such as Telephone Operating, Physiotherapy, Computer Programming and Stenography to name but a few. Blind women employed in open industry are also able to stay here and thus be saved from expensive urban living.

The hostel has been covered under the grant-in-aid scheme of the Department of Social Defence, Govt. of Gujarat. The Department will provide grant-in-aid for staff and admissible recurring expenses.

### **1991: Multiple Sclerosis Society of India (Gujarat Chapter)**

Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic, progressive disease of the central nervous system in which even simple everyday tasks can no longer be taken for granted. Its symptoms can vary from slight blurring of vision to complete paralysis. The disease could thus result into severe disability. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of India was formed in 1985 in Mumbai by Mrs. Rehmata Fazalbhoy, who has been an active worker for the blind since the past forty years.

The Sadbhawana Rural Development Trust decided to take up this challenging new project and decided to provide comprehensive services to MS patients. The Gujarat Chapter was inaugurated on 4th January, 1991 - Louis Braille Day by (late) Shri Babubhai Vasanwala, Minister of Health, Government of Gujarat.

The Chapter is providing family counselling, home visits, medicines on a regular basis, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, aids and appliances, guidance for availing social security schemes. Economic rehabilitation services are also provided after adequate training.

Vimal Thawani, Coordinator, MSSSI, Ahmedabad Chapter and Jyoti Doshi, Rehabilitation Worker are providing their honorary services to the families and people with multiple sclerosis. So far the chapter has identified and enrolled 86 confirmed cases of multiple sclerosis. The major break through of the Chapter was organizing free or concessional MRI check up. The Chapter approached the concerned officials of the Regional offices of the UCO Bank and the Bank of Baroda to retain the services of the employees suffering from MS. The Chapter could also organize provision of medicines to many needy persons.

Dr. Sudhir Shah, Dr. Bharat Shah, Dr. Ajit Sowani, Dr. Chetan Trivedi from Vadodara, are Neurophysicians; Dr. Narendra Patel, Dr. Suresh Shah, Dr. Premal Shah, are the Radiologists who have provided exemplary services to the Chapter.

### **1993: Ratanlal Lalubhai Centre for Multihandicapped**

The organization deputed Mr. Akhil S. Paul for a training in handling children with multiple disabilities at the Hilton Perkins International programme, Perkins School for the Blind,



U.S.A. during 1994. On return, Akhil with the involvement of Vimal Thawani and Jyoti Doshi established integrated services for persons with multiple disabilities.

The Hilton Perkins International programme of the Perkins School for the Blind approved a three years grant of US\$ 34,225 to develop and expand integrated services in India for persons with multiple disabilities. This grant is for the period from 1 September, 1995 to 31 August, 1998.

The family members of Ratanlal Lallubhai have donated Rs. 2,00,000 for the naming of this centre. The organization has already conducted short term courses for the teachers of the blind and CBR personnel for promoting services for children with multiple disabilities.

Ms. Marianne Riggio, Educational Consultant and Mr. Kirk J. Horton, Regional Representative, Hilton Perkins International programme have been visiting the centre regularly and providing their technical and administrative support. Ms. Charlotte Cushman also provided consultancy to the programme during 12-22 March, 1996.

#### **1994: Shakriben Mangaldas Teacher's Training Centre**

The Diploma Course for the Secondary School Teachers of the visually handicapped was inaugurated on 18th July, 1994. This course trains 15 itinerant teachers every year who are already working in the Integrated Education Programmes in the various parts of Gujarat. This course, sponsored by the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped and recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India is providing a recognized diploma to these teachers. Under the Scheme of Integrated Education of the Disabled, it is imperative that teachers have successfully undergone a one year recognized diploma in special education. The Sight Savers International donated Rs. 25,000 and Manav Kalyan Trust has sponsored the furniture and equipment for this course.

The BMA has a large number of human resource development programmes and a teacher's training course is the crowning glory. (Late) Kanubhai used to coordinate this course. Now, Mr. H. U. Joshi, retired Principal of the Navrangpura School for the Blind coordinates teacher training activities. Mr. Kailashbhai Shah has donated Rs. 1,11,000 for naming the Centre in the memory of his aunt Shakriben.

#### **1994: NIVH National Seminar**

The National Institute for the Visually Handicapped (NIVH) Dehradun is a national level organization set up by the Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India. The NIVH and the Blind Men's Association, Ahmedabad jointly organized a National Seminar on Visual Handicap at the BMA campus on 23-24 March, 1994. The seminar had a participation of 70 leaders in the field of blind welfare from the different parts of the country. These experts deliberated on the present trends in the educational rehabilitation of the blind and planned for a better future. Shri T.C.A. Rangadurai, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of

Social Welfare Govt. of Gujarat inaugurated the seminar. Lt. Col. A. K. Verma, Director, NIVH, Shri Arvind N. Lalbhai, President, Blind Men's Association and Heads of various renowned blind welfare agencies were also present on the occasion.

### **9-11 January, 1995: Asian Conference of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment**

The Asian Conference of the ICEVI was organized for the first time in India during 1995 and the Chairman of the Organizing Committee was Jagdishbhai.

The conference was inaugurated on a cold yet sunny morning on 9 January, 1995 by H. E. the Governor of Gujarat, Dr. Sarup Singh. The city of Ahmedabad and the Blind Men's Association was host to 205 delegates from 17 Asian countries. The most noteworthy achievement was that almost every state of India was represented as also representatives of every major funding agency were present at the conference.

The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) is the largest and the most significant professional body in the world working in the area of education for persons with visual impairment. The aim of the ICEVI is to promote the equalization of educational opportunities for the people with visual impairment throughout the world. As per the constitution of ICEVI, the term "*visual impairment*" refers to those who are blind or who have low vision, including those with additional disabilities.

After three days deliberations, the participants recommended the following four-pronged strategy which should be followed by the member countries:

- **Do what is possible now:** The challenge for the member countries will be to reach *MANY* children, in *MANY* areas, in the *SHORTEST* possible time. The approach should be - more programmes in '*unreached*' areas and effective utilization of the existing infrastructure in the '*reached*' areas to attain the highest level possible.
- **Disadvantaged groups come first:** The programmes will prioritize in favour of the disadvantaged groups. Tribal/rural areas come before the urban areas. Special efforts must be made to cover more visually impaired girls.
- **Collaboration and coordination is the key to success:** ICEVI advocates for effective collaboration and coordination amongst its member countries, implementing agencies and various programmes and activities for synergistic results.
- **Reach them young:** The focus should be on early identification, intervention and education to provide maximum benefits to the target clientele.

*When the ideal is not possible*

**Make '*what is possible*' as your ideal**



*Jagdishbhai with (a) Mrs. Huegette Labelle, President, CIDA, (b) Mr. Abdullah M. Al-Ghanim, President, WBU, (c) Mr. Kirk Horton & Ms. Marianne Riggio of HPI, (d) Mr. William G. Brohier, President, ICEVI*



*Jagdishbhai with (a) Mr. Tim Reid, Helpuge Internationl, (b) Mrs. Nandini Munshaw, Secretary, BMA, (c) Mr. Arvind Narottam, President, BMA; and Mr. K. V. Bhanujan, IAS, (d) Mr. Terry D. Curran, British Deputy High Commissioner, (e) Mr. Ramchandra, his P.A.*

## **1995: Regional Workshop on CBR**

The Blind Men's Association, Ahmedabad organized a two day workshop on Community Based Rehabilitation sponsored by the Rehabilitation Council of India (*A statutory body under Ministry of Welfare, Government of India*). Around 30 participants from the western states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra participated in this workshop.

A huge knowledge base of CBR has been developed all over the world. It needs to be disseminated for CBR to reach the untaught. The Rehabilitation Council of India has been setup for ensuring the quality of knowledge and skills amongst the rehabilitation personnel so that the disabled persons can get qualitative care. The RCI sponsored this workshop which sought to enable 30 people from western India to learn about CBR and implement such programmes in their own areas. The Blind Men's Association which organized this programme, has fourteen years experience in successful implementation of CBR Programmes.

The programme was inaugurated by Dr. B. P. Yadav, Chairman, Rehabilitation Council of India, at 10 a.m. on Friday, 28 April, 1995 at the Arvind Narottam Lalbhai Convention Centre, Blind Men's Association Campus, Ahmedabad.

## **1995: Braille Research & Documentation Centre**

The organization is well known for its revolutionary and trend setting programmes for the blind and disabled. It has undertaken a variety of research in the areas of rehabilitation and mobility aids. It can take the credit of collecting together a lot of research material, documents and aids and appliances which have benefitted a large number of disabled persons. It realizes that it is essential that it keeps its research and other studies on a continuing basis to incorporate the changes which occur due to change in technology and modernity.

Foundation stone of the BMA Lioness Karnavati Smt. Ruxmaniben Deepchand Gardi Braille Documentation and Research Centre was laid by noted philanthropist, Dr. Biharilal Kanaiyalal and in a record six months inaugurated by Shri Jay Narayan Vyas, the then State Minister, on 28th February, 1995. The total sum of Rs. 5,00,000/- needed for this project was channelized by Lioness Club of Karnavati which has earlier donated an amount of Rs. 21 lacs for starting the first ever hostel for working blind and disabled women. Rs. 3 lakhs have been donated for the above centre by Shri Deepchandbhai Gardi, a well known philanthropist.

This centre will have braille books and techniques from all over the world and will also exhibit technical aids for the blind like talking dictionary etc

### **2-3 March, 1996: NAB National Seminar**

The National Seminars of the State and District Branches of the National Association for the Blind are held in rotation in different states and organized by the state branches. The District Branches of the NAB Gujarat Branch have excellent leaders and they offered to host such seminars.

The NAB Jamnagar District Branch was given the privilege of hosting the 5th National Seminar of State and District Branches organized by the NAB Head Quarters during 2-3 March, 1996. This was the first time that a District Branch had hosted a national seminar. Jagdishbhai also presented a paper on employment of the visually impaired. His most recent paper advocates exploring all avenues of employment, promoting appropriate on-the-job training as well as professional training and evolving a co-ordinated approach to training and employment.

The seminar was very efficiently handled by the Branch which is now a very respected organization in its area. The theme of the seminar was to disseminate information between the Head Quarters and the various State and District Branches regarding education, new avenues of employment and the needed attention to community based rehabilitation. Representatives of most of the NAB State Branches and all the District Branches of the NAB Gujarat State Branch participated in the seminar.

### **14 July, 1996: Bhikhabhai C. Shah Memorial Award**

Jagdishbhai played the most significant role in mobilizing financial resources for instituting an Award to commemorate the memory of Late Shri Bhikhabhai C. Shah, a doyen who had put years of selfless efforts for comprehensive development of blind persons of Saurashtra. The Award is being presented on Mr. Bhikhabhai's birthday every year on 14 July to outstanding personalities in the field of blind welfare.

### **1996: District Branches Workshop**

The NAB Surat District Branch hosted a Two-Day Workshop, for the Presidents and Secretaries of the various District Branches of the NAB Gujarat State Branch, on 28-29 September, 1996 at Surat. Nearly 40 Office Bearers and Executives attended this Workshop which was inaugurated by Dr. B. A. Parikh, Vice Chancellor of South Gujarat University.

### **14 October, 1996: Parent Teacher Training**

The BMA organized a unique training programme for training parents who have blind children. This programme was undertaken over a period of 3 months and these parents were given training in orientation, mobility, braille, teaching of science and maths to the blind children etc. This programme was concluded on 14 October, 1996 at the worthy hands of Mr. Bhaskaran, Chief Post Master General, Ahmedabad.

One of the parents, Mr. Dilipbhai Bhatt, who works in ISRO has developed a unique aid for teaching drawing to blind children. It consists on a board fitted with velcro strips, a pen with thread inside it which will enable the child to make meaningful pictures which he can touch, feel and be able to act as teachers for their own blind children. Mrs. Nandini Munshaw, Secretary, BMA, was motivated by Jagdishbhai to commit Rs. 1 lakh for this Project.

### **1996: I.T.I. Level Courses for the BMA**

The BMA has been given the recognition and permission to initiate three courses under the Industrial Training Institute pattern by the Department of Employment and Training, Govt. of Gujarat. These courses are Receptionist-cum-Telephone Operating, Computer Programming and English Stenography. This recognition was given in a meeting where the Joint Director of the Department, Mr. A.I. Shaikh was present. As these courses are recognized, blind and disabled persons will be able to get jobs in open industry on completion of training. The minimum requirement for the Receptionist Course is Tenth Standard with English as a subject, students entering the Computer Programming have to be Higher Secondary pass and student undergoing Stenography has to pass the Tenth Standard. The students are provided educational materials in braille as well as on audio cassettes. They are also provided brailers, shorthand machines, type-writers and computer for their practicals etc. 40 students will be enrolled every years under courses.

Tejal Lakhia provides her services as Honorary Superintendent of the ITI, Nainesh Purohit, Kalpana Dani and Chetna Parikh as instructors of Computer Programming, Telephone Operating and Braille Shorthand courses respectively.

### **1996: BMA Nadiad Branch**

Mr. Ramanbhai F. Patel and Mrs. Shantaben J. Patel, family members of Jagdishbhai decided to donate their ancestral house at Kakarkhad, Nadiad to the BMA. The house was gifted in the month of May, 1995.

The BMA decided to establish BMA Nadiad Branch for promoting services for the visually impaired persons of Nadiad taluka. The branch was inaugurated by Mr. Indubhai Patel, a leading industrialist of Nadiad on 27 October, 1996 at 10.30 A.M. Shri Ganeshdasji Maharaj of Shantram Mandir, Umreth; Dr. Ratilal P. Patel, Chairman, Education Society, Nadiad; Shri Dhirubhai Gopaldas Patel, Chairman Human Welfare Trust, Dar-e-salam; and Mrs. Jyotsanaben C. Bhrahambhatt, President, Nadiad Municipality were the Guests of Honour.

The organization has constituted a local management committee with Rakshaben J. Mehta as President; Mr. Chandrakant K. Solanki as General Secretary; and Ashok H. Patel and Sudha K. Patel as Vice Presidents. The branch has started distributing bus passes, organizing eye camps and promoting general services for blind persons.

### **1996: CAPART Project**

The Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology of the Ministry of Rural Development has sanctioned a Project to the BMA for development of various formats regarding assessment, evaluation, monitoring for cross disabilities. Mrs. Brahada Shankar, has been appointed as a Project Coordinator for this 6 month project. A national level workshop to finalize reporting formats was convened at the BMA during 28-29 April, 1997.

### **1996: CBR Networking**

CBR-Network for SAARC countries has been launched effectively. India has been divided into four zones - North, East, West and South with a Coordinator for each zone. Nandini Rawal has been appointed as the Zonal Co-ordinator for the Western zone. Mr. Ashok Kumar has been appointed as Project Coordinator for handling this work.

The National CBR Network envisages a network system for smooth flow of information, experience and knowledge on CBR in the country, to strengthen existing CBR programmes in respective zones and to initiate new ones. The National CBR Network is a part of a wider network on CBR in the SAARC region.

### **3 December, 1996: Most Outstanding Placement Officer**

Naresh Rathod, Placement Officer of the organization was conferred the Most Outstanding Placement Officer Award by the President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma on 3 December, 1996 which is the World Disabled Day. This Award has been instituted by the Ministry of Welfare for promoting employment of disabled persons. The Award Citation reads as:

*34 years old Shri Rathod is a graduate and has been assisting in placement of handicapped persons in employment through his own efforts. During the last five years he has registered 385 handicapped persons, out of which he placed 292 persons in different jobs in different organizations with a success rate of 80 percent.*

### **1997: National Seminar on Community Based Rehabilitation**

The National Workshop on Community Based Rehabilitation organized by the National Association for the Blind, Rural Activities Committee and the Blind Men's Association, which was sponsored by the Royal Danish Embassy was inaugurated at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 6th February, 1997 by Dr. Hans Limburg, Chief Adviser, Danida Assisted National Programme for Control of Blindness. Mr. P. G. Ramrakhiyani, Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Social Welfare Govt. of Gujarat was the Chief Guest.

56 delegates from all over India, who are experts in the field of community based rehabilitation, were invited to this Workshop. In the inaugural function, two Manuals, one each on



community based rehabilitation and integrated education were released by the Chief Guest. These Manuals which are free of cost were distributed to all delegates present. Dr. Hans Limburg in the inaugural address said that the Danida Mission and the National Association for the Blind had collaborated together to come up with a unique and extremely practical model for eye care and rehabilitation. He urged all the agencies to come together and attempt to create a massive demonstration effect by covering lakhs of blind persons in CBR programmes spread over the length and breadth of India. He added that there was no other option but to start CBR projects on a large scale all over India in the form of a widespread movement.

The 3-day Workshop had representatives from funding agencies, frontline workers, grassroots agencies and specialist workers. The topics discussed ranged from the prevalent and popular CBR models in India, networking amongst the various agencies, role of grassroots agencies in proliferation of CBR, scaling up model, human resource development in CBR, integrating CBR in general rural development, resource material in CBR and evaluation. There was also a great deal of discussion on Government policy regarding CBR and the need of lobbying for funds from the Government.

All participants felt, that instead of piece-meals efforts and sporadic attempts, the CBR concept must emerge as a national movement. On the last day, participants recommended that a National CBR Fund equivalent to the status of the Prime Minister's Fund be set up. Donations to this fund should also be given 100 percent exemption under Section 35 AC of the Income-tax Act. Delegates also recommended that the National CBR Forum be set up for lobbying with the Government for allocating and releasing funds for CBR programmes. They also felt that the Members of Parliament should be sensitized and this issue be raised in Parliament and its national ethos and importance be recognized by the planners of the country. This Scheme for Community Based Rehabilitation was finalized by the Ministry of Welfare and allocation had been made, but due to financial constraints, this Scheme was arbitrarily scrapped even before it took off.

Jagdishbhai said that the rural blind and disabled have been ignored for centuries, Government must wake up to the concern of this large majority. The participants appreciated efforts of Government of India in enacting a comprehensive Persons with Disabilities Act, launching a large number of schemes and for recognizing the needs of disabled persons. The Ministry of Welfare so far has not recognized the CBR concept. They felt that there was an immediate need for evolving a realistic and practical scheme for promoting this concept.

The Workshop concluded with the Valedictory Session being graced by Dr. Kirit N. Shelat, Commissioner, Employment and Training, Government of Gujarat. Mr. Arvind N. Lalbhai, President of the National Association for the Blind presided over the function. Speaking on this occasion, Dr. Kirit N. Shelat declared that registration of blind persons for employment would be done at the campus of the Blind Men's Association. He also

declared that his Department would be glad to recognize new trades under the ITI. His Department has already recognized the first ITI for the Disabled in the country set up at the Campus.

He also desired the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to allocate larger funds for promoting community based rehabilitation and added that blind and disabled persons must be covered under various rural development programme. Mr. Subhash Datrang, Executive Director, National Association for the Blind presented details of the Workshop. Mrs. Bhadra Satia proposed a vote of thanks.

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### **Representation at National Level**

Jagdishbhai has been invited on a large number of expert committees of various Ministries, governmental bodies and other reputed agencies.

- Founder General Secretary : Blind Men's Association, Ahmedabad since 1950.
- Secretary and E. C. Member, National Association for the Blind, Mumbai.
- Founder Honorary General Secretary, Gujarat State Branch, NAB (India) since 1964
- Founder Honorary General Secretary : P.N.M. Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, Mount Abu, since 1967.
- Past President : National Federation of the Blind, India, New Delhi.
- Founder Executive Member, NASEOH, Gujarat Chapter, Ahmedabad.
- Member, Advisory Committee, State Social Defence Department and Social Welfare Department for Physically Handicapped.
- Member, Central Governing Council, NASEOH, Mumbai.
- Founder Secretary and Executive Member, Light House for the Blind Girls, Ahmedabad.
- Member of Advisory Committee, Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, Ahmedabad.
- Executive Member, National Society for the Prevention of Blindness.
- Ex-member, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Ahmedabad
- Member, Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Ahmedabad
- Member, Ahmedabad Productivity Council

- Past President, All India Confederation of the Blind, New Delhi
- Member, Committee for Helen Keller Centenary Celebration, Gujarat State
- Secretary, Rural Development, NAB, Mumbai
- Director, Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped, Ahmedabad.
- Member, State Level Committee of I.Y.D.P. 1981.
- Member, Gujarat State Level National Award Committee, since 1980
- Member, Tata Agricultural & Rural Training Centre for the Blind, Phansa.
- Member, Academic Council since 1983 and Member of the General Council of the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun
- Chairman, NAB Rural Activities Committee since 1983
- General Secretary, Saddbhavana Rural Development Trust (Blind and Disabled) since 1984.
- Member: National Council for Vocational Training, Govt. of India.
- Member, Selection Committee, National Technology Award for Welfare of the Handicapped.
- Past Chairman, BMA Staff Cooperative Credit Society.
- Member: National Advisory Committee, District Rehabilitation Centres Scheme, Ministry of Welfare
- Member: National Fund for Handicapped Welfare, Ministry of Welfare

If one has to list the successful blind persons in India, there are a few thousand of them. There are a few hundred most outstanding blind persons in the country. Most well-known leaders of the blind - there are around 10 leaders, if we have to go by the All India Confederation of the Blind Award, 1987 list. But institution-builder blind persons there are only three - Dr. Rajendra Vyas, Mr. Lal Advani and Jagdishbhai.

If one has to identify the most successful and most outstanding blind person, who is a well known leader and who has established a large number of institutions single handedly, on his own initiative and without any major backing of any international organization or any government - one could short list Jagdishbhai only.

The founder General Secretary of the Blind Men's Association (Ahmedabad), Adult Training Centre for the Blind, Saddbhawna Rural Development Trust (Blind and Disabled), Past President of the National Federation of the Blind; Founder President of the All India

Confederation of the Blind; Founder and Secretary of the National Association of the Blind, Jagdishbhai has been associated with the leading blind welfare organizations of this country.

If one has to go by the National Delegation of the World Blind Union till 1996 - there were three national level organizations viz. NFB, AICB and NAB in India. The fourth set of organizations, 3 Blind Men's Association have been contesting for his honour. Jagdishbhai is the only person who steered these organizations as President of the first two organizations, Secretary of the third organization and General Secretary of the Blind Men's Association (Ahmedabad).

It is possible only for a versatile person like Jagdishbhai to head two national level organizations with conflicting and very diverse ideologies simultaneously. In the field of Lionism, Jagdishbhai is the first blind person to reach the level of Deputy District Governor. As President of the Lions Club of Digvijaynagar, he was adjudged the Best President of the year. It is an established fact that most of the people who have money power can generally head a public charitable organization. Jagdishbhai is an exception. While he never had money power, he always had a strong will power. He could hit the top due to this quality and, of course, tremendous self confidence.

## Global Efforts:

Jagdishbhai has toured extensively to exchange views in various conferences and seminars. He has earned international prestige for his modern approach to the economic rehabilitation, integrated education, community based rehabilitation and professional training. He has presented a number of papers on these and related aspects in number of seminars in the country and abroad.

### **1962: Blind Administrators Course**

At the age of 24, he got the first opportunity of travelling abroad. He was selected to undertake a three months Blind Administrative Officers Course in London. Through the efforts of Mr. Arvind Lalbhai, Mr. Jivraj Mehta, Chief Minister of Gujarat sanctioned Rs. 5,000 as a grant for foreign travel. Mr. Arvind Lalbhai provided funds for his travel to other countries after completion of the course.

During his stay, he visited all the leading



institutions for the blind in the United Kingdom. He also travelled to other European countries and observed a variety of innovative programmes.

### **First World Conference**

From London, he travelled to Germany to participate in the World Conference of the International Council for Education of the Visually Handicapped (now known as International Council for Education of the People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI)). In this conference, Ms. Rehmat Fazhelboy presented a paper on education of the visually impaired. This conference was just a beginning of consistent efforts of Jagdishbhai on promotion of services for the fellow beings. After that, he participated very regularly in a number of conferences at international level.

*Jagdishbhai participated in the following international conferences:*

1. World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, New York, 1964
2. Visited U.S.S.R. as delegate of Government of India, 1967
3. W.C.W.B. World Assembly New Delhi, 1969
4. International Federation of the Blind, Sri Lanka, 1969
5. Seminar on Rehabilitation and Employment of Physically Handicapped, Germany, 1972.
6. Visited Berlin for International Federation of the Blind as President of National Federation of the Blind, 1974
7. Fourth Asian Conference WCWB Committee, Mumbai 1974
8. Fifth Asian Conference WCWB Asian Committee, Hongkong, 1978
9. Sixth General Assembly for the Blind, WCWB, Antwerp, 1979
10. Sixth Asian Conference, WCWB Asian Committee Jakarta, 1980
11. Asian Conference of the WCWB, Singapore, 1983
12. Valentine Huay World Conference in Paris, June, 1984

The world conference was convened to celebrate bicentennial of the world's first school for the blind. Jagdishbhai accompanied with Bhushan Punani participated in this important conference. Bhushan presented a paper on the employment opportunities for the blind in the developing countries. Jagdishbhai also shared his experience of promoting employment services for the blind in India.

13. World Assembly of World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, October, 1984, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
14. Quinquennial Conference of International Council for Education of the Visually Handicapped, Wurzburg, West Germany, 1987

In this conference, a manual titled "*Social and Economic Rehabilitation of the Rural Blind*" was released. This manual was presented by Capt. H. J. M. Desai and Jagdishbhai, Chairman and Co-chairman of the NAB Rural Activities Committee respectively. Nandini presented a Paper on "Learning to live in the Community" in the plenary session of this Conference.

15. Conference of the World Blind Union, Madrid, Spain, 1988
16. Meeting of the Asian Blind Union, Karachi, Pakistan, 1989

Jagdishbhai presented a paper titled "*Community Based Rehabilitation: Management Perspective*" in the Asian Conference of the World Blind Union held in Karachi, Pakistan during 1989. This paper was published in the **World Blind**, a publication of the World Blind Union during 1990. Jagdishbhai updated the content during 1995 and sent it for publication in a book to be published by the Christoffel Blindenmission, South Asia Regional Office.

In this paper, Jagdishbhai emphasized that the unorganized sector is definitely the most ideal avenue for the economic rehabilitation of blind persons. The strategy of their resettlement into these occupations should be well planned, individual need based, client centred and should involve family, community and local administration at all stages of rehabilitation. These efforts should be supported with appropriate research and development.

The community based rehabilitation programme should encompass all aspects of rehabilitation including prevention of blindness, integrated education of blind children, social integration through orientation & mobility training, training in activities of daily living, counselling and economic rehabilitation. As far as possible, the economic rehabilitation should be in the family occupation or trade and it should be within the community.

17. Conference for the Deaf-Blind, Stockholm, Sweden, 1989
18. Meeting of the Deaf-Blind Activity Committee of the World Blind Union at Osimo, Italy, May 1992

*The 5th Helen Keller World Conference on the Quality of Life on Deaf-Blind People: Realities and Opportunities* was convened at Osimo, Italy during 25-

30 September, 1993. Jagdishbhai presented a paper *"The Situation of Deaf-Blind in Developing Countries - An Overview"* in the conference.

He emphasized that services for screening, assessment and early intervention of the deaf-blind in the developing countries are almost non-existent. Lack of programmes, paucity of funds, limited human resources, and lack of inter-agency coordination have resulted into this situation. New strategies should aim at promoting skills of total communication as well as independent living. These should expedite their social integration through result-oriented, community-based, client centered and cost effective programmes.

19. Chairman, Organizing Committee, Asian Conference, International Council for Education of the People with Visual Impairment, 9-12 January, 1995, Ahmedabad

While proposing the Vote of Thanks in the inaugural function on 9 January, 1995, Jagdishbhai remarked, *"I am very glad to be standing before the august gathering. I feel that my dreams have come true today. I am glad that my organization which I have built up from scratch is acting as a host of a gathering of such esteemed participants from so many countries."*

While welcoming the guests in the Valedictory function on 11 January, 1997, Jagdishbhai offered to host the Eleventh Quinquennial Conference during the year 2002 at Ahmedabad.

Jagdishbhai truly personifies a global persona, his many visits around the world and his attendance at various international conferences has made him an international citizen. When work for the blind was in its infancy stage in India and organizations were managed by unambitious and god-fearing do-gooders, Jagdishbhai was decades ahead of his time in vision. He was globe-trotting even then and constantly learning about advancements in the developed countries. He was a man constantly in search of new ideas and on the move. Even today, when fate has been unkind to him in his physical limitations, his spirit still longs to soar. Even today with multiple disabilities, he is busy planning his participation in the forthcoming quinquennial conference of the ICEVI and the next World Assembly of the World Blind Union.

He is saddened and disheartened that today people look more at his disabilities rather than the razor sharp intelligence within him. He is out of the reckoning at many stages when delegations are drawn up for attendance at world conferences. However, he realizes that he cannot forever attend conferences. He has to make way for the new order. Some part of his being does resent this change brought about primarily by his disabilities, but the rational side tells him that he must heed the writing on the wall.

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## **Lionistic Career**

### **1968: Beginning**

Jagdishbhai joined the Lions Movement during 1968 and emerged to be a very active Lion. He was the first blind person in Gujarat to be accepted as a member of Lions Club of Digvijaynagar, the most prestigious club of the Lions International District 323-B. Ever since he joined the club, he has been striving to improve life for others in general, and disabled in particular. He has helped to restore sight and dignity to many individuals through his continued interest in the activities of the club.

### **1969: Chairmanship**

Due to his hard work and achievements, during the second year itself, he was appointed Chairman, Sight Conservation Committee at club level for the year 1969. His work at the club level was appreciated so much that he was promoted as District Chairman, Sight Conservation and Work with the Blind for the year 1970-71. The very next year, he became the Secretary of the club for the year 1972-73. After serving as Vice President for 3 years, he rose to the post of President of the Lions Club of Digvijaynagar for the year 1975-76.

### **1975: President**

During his tenure as President, the Club secured the Best Club Award for the third time. The club also secured five highest awards including the Best Club Award, Best President Award, 100 percent International President Award, Melvin Jones Medal, and Membership Achievement Award.

### **1982: Deputy District Governor**

Encouraged by his performance, he was invited to work as District Chairman, U.N.O. and CARE Activities for the year 1977-78; District Chairman, Sight Conservation for the year 1981-82 and then Deputy District Governor of the Lions International District, 323-B for the year 1982-83. Jagdishbhai is the only blind person in the Lions International District who could achieve this level through his persistent efforts and result oriented nature.

Mr. Dilip R. Parikh, Past Dist. Governor, Lion Clubs District 323-B and Minister of Industries, Govt. of Gujarat, a close associate of Jagdishbhai narrates his lionistic achievements, *"It was only in the year 1973 when I was the President of my home-club Lions Club of Ahmedabad Main that I came in contact with Jagdishbhai. The latter also confirms this encounter. I distinctly remember that the man wearing sun glasses was aware of everything that was going on in Lionism. Such was his striking personality and such was his level of personal involvement"*.



Dilipbhai further narrates Jagdishbhai's achievements, "*Our friendship grew when he was the President of the Lions Club of Digvijaynagar and at that time I was the Cabinet Secretary of the Lions District 323-B. What tremendous efforts he put up during his tenure as the President of the club, it was a matter of no surprise when he received an award for the Best Lions Club in the district. It was an achievement which he very truly deserved*".

Jagdishbhai values Dilipbhai's friendship very much. In fact at all the important social gatherings at the latter's residence Jagdishbhai has always been invited and introduced to the other guests personally by Pritiben, Dilipbhai's wife. She was instrumental in helping Jagdishbhai to raise Rs. 21 lakhs from the Lioness Club of Karnavati for constructing the Lioness Karnavati Hostel for Blind Women.

Even after Dilipbhai switched over to politics and got elected as Member of the Legislative Assembly (Gujarat), he maintained his concern and respect for Jagdishbhai. Whenever Jagdishbhai wanted to meet any Minister in the Government of Gujarat, Dilipbhai extended his fullest cooperation.

Once, however, such an assistance rebounded, as the former Chief Minister of Gujarat Late Mr. Chimanbhai Patel, who was very considerate and support the cause of the disabled whole-heartedly, refused to even talk to Jagdishbhai as he was taken to him by Dilipbhai. Dilipbhai represented the opposition party and Chimanbhai in spite of knowing Jagdishbhai very well, he declined to co-operate and listen to him.

While Jagdishbhai learnt a lesson that it is desirable to avoid being identified with any particular political party, this incident did not hamper the personal bond of friendship between him and Dilipbhai.

**Lion Homi S. Tarapore:** Past Dist. Governor, Lions Clubs also explains his association with Jagdishbhai in respect of his lionistic career. He narrates, "*My association with Jagdishbhai goes beyond two decades, and more, we have on many occasions worked together, being members of the Lions fraternity.*"

*Having had past experience of working for and with the handicapped, Jagdishbhai became the natural choice to be appointed as Chairman: Sight Conservation during my tenure as District Governor during 1981 - the International Year of Disabled Persons. I feel that none other would have suited the occasion and the position better than him. The guidance and the services rendered by him during that year have left an exemplary landmark for one and all to follow.*

*Yet another brain-child of this pioneer was the International Project comprising of sending a team of Ophthalmologists to Sri Lanka fully equipped with medicines and instruments. The project, the first of its kind in our Lions International District,*

*made it possible for us to lend a helping hand to our neighbouring country. This won Lion Jagdishbhai the acclamation world over. To his credit our District also revived the dormant "Eye Donation" project.*

*Devotion to duty and the capacity to lead and rehabilitate the blind at home as well as abroad was rightly appreciated by the Lions International and Jagdishbhai was presented the coveted Appreciation Certificate, the one and the only one of its type received during the year. The excellent work done by him lives up to the saying "Act well thy part and there the honour lies".*

Jagdishbhai in turn always finds Lion Homi to be full of life, jovial and respectful. He and his wife always give due respect and consideration to Jagdishbhai whenever and wherever they happen to meet him.

Jagdishbhai feels indebted to Lion Homi for providing him a berth in the District Cabinet and for giving him the opportunity of proving his prowess in the spirit of lionism. This is probably for the first time that a blind person was inducted into the District Cabinet. A number of other blind persons like (Late) Mr. H. M. Makim and (Late) Mr. Kanubhai Thaker were also co-opted into the District Cabinet subsequently.

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## **Awards Galore**

Jagdishbhai has been conferred a number of awards for his outstanding contribution in the field of disabled. His encouragement and support has helped his colleagues to carve a niche for themselves. Jagdishbhai thus belies the popular myth that nothing grows under a large tree.

### **1980: Club Award**

Jagdishbhai was honoured with the first award "*Late Nilkanthrai Chhatrapati Award*" during 1980 jointly by the Lions Club of Ahmedabad (North) & *Andh Kalyan Kendra*, Ahmedabad. This was just a beginning of Awards Galore to this visionary which has continued till today.

Ms. Bhadraben Satia, another Secretary of the organization was also conferred this Award on 8 February, 1997.

### **1981: Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwala Memorial Award**

The National Association for the Blind has instituted this award to commemorate the memory of its Founder President, for honouring professional as well as voluntary workers in the field of blind welfare. Jagdishbhai was conferred this prestigious Award as a professional worker for the year 1981. The award was conferred on 19 January, 1981 at Mumbai.



*Jagdishbhai while receiving Alpanwala Award*

The award citation highlighted that this award has been conferred in appreciation of his outstanding contribution in promoting vocational training and rehabilitation of the blind as a professional worker.

(Late) Mr. Kanubhai Thaker, Treasurer of the organization and life-long companion of Jagdishbhai was also conferred this Award on 19 January, 1992 in recognition of his outstanding pioneering services to the cause of the blind as a professional worker.

Kanubhai helped develop education of the blind, including integrated education, BMA School of Physiotherapy, Teachers training Course, Braille Shorthand and other Career Development Courses.

Ms. Bhadraben Satia, Secretary of the organization and life partner of Jagdishbhai was also conferred this Award on 19 January, 1994 in Mumbai. She was conferred this Award in recognition of her outstanding work for the welfare of the visually handicapped as a voluntary worker.

### **1981: State Award**

The Department of Social Defence, Government of Gujarat presented a State Award to Jagdishbhai on 26 December, 1981 in appreciation of his outstanding and dedicated services in the field of disabled welfare.

Mr. F. J. Porwal, Braille Press Manager and a close associate of Jagdishbhai was also presented the State Award as the Most Outstanding Blind Employee by the Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat, Shri Krishnapal Singh 7 January, 1997.

### **1982: FICCI Award**

The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi presented the FICCI Award to the Blind Men's Association in recognition of institutional initiatives in training & placement of disabled persons. The award citation read:

*"The Blind Men's Association, first in the State of Gujarat of its kind has rendered yeoman's services to the cause of the blind by providing training, rehabilitation and gainful employment. Nearly 600 disabled have been trained and 400 found suitable placement. Professionalism in operations, commercial outlook, economic viability, motivating of trainees and periodic evaluation of programmes have all resulted in increased turnover from its multi-purpose workshops undertaking a wide variety of*

*jobs. The many sided activities of the Association at bringing solace and succour to the blind is of a very high order."*

Jagdishbhai received the award on behalf of the organization on 2 April, 1982.

### **1987: Centennial Award**

The first school for the blind in India was established at Amritsar during 1887. The year 1987 was celebrated as the Centenary of Work for the Blind. The All India Confederation of the Blind convened a National Seminar in New Delhi and instituted a Centennial Award for outstanding work for the blind. The Confederation selected 10 Most Outstanding Blind Persons from the whole country for this Award. Jagdishbhai was selected for this Award. Mr. K. C. Pant, former Central Minister presented the Centennial Award on 4 January, 1987 in New Delhi.

### **1989: Shastipurti Mahotsav**

Friends, well wishers, admirers and heads of the organizations established by Jagdishbhai, District Branches of the NAB got together and decided to celebrate his 60th birthday in a befitting manner. It turned out to be grand event with the Governor of Gujarat, Mr. R. K. Trivedi presenting a souvenir, shawl, a purse of Rs. one lakh and a citation in a packed public hall of 1000 capacity; release of a book titled "*On the Untrodden Path*"; large press coverage and active participation of a large number of persons.

The citation read on the occasion personifies Jagdishbhai most accurately:

*Having conquered blindness you, Shri Jagdishbhai Patel, with your unparalleled prudence, self confidence and keen foresight have toiled for the comprehensive development and progressive welfare of the blind and the disabled.*

*With your devotion, dedication, dynamism, fearlessness modern thoughts and your innate ability to realize dreams and concretize plans, you have achieved success and as an innovative person, you have proved a beacon to many a floundering persons and provided able leadership to many institutions to become a recordsetting founder, administrator and trendsetter.*

*With your contemporary ideas, your ability to transform western ideas to suit Indian conditions with infusion of your experience, you have ushered in light in the lives of thousands of blind persons by initiation of modern need based programmes of education and training.*

*You have blazed a new trail by reaching out to the teeming millions of blind persons in remote rural villages and rehabilitating them in familiar surroundings. History and posterity will always remain a witness to this unprecedented phenomenon.*



*Mr. K.C. Pant, Central Minister presenting Centennial Award to Jagdishbhai.*



*Jagdishbhai receiving National Award from Hon'ble President of India, Mr. Shankar Dayal Sharma.*

*Jagdishbhai receiving Padmashri Award from Hon'ble President of India, Mr. R. Venkataraman.*



*Jagdishbhai receiving International Award for Community Development Services from Princess of Wales, Princess Diana.*



a. Mr. Sanatbhai Mehta, Minister of Finance, Government of Gujarat greeting Jagdishbhai.  
b. Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat, Mr. R.K. Trivedi felicitating Jagdishbhai on the occasion of Shashtipurti Mahotsav.



*Your active involvement in the Lions and other service clubs, your participation on Governmental Committees has enabled you to focus attention on the blind and the disabled and initiate varied and well organized programmes for their rehabilitation. Your efforts in this direction have been appreciated by the numerous national and international accolades, laurels and awards accorded to you.*

*Your faithful supporter and your shadow with you on your illustrious path has been none other than your wife, Bhadraben whose union with you has complemented your life, made it rich with meaning, warmth, love and understanding.*

*Sensitive, sensational, self-confident, frank, blunt, open hearted, judicious, foresighted, friendly are some of the qualities which have enabled you to strive relentlessly for the welfare of the blind and the disabled.*

*With an earnest desire of felicitating you on your achievements, we the Members of the Shashthi Purti Committee, sponsoring institutions well wishers and friends present you this humble citation on the 6th of April, 1989. With the hope that the Almighty blesses you with a long and healthy life, free from want and woe, for the welfare of the cause most dear to your heart. - Shashthi Purti Mahotsav Samiti*

Jagdishbhai was presented a purse of Rs 1,00,000 contributed by his friends and well wishers and welfare agencies from all over. Jagdishbhai very graciously gifted that money to the Blind Men's Association for promoting education and innovative services for the blind. This amount has been earmarked as Lalitaben Kashibhai Endowment Fund in the memory memory of Jagdishbhai's parents.

### **1991: 'Padmashri' Award**

The President of India, Mr. R. Venkatraman conferred this most coveted title to Jagdishbhai at the Investiture Ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi on 26 January, 1996, the Republic Day of India. The Citation reads *"In recognition of your personal qualities this Padmashri is bestowed on you"*.

Overjoyed Jagdishbhai on hearing about this great news remarked spontaneously, *"This Award is not my individual recognition - it is recognition of the blind community, it is recognition of a team work. This Award is due to perseverance and efforts of his band of dedicated workers of the BMA."*

### **1991: Golden Award for Overseas Services**

Help the Aged, United Kingdom selected Jagdishbhai for the International Award for Community Services Overseas. The Award was presented at the Hilton Hotel, in London,

by the Princess of Wales, Princess Diana, on 4th November, 1991. The citation reads as:

*"In 1983 Jagdish turned his attention to the elderly people of his country. As he says "Elderly people are valuable in their own right, they are worthy of our respect." working through Blind Men's Association, Jagdish lobbies government servants on pension issues and has organized a system of community projects helping to alleviate the problems faced by the poor areas of Ahmedabad.*

*The aim of the project is to establish self sufficient centres within each community which arrange for operations, disability aids, physiotherapy and treatment for those who need it, often with volunteer doctors.*

*So well loved has Jagdish become through his tireless work that he is known as Jagdish-bhai, or 'brother', a term used to express affection and respect."*

This event was covered in a number of leading publications circulated in the U.S.A. and U.K.

*Asian Herald* of 8 November, 1991 published a photograph of Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben with the Award. *"India Abroad"* also published this photograph.

*Current Weekly Newspaper*, 18-24, January, 1992 published a lead story under the title, **"Jagdishbhai, the First Asian Helpage Winner."** The news item narrates, *"The successful implementation of the Urban Helpage Programme won Jagdish Patel one of 963 nominations for the 1991 Helpage Golden Award, proposed by Graime Jackson, Head of Asia Department of Helpage, U. K". "Is not it like winning an Oscar", enthuses Jagdishbhai.*

### **1994: National Award**

The President of India, Mr. Shankar Dayal Sharma presented the National Award to Jagdishbhai for his most outstanding services in the field of blind welfare. Jagdishbhai was presented a citation and a cash award of Rs. 10,000 on this occasion. Every year, the Ministry of Welfare selects one most outstanding worker of the disabled for this coveted award. Jagdishbhai is one of the few persons who have received *Padma-Shri* as well as the National Award. The Award citation mentions that this Award has been conferred to recognition the most outstanding services of Jagdishbhai in the field of welfare of the blind and the disabled.

### **1994: Braille Shree Award**

Jagdishbhai was given *"Braille Shree"* Award by Mr. Upendra Trivedi, Minister for Information, Youth Services and Cultural Activities of a Seminar, on 12 November, 1994 organized by *Louis Braille Smarak Samiti*, Amreli.

A befitting homage was paid to Louis Braille, who invented the "Braille Alphabet". A life size statue of Braille was unveiled by Mr. Upendra Trivedi.

Addressing the Seminar, the Minister said that *"the tribute paid to Braille was most befitting. There is one statue erected in France to commemorate the great inventor, while the statue here is the second one. The Frenchman had rendered exemplary services to the cause of the blind. He provided them with a master-key to the realm of knowledge. It has been easier for the blind to read, write and communicate now, thanks to Louis Braille's efforts. Eventually this has enabled members of the world of the blind to lead normal lives with self-respect"*.

### **1996: "Pride of Ahmedabad" Award**

The Ahmedabad Medical Association honoured Jagdishbhai as Pride of Ahmedabad, 1996 in a public function organized on 25 February, 1996. Honourable Chief Justice of India, Shri A. H. Ahmadi was the Chief Guest of the Function. This was the first time that such a function was arranged by the Medical Association.

## **Other Awards**

<b>Date &amp; Year</b>	<b>Name of Award</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Organization</b>
19 January 1981	Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwala Memorial Award	Mumbai	National Association for the Blind
26 December, 1981	Certificate of Appreciation	Gandhinagar	Department of Social Welfare
14 February, 1982	Special Award	Vadodara	Blind Welfare Council
2 April, 1983	FICCI Award	New Delhi	Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
16 July, 1983	Certificate of	Gandhinagar	Department of Appreciation Employment & Training
13 May, 1985	National Award	New Delhi	Ministry of Welfare

<b>Date &amp; Year</b>	<b>Name of Award</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Organization</b>
17 May, 1987	Special Award	Rajkot	Akhil Gujarat Andh Shikshak Sangh
11 May, 1987	Special Award	Idar	Blind Physiotherapists Association
25 December, 1987	Special Award	Idar	NAB Sabarkantha Dist. Branch
25 December, 1988	Special Award	Porbandar	Shree Andh Sarvodaya Mandal Braille Library
11 March, 1989	Special Award	Palanpur	Palanpur Shishushala Balmandir & Education Trust
6 April, 1989	Special Award	Ahmedabad	Trainees, Adult Training Centre for the Blind
6 April, 1989	Certificate	Ahmedabad	Shashtipurthi Mahotsav Samiti
25 December, 1989	Special Award	Rajkot	Andh Apang Manav Kalyan Trust
25 December, 1989	Special Award	Rajkot	NAB Rajkot Branch and Andhjan Kalyan Mandal
23 March, 1991	Padmashree	New Delhi	President of India
21 March, 1993	Special Award	Rajkot	The Society for Mentally Retarded
13 October, 1993	Certificate	Ahmedabad	Paraplegic Hospital
30 January, 1994	Special Award	Wankanar	Shree Navjeevan Andhjan Mandal

<b>Date &amp; Year</b>	<b>Name of Award</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Organization</b>
20 March, 1994	National Award	New Delhi	Ministry of Welfare
12 November, 1994	Braille Shree Award	Amreli	Louis Braille Smarak Trust
12 November, 1994	Special Award	Kheda	NAB Kheda Dist. Branch

#### **Awards for Bhadraben**

18 March, 1989	Special Award	Rajkot	Blind Physiotherapists Association
25 December, 1989	Special Award	Rajkot	Andh Apang Kalyan Trust
1 May, 1994	Certificate	Amreli	Andhjan Pragati Mandal, Amreli
1 May, 1994	Certificate	Kheda	NAB Kheda Dist. Branch
27 Feb., 1997	Gujarat Stri Kelvani Mandal Award	Ahmedabad	Gujarat Stri Kelvani Mandal
2 March, 1997	Dr. Nilkanthrai Chhatrapati Award	Ahmedabad	Andh Kalyan Kendra

### **Journey on Untrodden Path Continues**

Jagdishbhai does not seem to be handicapped in any way by his blindness. He has achieved several distinctions which many a sighted person has not been able to achieve. He is a good employee and a democratic leader. He has worked hard and knows the true meaning of labour. He is a dynamic man spontaneous, witty, charming and extremely intelligent. His ideas are always novel and he has been recognized in circles of disabled welfare as an *'Idea Generating Computer'*. His achievements portray his independence, his meteoric rise in spite of his handicap. He is a person who has laughed at fate and has succeeded in softening her cruel blows by determined effort. He is a model of endless patience, unceasing effort and should serve as a model for other blind people to emulate. He is risen on his own, is a self-made man, and can be called *'Swayambu'*.

Jagdishbhai is known all over India for developing innovative need based programmes for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind and disabled persons. His major contribution

*On the Untrodden Path* 7 3

included professionalization of services for the disabled, introduction of a nationwide community based rehabilitation programme. Introduction of professional training for the blind and disabled, Introductory approach to vocational training, and promotion of professional employment of the visually handicapped

At present, Jagdishbhai is concentrating on economic rehabilitation of the rural disabled and developing professional training for the blind and disabled. He feels that blindness is not a tragedy, it is a mishap. The disabled do not expect charity, they need opportunity to grow, develop their personality, integrate themselves and become economically independent.

He desires the society not to isolate the disabled but to accept them in the mainstream of social progress. He is also proud of his blindness and deafness. He says, *"It is a blessing in disguise because by this multiple handicap, I am able to understand the agony of the millions of the blind and disabled"*.



# CHAPTER II

## Many Shades of the Visionary

*Jagdishbhai has always been a person with a very dominant personality, an individual with strong likes and dislikes, with unshakeable convictions and an extremely individualistic sense of morality. He is a person you may love or hate, but one you can definitely not ignore! He is a man who goes by his instinctive reactions to a situation rather than by deep and researched study.*

*This chapter gives an insight into Jagdishbhai's personality, his innermost thoughts and mental processes. Rather than only documenting facts and historical events, this chapter seeks to show him as a human being with all his strengths, foibles, fancies, fixations and his endearing qualities. What follows is a collection of thoughts and reactions gleaned from a cross section of people - friends, relatives, colleagues and staff members of various development agencies. There has been an attempt to make this chapter as candid as possible. and interesting to our readers !-  
Authors*

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### **Scent of a Person**

Jagdishbhai has a very uncanny sense of smell. He can sense the presence of a person by the particular smell of the person. He recognizes Punani by his after shave, Harishbhai by his talc, Nandini by her moisturizer, Nandiniben Munshaw by her French perfume, Bhadraben by her face cream, Futarmal by his *Jasmine* body spray, and Pankaj Dalal by the pungent smell of his *Pan-masala*. The surprising thing is that none of the persons described above use strong aromatic cosmetics and most of the smell is lost by the time they reach the office. If on a particular day, these persons use any other perfume or talc, Jagdishbhai points out and says he does not like it.

He can sense the atmosphere of a person's home by the smell of the house. He sometimes embarrasses people by saying bluntly that their food is not well prepared or tasty as it does not smell good.

He can sense whether some new or formal clothes are worn by the crisp 'new' smell or the typical closet odour. Things that the sighted people gauge by seeing, Jagdishbhai gathers by smell.

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## The Clothes Horse

An admirer of Jagdishbhai once said, "He is like Gregory Peck or a hollywood 'yesteryear star" - tall, handsome, black hair with widows peaks on both sides, a roman nose with those dark dark glasses perched on them. Jagdishbhai was truly handsome till a stroke affected his left side and crippled his fingers. He is aware of his good looks and in his youth used it to his advantage. People fell for his magnetic looks and his winning manner. He loves wearing smart clothes and showing off a little. He wears classy suits, safaris, infact everything he wears suits him. He never shops for his clothes himself so his wife is to be complimented for Jagdishbhai's immaculate looks.



Jagdishbhai with a Visitor

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## The Gourmet Eater

Jagdishbhai is a lover of good food. He is a small eater, never overeats under any condition. A highly diabetic person like him, who has to take insulin injections daily, cannot afford to take chances with food. He has a perchant for sweet food and loves hot *Jalebis* and *Gulab-jamums*, loves *Rabdi* and cold *Kheer*. He loves eating out at night but his lunch is always at home and in a hurry. After his lunch, he trundles into bed for his siesta and wakes up at 2.30 p.m. and comes straight to office.

He loves having bread sticks, bread and butter with soup, *Aluparathas* and curd. He adores having *Alutikkis* and devours *Dahiwadas*. He does not like food with sticky or a mashed feel. He likes food which smells good and fresh. He does not like heavily spiced or oily food, he is very choosy about the quality of the food and who he eats it with.

He could never develop a taste for Brinjals, processed cheese or cottage cheese. Any preparation which contains either of these items, he simply keeps aside. One is surprised when one finds that Jagdishbhai has nicely removed cooked cottage cheese cubes from a cheese preparation which generally is the most expensive vegetable preparation for the main course in any restaurant. The soft and leathery touch of cheese makes him feel as he is having mutton and makes him discard a delicacy in vegetarian food. Similarly, he distastes Brinjals because of their fleshy feel!.



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## **Voice Indicated Mood**

Jagdishbhai is known among his colleagues and close associates for his natural gift of judging a person's mood from his voice and general behaviour. On the first day, Punani came to meet him after a pre-fixed appointment, within a few seconds Jagdishbhai pointed out that Punani was scared and a bit confused. That was a reality. When Punani fixed up the appointment on telephone, he did not know that he was going to meet a blind person. The moment he realized that a blind person was going to interview him all by himself, he lost his wits and could not hide his shock which resulted into confusion. Jagdishbhai shocked him further when he pointed out, *"Why are you so much confused and uncertain about yourself? Why do not you sit down first and then we may discuss further."*

On a number of occasions, Jagdishbhai has pointed out to a number of persons about their state of mind from their voice and general behaviour. Many a times, he could clearly and with confidence point out whether the visitor has a warm personality, whether he is a trustworthy or a genuine person. He attributes this gift to his ability of judging a person's personality from his voice and style of presentation.

Similarly from the quality of sound and the manner of presentation, Jagdishbhai easily establishes whether the person is angry, disturbed, confused, assertive, casual, joyful or sad. He has developed his own mechanism of evaluating different moods of different people from these verbal clues. It is sometimes embarrassing when he says that the person who came here will betray you, he is not reliable - uncannily this prophecy comes true.

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## **Angle of Sound**

Many times, visitors get a shock when Jagdishbhai asks why they are standing and not sitting down. Generally one wonders as to how Jagdishbhai recognizes that the person is standing and talking. He has developed his own mechanism of tracing the angle of the voice and following it from the source downward. When the voice is coming downward, he establishes that the person is standing. He also points that the visitor will feel more comfortable and at home if he sits and talks.

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## **Love for Music**

**July, 1986:** When a journalist from the Times of India inquired with him whether he was interested in fine arts, he quipped, *"Oh yes, I love music. I like to listen to ghazals, bhajans and everything that is soulful, every song that is sad."* "Any games", he heaves a sigh, *"I can play only braille cards and chess. But my partner must be interesting"*.

regard, *"The day I joined the institute, I went to meet Jagdishbhai. I was amazed about his memory power and his capacity to recognize people from the way they talk, the way they walk and from the fragrance or the scent they put on. He advised me to be very particular and careful about my work. Whenever I prepare any letter, I always remember this visionary as the first mistake he pointed out to me in my work was regarding not putting an enclosure with a letter dictated by him. I learnt to be more efficient in my first meeting itself"*.

Leelamma Thomas, Executive Assistant, Adult Training Centre for the Blind narrates her first encounter with Jagdishbhai in these words, *"I first met Jagdishbhai on 17th January, 1980. I just could not believe as to how a visually impaired person could develop such a large empire devoted to almost all aspects of their development. But within a few days, I could understand that a blind person can do many things as a sighted person does."*

*When I joined BMA I was totally unaware of any office routine as it was my first job. At the same time as an outsider, I could not talk Hindi and Gujarati very fluently. So whenever I went to Jagdishbhai, he used to make a joke on my Hindi and Gujarati speech. Instead of "Leelamma" (which is my original name) he calls me "Nilamma" which I always like to hear.*

*As mentioned earlier I was an inexperienced person when I joined BMA. So for the first few months, I was very afraid of taking Jagdishbhai's dictation as he does not like repeating one sentence again. But after sometime, I could follow Jagdishbhai's dictation very well. At the same time, I could learn many things from him. Many times, I was surprised to see Jagdishbhai's memory power. Being a sighted person, I am unable to find out a paper which is filed 10 years back. But Jagdishbhai will tell the date of the letter and in which file it may be filed".*

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## **A Helping Hand**

Jagdishbhai always enjoys helping others, particularly those who are close to him in the personal as well as professional life. Never bothered about his own health, he is more worried and concerned about the well being of his close associates and people around him.

Dr. Rajendra Vyas, close life time associate and coworker of Jagdishbhai appreciates this dimension of the Visionary when he narrates, *"Jagdish's father passed away when Jagdish was only 34 years old and being the eldest child and the only earning member in a way the burden of supporting his family comprising his mother, three brothers and two sisters fell virtually on his shoulders. He supported all the siblings financially"*

*and morally. Today, all of them are well settled. Dr. Ramesh Patel has a roaring practice as a General Surgeon at Godhra in Panchmahal District of Gujarat. Naresh is well settled in his business in America. Sudhir, a bank employee, has recently migrated to the U.S.A. with his wife Niru. Jagdish's sister Gita practices medicine along with her doctor husband in the United States. Another sister Daksha is happily married to a well settled businessman in Mumbai. Daksha's son Mandeep also spent five years under the care of Jagdish while doing his Bachelor as well as Master degrees in Pharmacy. I am personally aware of the trying time which Jagdish had gone through in helping his family after the death of his father. The welfare of the family took equal importance with his blind welfare work."*

Nanala Kanabar, another disciple of Jagdishbhai has also highlighted this quality of Jagdishbhai. When Kanabar's wife gave birth to a child with mental handicap, Jagdishbhai extended him fullest support and provided him a lot of encouragement to devote his attention towards the upbringing of his retarded son like any other offspring. With the whole-hearted support of Jagdishbhai, Kanabar even established a school for such children which is now a leading centre of its kind in Saurashtra.

Kanabar also appreciates Jagdishbhai's friendliness with all sorts of people including the disabled, poor, illiterate and the down trodden. He is always willing to make any sacrifices for his friends. A lot of people have deceived him in the name of friendship. The most remarkable aspect is that he wishes well of even such people. This is a great quality of a true friend.

Leelamma Thomas narrates her experience, "*Nature-wise Jagdishbhai gets angry very soon. But he will cool down within a few minutes. Jagdishbhai is very helpful to others whenever anybody is in trouble. He always helps his staff members whenever they have difficulties in their life. His guidance and advice have always helped me to go to the right direction. Whenever I fell ill, Jagdishbhai used to call me and tell me to take care of my health and that if I needed any help, I should approach him without any hesitation*".

**Mr. Akhil Paul**, former Senior Project Coordinator, National Association for the Blind, Rural Activities Committee and now Development Manager (India), Sense International, also explains this quality of Jagdishbhai.

Akhil recalls that on joining his job with the National Association for the Blind based at Ahmedabad on 17 February, 1990, he had to rush to his home town at Raipur to see his father who had met with a road accident. His father had a mental black-out and could hardly recall as to what exactly had happened.

Akhil first met Jagdishbhai on 20 February, immediately on his return to Ahmedabad. Jagdishbhai inquired about the health of his father. To console Akhil, he mentioned that

even he was losing his hearing and finding it difficult to maintain his balance while walking, apart from his blindness. He desired Akhil to consider him like his father. He assured him that he would always provide moral support like a father does to his son. These words of consolation were helpful to Akhil in easing his tension. Being new to Ahmedabad and due to his father's accident, Akhil was feeling lonely those days. These words of Jagdishbhai were very soothing.

Jagdishbhai also confirms this meeting. He, however, maintains that his first meeting with Akhil was during the personal interview for the job. Akhil was approached thrice on the telephone inviting him to appear for the interview. During the interview Jagdishbhai felt that he was not sure whether Akhil would last in this job for a long time. During the first encounter itself he realized that Akhil would shape up well and prove to be an asset for the field and continue for a long time.

Akhil's performance and his movement up the ladder in the organizational hierarchy - from co-ordinator to senior coordinator - establishes the truth of Jagdishbhai's first impression of Akhil. At present (*April, 1997*), Akhil is Asia Chairman of the International Council for the Education of the People with Visually Impaired Committee on the Multi-handicapped, recently he conducted training for the CBR functionaries in Malaysia and also coordinated training of teachers of the multi-handicapped there. Akhil, as forecast by Jagdishbhai, is proving his prowess, rather too soon. He joined the Sense International, U. K. as Development Manager (India). The Sense International launched a nation-wide hunt for the appointment of a suitable person. Akhil was the only and unanimous choice of the selection panel for this coveted post.

Akhil feels that in the first meeting itself, he found Jagdishbhai to be a caring person who looks after his co-workers and employees very well. This meeting established an everlasting bond of concern, understanding and mutual sharing between them. This maiden meeting also established the credibility and openness about the system itself. Akhil who was hesitant at the thought of working for an organization and people completely unknown to him, found that his fears were unfounded and that he had found a family and home at Ahmedabad.

Jagdishbhai adds that he also advised Akhil to put his heart, body and soul into his work to achieve success. He also desired Akhil to maintain good relations with other staff members but cautioned him not to develop too much familiarity, maintain a gap and establish his identity. This piece of advice of this visionary always guides Akhil on to the path of success.

**Mr. Ishitiaz Haider**, Principal, Ahmadi School for the Blind, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh met Jagdishbhai for the first time in Tashkant, erstwhile U.S.S.R. during their visit as a members of a delegation of the Government of India which included Dr. Rajendra

Vyas, Mr. Suresh Ahuja, Jagdishbhai and Mr. Edward Jonathan. Mr. Haider happened to be in Tashkant as he was touring U. S. S. R. on behalf of the University Grant Commission. As Mrs. Haider knew the Russian language, the members of Indian delegation requested her to help them as interpreter.

In the first encounter itself, Mr. Haider found that Jagdishbhai was very hard working and always devoted to his work. His first impression was that Jagdishbhai is rough in nature and probably not willing to develop friendly relations. He, however, later discovered that Jagdishbhai takes some time to understand a person. Once he understands, he is ever willing to extend his fullest cooperation as a close friend.

During subsequent meetings, Jagdishbhai was very friendly and extended his fullest cooperation in organizing visits of teachers of Ahmedi School to BMA.

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### **Personal Sacrifice**

**July, 1986:** When the staff correspondent from the Times of India, Ahmedabad asked Jagdishbhai, "What do you plan for your children?", he maintained silence for a while. Jagdishbhai replied, *"You see my wife and I had decided not to have any children, as we feel that having children will hamper our mission. All these blind and handicapped children are our children. We nurse, we play with them and we teach them. We treat them like our children."*

Mr. Natwar Patel, a life time associate of Jagdishbhai also confirms this resolve of Jagdishbhai. As he wanted to devote himself completely to the welfare of the blind, he decided firmly not to have any children.

Jagdishbhai has, on a number of occasions, confirmed this resolve. Even Bhadraben has also confirmed the same unequivocally. Both of them have never reflected any frustration or dissatisfaction on not having



*Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben*

their own children. While touring whenever this topic came up for discussion, both of them maintained that this was the condition of their wed-lock that they would never aspire to have children. They generally reflect satisfaction that both of them could fulfill this condition.

They consider this as a personal sacrifice for the cause of the welfare of the blind. Their resolve which they defend even today was that having children of their own may have diverted their attention from their self-chosen path of devoting their complete life for the promotion of innovative services for the blind and disabled.

Mrs. Nandini Munshaw considers Bhadraben as his anchor and a steadfast and loyal companion, working with him shoulder to shoulder and yet behind the scene and without basking in reflected glory. She sometimes feels that this couple has been different here also - they have been wedded to blind welfare and zealously attached to the cause. Their private life is also wedded to blind welfare and persons related to the field. In fact, they are possessed by blind welfare.

Dr. Rajendra Vyas also feels that although Jagdish has no children of his own, all the projects, programmes and activities of the BMA are his children whom he has helped to conceive, nurture and nourish, benefits of which are for all to see.

Mrs. Nandiniben Munshaw considers Jagdishbhai's complete devotion to his work and his institution above all as his major sacrifice. She cites the example of *Navnirman* agitation of 1974. He was blamed by the students and staff members on a number of grounds, almost all the Office Bearers excepting a few went against him, the media gave adverse publicity. Anyone else in his place would have simply withdrawn and devoted himself to his profession. He considered cause of welfare of the blind the most important and fought the situation diligently. Thanks to his determination and the support of Mr. Arvind Lalbhai and Mr. Manubhai D. Shah, he emerged victorious. BMA was handed back to the same management and it has subsequently grown to be one of the largest organizations in the country in the field.

Subsequently, he decided to wind up his very lucrative practice in physiotherapy to devote himself completely to the welfare of the blind. Natwar Patel confirms that Jagdishbhai had an excellent practice. He was the most well known physiotherapist of Ahmedabad from 1948 to 1960. After he established the Recreation Club for the Blind during 1960, he started devoting more and more time toward blind welfare activities. In fact, Natwarbhai and Wankhede were handling almost three-fourth of his patient load.

Ultimately, he decided to wind up his lucrative practice and devote himself completely to his blind and disabled welfare activities. Probably, due to his supreme sacrifice and untiring efforts, BMA is today such a leading voluntary organization.

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## **Outstanding Physiotherapist**

The first course in physiotherapy for the blind in India was set up at the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind, Mumbai during 1940. Jagdishbhai joined this school and completed the Certificate Course in Physiotherapy during 1946-47. Over 120 blind persons were trained in physiotherapy who were gainfully employed subsequently.

Jagdishbhai joined his father who was a medical doctor having good private practice. He established his own clinic '*Medico Massage*' on 1st January, 1948 at Khadia. He subsequently shifted his clinic to N. L. Trust Building at Relief Road, most prominent business centre of Ahmedabad. He also worked as Physiotherapist and subsequently Head of Department with the L. G. Hospital, Maninagar during 1960 to 1986.

His life time associate Natwar Patel confirms that Jagdishbhai has excellent knowledge of the subject and a very pleasing and attractive personality which stood him in good stead. He emerged to be most leading physiotherapist. His patients included Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai and many other leading industrialists of Ahmedabad. He has requisite talent and a good oratory. He would always talk to the point which was much appreciated by his patients.

Almost all textile mill-owners and other leading citizens of Ahmedabad availed his services. He was known for his most accurate diagnosis. He, however, confined himself to massage. He was most skillful in handling fracture cases. As one has to put minimum labour in handling such cases, he always preferred such cases. In other cases of haemeplegic and spondalities, more labour is required, hence he would avoid. As his father was a medical doctor, other doctors would refer cases to Jagdishbhai.

Generally he had wealthy clients for home visits. People who could not afford would come to his *Medico Massage* clinic, he would always treat all his clients equally well.

From the day he established his clinic during 1948, he had desire to establish a high quality training programme for training blind persons in physiotherapy. Subsequently, Navrangpura School for the Blind established a two-years training course in physiotherapy under the guidance of Late Mr. Kanti Gandhi, himself a Physiotherapist. As this course was not recognized by any appropriate authority, Jagdishbhai wanted to establish a course duly recognized and financially supported by appropriate government. After persistent struggle of seven years, BMA got recognition during 1983 from the Department of Education under Vocational Career Courses to introduce a two years certificate course.

The Ministry of Welfare also came forward to extend financial assistance for this course. By this time, Victoria Memorial School for the Blind had closed down the physiotherapy course. After 3 years, Navrangpura School for the Blind also discontinued the certificate course for the blind. It emerged a great challenge for Jagdishbhai to develop the Nandini

Ramesh Gandhi School of Physiotherapy as a successful venture. The course has survived and progressed over the last 14 years. It is today the most appropriate and effective professional training programme in the country. From June, 1997 the National Association for the Blind has also started a similar course at Mumbai based on the BMA pattern. The BMA has already extended training support to Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paraplegic, Bangladesh through Helen Keller International.

Himself a leading Physiotherapist, Jagdishbhai succeeded in extending training facilities to hundreds of other blind persons. Through this endeavor, he also proved to the world that the blind persons were capable of competing with their sighted counterpart in select professions.

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### **Idea Machine**

Akhil Paul strongly feels that whenever you go to Jagdishbhai with a problem or a solution, he always points a few more aspects of the problem or a few more alternative solutions. The beauty of the thing is that he comes up with such ideas at the spur of a moment. Akhil considers Jagdishbhai an *"Idea Generating Machine or a Thinking Tank"*.

To support this conviction, Akhil narrates an incident: *"During the Concluding Ceremony of the International Council for the Education of the People with Visual Impairment Asian Conference, hosted by the Blind Men's Association at Ahmedabad during 9-11 January, 1995, when everyone including Mr. William Brohier, President of the ICEVI, was all praise for the Blind Men's Association, Jagdishbhai came up with a brilliant idea. He announced publicly that if everyone was satisfied with the local arrangements, Mr. William Brohier and other officials of the ICEVI should grant the forthcoming International Conference to the Blind Men's Association"*. What a beautiful thought but only Jagdishbhai out of a packed audience could think of this.

The Times of India, Ahmedabad also designated him as the *"idea generating computer"* who is always busy from early morning till late in the evening. He is always concerned about the economic and social rehabilitation of the handicapped. He wants society to accept their less-fortunate brethren and give them a place of dignity.

According to Nandubhai Parikh, *"Above all, he is extremely hard working and a man of creative vision. With his computer-like mind which generates innovative ideas every moment, he has been able to give to society a great deal more than he has taken from it"*.

Anil Patel, General Secretary, NAB Junagarh Branch met Jagdishbhai for the first time while studying in Mumbai. Once Anil Patel's radio was out of order and he was not able to listen to news. Jagdishbhai volunteered to check the radio. Lo! in two minutes, Jagdishbhai



could repair the radio and Anil Patel could listen to the news bulletin. This incident that a blind person can also repair a radio have ever remained ingrained in his mind and it has given him lot of confidence.

Subhash Datrang maintains that whenever he meets Jagdishbhai, the latter has something original to tell him. On 2nd March, 1996, when he met Jagdishbhai and wanted to discuss the recently initiated course of physiotherapy for blind persons, Jagdishbhai promptly pointed out that he should send blind students to the hospitals where they carry out post-mortem to give practical demonstrations of various aspects of anatomy and physiology. Subhash was wonder-struck as no one else could think of this most practical way of teaching such difficult subjects to the visually impaired.

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### **Man of Many Shades**

The year 1992 was a very damaging one for Jagdishbhai. He suffered a massive stroke in August and had to be hospitalized for two weeks. He was administered heparin treatment to dissolve any possible clots in the blood stream. This treatment which saved his life left adverse effects. His deafness became almost 90 percent and he was left with severe left hemiplegia with both upper and lower limbs being affected. He was in his own words, "*A person with multiple disabilities - both motor and sensory.*" In moment of humour, he says, "*He is worse off than Helen Keller - as he is blind, deaf and orthopaedically handicapped*".

Subba Rao in his article "**Jagdish Patel: Breaking the Barriers**" published in the **Blind Welfare**, December, 1992 issue also makes a similar observation that Jagdishbhai has now (1992) developed a hearing problem. Blood pressure and diabetes are the other two companions he has to live with. To top it all, he suffered a paralytic stroke last year. None of this has kept him down. "*I have been a fighter all through my life*", says Jagdishbhai with justifiable pride.

Jagdishbhai was never known to be a great walker even earlier when he was physically fit. After his stroke, he has to be propped and helped by two persons even for taking small steps. A tall man, good looking, and a great charmer in his hey days, he found this shuffling gait and dependence a great blow to his ego. His inability to hear discussions in a meeting made him feel insecure and threatened and he felt as if the curtain had fallen and his innings were over.

From 1992 to early 1994, due to his complete dependence on others for his routine activities, he went into depression and he developed suicidal tendencies and mentioned openly that he felt many a times like committing suicide. His fear was that when Aurangzeb, Monarch of the Moghul Dynasty became a weak monarch, the kingdom got divided

into fragments and the monarchy came to a grinding halt. He feared that the institution he has created during his life time may get fragmented due to his physical disabilities. The fear-psychosis of his becoming a weak institutional head gripped his mind to such an extent that there are times when he does not trust his otherwise most trusted colleagues at the institute.

Jagdishbhai is nothing if not obstinate and determined. He analyzed his own personal condition and realized that physiotherapy was the only panacea. Like a General going to war, he made his own plans. Every evening, for one hour, he takes active and passive exercise therapy, muscle and nerve stimulation. His arduous efforts paid dividends by 1994 and he could walk with more equilibrium in his gait. The daily physiotherapy has become a compulsive passion - come 4.30 p.m., rain, heat, holidays, guests, meetings, and compulsions notwithstanding, he is off like a homing pigeon to the physiotherapy department of the BMA. Even during his retreat at Mount Abu centre, he would prefer to invite a Physiotherapist friend as a companion to spend holidays along with him at his cost so that he continues getting physiotherapy treatment everyday.

He is, however, coming to terms with his handicap. His staff and friends have tried to convince him that it is his brain, his dynamism, his lucid thinking that the BMA needs, not his physical vigour or ability.

Jagdishbhai proclaims that he does not mind his blindness as he has been living with it throughout his life. But he despises his newly acquired deafness and locomotor disability as these restrict his conversation and movement which he feels hampers his administrative abilities. These additional disabilities create turmoil in his mind, as he has to completely depend on others for his daily activities. He wants to be mobile, active and above all, an effective administrator.

**23 November, 1995:** At BMA, the II Orientation Programme for the Clinical Psychologists sponsored by the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped is in progress. BMA organizes a Reception Dinner at Hotel West End for the programme participants and the BMA's concerned staff. As Bhadraben develops diarrhoea, she is indisposed. One wonders if Jagdishbhai would be able to manage to come for dinner. 8 p.m., the designated time for dinner, there comes Jagdishbhai and straight-away joins the group. Within minutes, he is participating in the *Antakshari* (an entertainment programmes of film songs). His loud and clear announcement of the occasional judgement that the opposite party has lost sends people into peals of laughter.

He enjoys good food and so eats more than the sparse meal that he normally eats. He signals Akhil to get him a cigarette which he lights himself. Smoking a cigarette and moving around and meeting people is his way of manifesting of his joy. One can hardly believe that, a person who was debating whether he would be able to join the reception

dinner, enjoys the same to the hilt and makes it a memorable evening for everyone. His bouncing back to normalcy and reflecting tremendous confidence in himself was probably the most effective demonstration to the Clinical Psychologists regarding the potentials, aspirations and expectations of a visually impaired person or for that matter, a multi-handicapped person.

What is particularly endearing about Jagdishbhai, is his child like ability to bounce back from the abyss of despair and physical limitations. One moment he is full of remorse, self pity and negative feelings and the next moment his ever active brain starts its chemistry - then comes an outburst of dynamic and innovative ideas which make the listener reel with disbelief! Was this the same man who was depressed - who is now perceptive, who is so foresighted, who can tell the next move on the chessboard before the other player has started! *A person of many shades, from dark to light, from disability to herculean ability - whose will is so strong that his body is subservient to it.*

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## **Complete Devotion**

**9 September, 1994:** Ahmedabad witnessed a rainfall of 50 cms. in the small hours of the morning, probably the heaviest in the past 25 years. All the major rivers in central and south Gujarat, Tapi, Narmada and Sabarmati were in spate and some had even crossed the danger mark. The train link between Ahmedabad and Mumbai completely got disrupted. Thousands of people from Surat and Bharuch were evacuated to safer places. The weather forecast for the day was heavy to very heavy rainfall for Ahmedabad with grave warnings of flash floods.

Punani attempted to leave his residence by Ambassador diesel car but had to reluctantly give up midway as the car would be submerged if he dared to proceed. Most office goers decided to confine themselves to their homes as the outskirts were turning into mini lakes. The only option for Punani was to requisition a loading truck and reach the institute. He did so and with great difficulty managed to reach the office getting jubilant over the fact that he would be the only one reaching the office that day.

As he reached the main building, he heard a familiar sound - the call bell from Jagdishbhai's office. He stood still in a state of near shock - not willing to believe that Jagdishbhai could have reached the office after braving the heavy rains and wading through knee deep water. Jagdishbhai's residence is located on the periphery of a rain-fed seasonal pond and the area gets flooded every year even after light rains! The general assumption on such a day would be that Jagdishbhai would be the last person one would expect to see in the office.

As Punani opens the door, Jagdishbhai is in his executive chair reading a braille book in his usual manner as if it is a normal day. He tells Punani that he was the first one to report

for duty. He mentions with pride that when he realized that it would be difficult for most of the staff members to report for duty, he felt that it was his prime duty to reach the office before time so that he would be available in the campus in case of any emergency.

That day, the attendance in the institute was only 10 percent, Jagdishbhai attended his office before time and spent the whole day at the institute. After many years, he had his lunch and post-lunch siesta in the institute itself. By evening his house was inaccessible due to knee deep water all around. Most staff members advised him not to go home and to spend the night at the institute. But using the loading truck, he made it a point to reach back and support Bhadraben morally in this moment of crisis. Jagdishbhai managed to reach home but on the way back, the truck got stuck in the rain water. Only after 3 days when the rain water receded, the truck could be brought back. Jagdishbhai, however, maintained his usual movements using alternative vehicles. He did not allow his disability to restrict his movements or jeopardize his regular duties.

Nandini also feels that whatever Jagdishbhai has achieved during his life time is because of his dint of efforts or "*Purusharth*" - he was neither born with a silver spoon nor was success handed over to him on a platter. He excelled due to his hard work, his single-mindedness of purpose and above all his complete devotion to his duties. His obstinacy is such that even with raging fever, he has this compulsion to attend office - sometimes it seems that he has no other distraction - his life revolves around his work.

Jasu Kavi has also marked this quality of Jagdishbhai. Whatsoever weather, whatsoever environment, or whatsoever occasion, Jagdishbhai always follows his daily routine without any alterations whatsoever. One always hears the horn of his car entering the main gate of the institute everyday at the same time - even when he is indisposed.

He is always fresh and active whenever he returns from his long trips abroad. Many-a-times he comes straight to office from as long trip and gets busy with his routine work immediately.

**Jasu Kavi** recalls one incident: "*Jagdishbhai had a two-months trip abroad. I went to meet him in his office to inquire about his well being. He immediately inquired about the progress of the task he had assigned me two months earlier just before he had left. He started discussing that topic spontaneously. I realized that his absence of two month from the scene just disappeared. His art of coming to the subject proper immediately and involving others in the same - may be designated as his habit - or for that matter his expertise*".

**Dr. Rajendra Vyas** feels that without fear of contradiction or exaggeration one can say that the complex of blind welfare activities developed under the banner of BMA, Ahmedabad and under the stewardship of Jagdish, is unparalleled in the history of work for the blind in this country, both in governmental and non-governmental sectors. His zest and deep

attachment to the cause of the blind has resulted in the development of institutional and non-institutional services both in urban and rural areas.

**Mr. Arvind N. Lalbhai**, industrialist, philanthropist and life-long mentor of Jagdishbhai also noticed a spark of devotion when the latter came to meet him during 1962. Arvindbhai recalls, *"I still remember a shy young man being shown into my chamber at Ashoka Mills Limited, somewhere during 1962, with a request for some financial help for feeding the blind. Behind the disarming smile and dark glasses that masked his face, was an air of quiet confidence, as he spoke about his work and the mission"*

Arvindbhai further mentions, *"Even in those days, the commitment and the dedication of the man came out loud and clear. His conviction made it easy for me to more than generously accede to his request. This was my first encounter with the man - Jagdishbhai - a man whose career I have followed closely over the past three decades with immense satisfaction and interest"*.

Prof. Anant Shastri, educationist and social worker also noticed Jagdishbhai's devotion to his duty in his first encounter itself and recalls, *"I was intrigued to hear of an organization working for the blind. It was during 1964, I entered the campus and saw a handsome tall man, with jet black hair, with dark glasses, rebuking some staff members. I stood there silent and was impressed by the way, this man scolded the staff, so lovingly, yet so firmly. This was my first impression of Jagdishbhai and still vivid in my memory.*

*It was my first encounter with this person who turned out to be a great source of inspiration and symbol of selfless devotion to one's duty. I developed a lot of respect for him in this chance encounter and felt honoured.*

*As a Member and subsequently President of the Lions Club of Vastrapur (Mostly of the Blind), I had the rare opportunity of working in close proximity with him. From the core of my heart, I consider those days as a divine and the most valuable period of my life. Jagdishbhai recalls inducting Prof. Shastri into lionism where he rose to the level of President of Lions Club of Vastrapur (Mostly of the Blind).*

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## **A Bold Person**

**Mrs. Gool Ghadiali**, Secretary, Education, Training & Fund Raising, National Association for the Blind (India) maintains, *"The thing that itched Jagdishbhai most was unnecessary expenditure. Many a times, he totally flared up that saying this was not important and we were wasting money on unnecessary, superfluous or unimportant things. He always kept on saying that money should be spent for the blind and for their project and for no other reason whatsoever - this was always the major conflict"*.

*"Jagdishbhai is a very out-spoken person, spelt out his mind clearly, forgetting that may be he was treading on other people's toes or may be he would make other people feel uncomfortable. But he was very straight forward and what he felt right he spoke without any inhibitions.*

*Jagdishbhai has been with the NAB for the past forty years, he is held in very very high esteem. Today people look up to him for his advice and guidance. He has always been by the side of NAB whenever there has been a problem. He has given his views and suggestions wherever needed. Many a times they have been implemented. Most of the times his suggestions may have apparently looked insignificant. After giving a thought, we found that there was lot of sense in what he was saying. Lot of his views have been adapted. He is greatly revered by the NAB people."*

Lallubhai Prajapati, Principal, Smt. M. K. Mehta, School for the Blind also feels that many times, Jagdishbhai gets angry with sighted persons who are planning to initiate any innovative programme for the blind. This, however, may be due to his emotional outburst as very little is happening in the field of education of the blind. It seems he is tough and irritated but in fact he is bringing out his pent-up frustrations.

An incident which impressed Lallubhai the most was the felicitation function at Palanpur to honour Jagdishbhai. He found that Jagdishbhai would speak whatsoever he wants to speak. But as he is known for performing impossible tasks and is a great achiever, his bold speeches are very much liked and appreciated by the people who know him well.

Rajni Chauhan, House Master of the Adult Training Centre (Hostel) for the Blind observed this quality of Jagdishbhai. He narrates this experience in this regard, *"When I was about to meet Jagdishbhai for the first time during 1984, I thought he must be an ordinary person, running the school for the blind alongwith other trustees. My first encounter with was in his office during my interview. The moment I saw him, a bell rang in my mind that this was the most appropriate organization where I would enjoy working. I thought that very moment that it would be a great pleasure working under the guidance of this most outstanding person.*

*After I came in his close contact, I realized that he was the person with utmost daring and was capable of managing this organization. His dealing with the staff is excellent. He develops acquaintance and then good interpersonal relations with every staff member. His is viewed as a Godfather by anyone around".*

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## **Hold for Power**

**5 September, 1994:** Jagdishbhai celebrated his 66th birthday on this day. 5th September is also the birth day of Dr. Radha Krishnan, first President of India, and hence it is celebrated

as Teachers' Day all over the country. The BMA schools are managed on this day by the students who have been elected to the different posts through a regular election process. The elected officials had organized a stage function in the evening where Jagdishbhai would also be felicitated.

In the morning at 9 a.m. during his routine daily briefings, Punani picks up an important issue. He explains to Jagdishbhai that henceforth he should stop bothering about trivial matters like sanction of earned leave, sick leave of staff, and approval of conversion of late reportings into casual leave etc. Punani also adds that these are the routine executive functions which can be easily performed by the departmental heads, need not be taken even at the level of Directors. Jagdishbhai being the functional head of the institute should confine his role to trust functions and policy matters alone.

Next day, on 6th September, there came along a one page long circular, dictated, issued and signed by Jagdishbhai. It directed all the staff members that henceforth even casual leave which was ordinarily sanctioned by the departmental heads, would be also sanctioned by him alone. The usual practice at the Blind Men's Association is that all such matters are discussed at the daily Director's meeting, each such circular is first checked by the Central Office Manager before it is circulated.

The discussion held on the previous morning probably conveyed to Jagdishbhai that he was being asked to relinquish his authority down the line. He probably felt that sanction of leave etc. is a symbol of authority or power. Instead of shedding his routine load of signing leave forms, he decided to take upon the added responsibility of going through each application for casual leave and sanctioning the same. Even at this age, he is very clear in his mind that he would continue to maintain his hold over staff members, that he cannot be asked to step back, however genuine the reason. This probably may be the quality of every successful administrator or an institutional builder.

Ishitiq Haider feels that Jagdishbhai always wanted that his achievements should be duly recognized. In fact, at one stage he was tipped to take over administration of the National Institute for the Visually Impaired, Dehradun. The offer, however, did not come through.

**26 February, 1996:** Jagdishbhai has been an Official Indian Delegate to the World Blind Union since its inception during 1984. There are only 4 delegates to the World Blind Union including two from the National Association for the Blind, one each from All India Confederation for the Blind and National Federation of the Blind. Jagdishbhai has been nominated by the NAB as the Indian Delegate. Through his consistent efforts, he was selected Member of the Standing Committee on Services for the Deaf Blind.

The last World Assembly of the World Blind Union was held during September, 1996 at Toronto in Canada. As per the usual practice and precedent, Jagdishbhai should be the Member of India Delegation to the World Assembly. During the beginning of 1996, Jagdishbhai

had started planning his visit to Canada and a stop-over in the U.S.A. to meet his siblings who are settled there.

The first feeler was received that Ms. Anuradha Mohit, Executive Director of the National Association for the Blind, Delhi Branch was keen on being nominated as the Indian Delegate to the World Assembly. The very mention of this development was sufficient to upset Jagdishbhai completely. His last hope for pushing forth his nomination was the next meeting of the Managing Committee of the NAB held on 15 March, 1996. Jagdishbhai, despite his indifferent health decided to attend the meeting. Due to ill-luck he got late for the meeting and this particular agenda item had already been considered, discussed and finalized. At the outset, Mr. Arvind Lalbhai, Chairman of the Meeting declared that Jagdishbhai would not be permitted to attend the forthcoming World Assembly due to his bad health. All the Members present in the meeting accepted the *ex-parte* verdict of the Chairman with any discussion.

The moment Arvindbhai saw Jagdishbhai entering the meeting hall, he declared that the latter was not attending the forthcoming World Assembly. Jagdishbhai was hardly given any opportunity to present his case. While Arvindbhai probably decided this issue in good faith purely on the basis of poor-health of Jagdishbhai, Dr. Rajendra Vyas justified the selection of Anuradha Mohit on the basis of a circular received from the World Blind Union desiring that 50 percent of the delegates should preferably be blind women. Mr. Jagdish Kapoor, President of the NAB Delhi Branch requested the President of the NAB to nominate Anuradha as she was likely to be appointed as Chairperson of the Women's Committee of the Asian Blind Union. However, the pre-requisite for this was that Anuradha must attend the World Assembly as a Country Delegate.

The incident turned out to be a great shock to Jagdishbhai. He felt humiliated and ignored. He then first cursed his failing health as his downfall. He took the incident very seriously and considered it almost as the end of his career - probably a blow to his prestige and culmination of his hold over this most leading international body.

Mrs. Gool Ghadiali, Secretary of the NAB maintains that the decision to depute Anuradha Mohit as a Member of Indian Delegation to the forthcoming World Assembly of the World Blind Union was taken not with any view to run down Jagdishbhai or to put some one up, it was taken keeping in mind his physical conditions.

*"We felt that he should now take it a little easy. He has lot of problems healthwise, even otherwise and in total good faith, it was discussed that this time, instead of Jagdishbhai, Anuradha should be nominated. We feel that a second line of leadership must be ready. If in his presence, we have a second line of leadership or people move in his footsteps, of course nobody will do as well as he has, but I think, in all fairness, young blood should also learn from his experience."*



*"We do admire Jagdishbhai. We all hold our breath in reverence when we see him coming, he is propped up by two people carrying him. It is astonishing as to how he manages, how he participates. Though he is little hard of hearing, sometimes he does talk in between, sometimes he talks out of the point because he does not follow what is going on. We do give him a patient hearing, we do listen to what he has to say. Though he may not be in line or in tune with what is happening, what he says again we, with great respect listen to him. May be it is not that he wants to hold power. But do feel that he wants to contribute his mite till the very end. He wants to see that services for the blind must progress. He feels that it is his own family, it is his own endeavour, therefore, it has to move. Well, It could also be that a person does not want to retire."*

Mrs. Nandini Munshaw, Secretary, BMA also voiced her opinion that younger people must be given a chance to represent the country in such international gatherings. Sooner or later, positions are bound to change. Jagdishbhai should be more concerned about his health than participating in such gatherings. He has travelled enough, he has participated enough and he should accept the realities that newer people have to be inducted.

Natwar Patel, a close associate of Jagdishbhai, feels that because of his age and his physical limitations, he must not aspire to attend such assemblies and undertake such travel. Jagdishbhai, however, feels that by attending such international gatherings, he would be able to share his views with others and get newer ideas from others. He is willing to sacrifice his comforts and take such risks mainly due to his urge to remain in the fore front of blind welfare activities.

But Jagdishbhai could never reconcile to the situation that he was dropped from the Indian delegation and considered this incident as a severe blow to his image and felt cheated.

**Conflict of Reporting:** As a teacher trainee, Madhukar K. Choudhary: Director, Education, National Association for the Blind came to Ahmedabad to visit BMA and to meet Jagdishbhai and discussed various approaches to education of the blind. In the first encounter, Jagdishbhai impressed him as a man of practical orientation. He showed him a tactile rubber model of the heart and gave insight into the practical aspects of general science. Madhukar could feel a great warmth of personality in Jagdishbhai.

The turning point in their relations, however, came when Madhukar stayed at Jagdishbhai's residence during 1985 with the purpose of finalizing the project proposal on community based rehabilitation. He got enough opportunity to interact and to peep into Jagdishbhai's home life. He learnt one gospel during his discussion that if one you wants to succeed in one's mission and wants to gain name and fame, one must work hard. The valuable advice given by Jagdishbhai always encouraged Madhukar to work hard in his life.

Madhukar, however, also recalls a bitter experience which created a rift between him and Jagdishbhai. During the early eighties, Gujarat was making a great stride in respect of promotion of Itinerant Model of Integrated Education. Most projects were being introduced by various district branches of National Association for the Blind, Gujarat Branch under the centralized coordination of NAB Education Committee with Madhukar as the executive head. Thus he was required to pay regular visits to various District Branches to coordinate projects on integrated education.

Madhukar used to do correspondence directly with project officials and proceed directly from Mumbai to various districts. Jagdishbhai, however, wished that Madhukar should first visit Ahmedabad, meet him, then visit District Branches, come back to Ahmedabad and report to him regarding the progress of these projects. Madhukar disagreed with this expectation and desired Jagdishbhai to show him such provision in the Constitution of the NAB which requires permission of State Branch as regard visiting District Branches of the NAB. Despite Jagdishbhai's insistence, Madhukar remained firm and argued that following such a procedure would not only make the visits very cumbersome and jeopardize the progress of this innovative concept. Ultimately, it was decided that Madhukar would pay visits to District Branches under intimation to Gujarat State Branch and share reports of visit.

Madhukar feels that he had no intention of by-passing the NAB Gujarat Branch or challenging Jagdishbhai's authority. It would create a wrong precedent and it would be almost impossible to follow this procedure and to route visits via Ahmedabad. This inter-personal conflict in fact created a good understanding among both of them in later years.

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## **Introduction of Professionals**

### **Blind Administrators Course: Beginning of Professionalism**

*30 April, 1964* could be traced as the beginning of professionalization of various services, activities and operation of the Blind Men's Association. Jagdishbhai, on this day, accompanied by his wife Bhadraben left for London to participate in the Blind Administrators Course organized by the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, now renamed as Sight Savers International. Jagdishbhai was probably the only organizer of blind welfare activities in India who participated in this course. The course was designed, developed and conducted by Mr. Swassburry, an instructor for the blind in Africa. Ten administrators from around the world participated in the course which was conducted at 46, Victoria Street, London. Mr. Jivraj Mehta, Honorable Chief Minister of Mumbai State very kindly provided a contribution of Rs. 5,000 for this purpose.

Jagdishbhai recalls that for him this was the maiden opportunity of participating in an international programme specially aimed at grooming prospective administrators of the

services and centres for the blind. He picked up various aspects of programme development, general administration, existing services and innovations in the field of blind welfare. He also understood the historical perspective of the services for the blind. The most interesting part of the course was the visits to various institutions and schools for the blind in the United Kingdom. The course and visits broadened his horizon and motivated him to adopt appropriate programmes and approaches aimed at the complete development of blind persons.

On completion of this course, Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben attended the World Conference of the International Council for Education of the Visually Handicapped (now known as International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment) at Hannover. In this conference, Mrs. Rehmat Fazelbhoj presented for the first time a paper on integrated education. The proceedings of the Conference motivated Jagdishbhai to promote appropriate training of teachers of the blind. The result was the deputation of a number of persons to the Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, U. S. A. for the Teacher Training Diploma.

Praful Vyas feels that completion of the Blind Administrators Course also facilitated Jagdishbhai's acceptance among his local friends. He brought latest educational aids, mobility devices and other adaptations with him from abroad. All his friends at the *Maganbhai Kendra* used to flock around him to understand the equipment and to share the latest knowledge he attained during his visits abroad. This trip helped him to realize that the blind people have progressed a lot in the western countries. Praful maintains that after this tour he decided to try innovations with the adoption of latest technology in this country also.

### **Training of Teachers**

The Perkins School for the Blind had been conducting a Teachers Training Diploma for the Blind. This was probably the only and the best course available in the world for teachers of the blind from the developing countries. Doing this course was probably the most prestigious and most sought after opportunity during the early sixties. On his return, Jagdishbhai deputed two persons, Kanubhai A. Thaker and Jitubhai Trivedi to participate in the course. He could also manage sponsorship for both these participants from the State Government.

Again in 1972, Jagdishbhai managed the participation of another teacher Mr. Adya Prasad Trivedi to the Perkins Teachers Training Course by getting sponsorship for him from the National Association for the Blind (India). Thus the BMA could manage teacher training of international repute for three persons who subsequently rose to be principals of various educational programmes for the blind.

Mr. H. U. Joshi who also completed his Teachers Training Diploma for the Blind from the Perkins School for the Blind joined the organization after his retirement as Principal of

the Navrangpura School for the Blind, Ahmedabad. He coordinates teachers training course conducted at the BMA.

### **Orientation & Mobility Professionals**

During his training in London, Jagdishbhai identified orientation and mobility as essential components for the overall development of blind individuals. During 1966, he accompanied with Mr. Oliver participated in an international programme of application of Skill Development Tests for the Blind. This unique programme was conducted in Malaysia under the auspices of the American Foundation for the Blind, U. S. A. The programme was coordinated and conducted by Major Bridges, son-in-law of Sir Clutha Mackenzie, author of the *Survey of the Blind in India* and initiator of blind welfare services in India.

During 1967, Jagdishbhai deputed the foreman of the Technical School for the Blind, (Late) Mr. Manharbhai Patel to participate in the orientation and mobility programme in Malaysia conducted by the American Foundation for the Blind, U. S. A. This was one of the first attempts on training personnel from developing countries in orientation and mobility. All those people who participated in this programme emerged to be pioneers in orientation and mobility. Manharbhai was subsequently elevated as Principal of the Technical School for the Blind. He expired in 1986.

Ganpatbhai B. Patel completed a course in orientation & mobility from the Training Centre for Instructors of the Blind, Orientation & Mobility Programme -Blind Relief Association, New Delhi during 1980. Immediately on completion of the course, he joined the Adult Training Centre (School) for the Blind as Orientation & Mobility Instructor with effect from 1 July, 1980.

### **Occupational Therapists**

Jagdishbhai also took the lead in appointing qualified Occupational Therapists at the institute. Mr. Ashok Khandelwal joined the organization during 1970 as a full time Occupational Therapist for evaluating the blind persons in respect of work efficiency, career counselling etc. BMA was the first organization for the blind which appointed a qualified Occupational Therapist.

Ashok Khandelwal recalls his first encounter with Jagdishbhai, *"I first met Jagdishbhai during 1971, when I came to work for him. Until I left India in 1976, he was a constant supporter, mentor and motivator. In 1972, he received a hint that support from a Government agency for establishing the Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped was likely. He grabbed the opportunity, worked very hard on it, and the results are now a tangible tribute to his vision. The same thing, I believe happened to the School of Physiotherapy. I remember at the time in the professional circles,*

*it was seen as an ivory tower plan but was changed to reality. His enthusiasm, care and passion to work for his fellow human beings has been same as I saw during my first encounter in 1970's".*

Jagdishbhai also confirms his first meeting with Ashok when he joined the Blind Men's Association as Occupational Therapist during 1971. He acknowledges that Ashok joined despite stiff resistance from the other Occupational Therapists who did not want any such professional to join an organization which favoured blind Physiotherapists. Ashok's determination to join and continue as Occupational Therapist set a new trend and subsequently a number of Occupational Therapists joined the organization.

Mr. Ashok Khandelwal left the organization during 1976 for better prospects abroad. BMA, however, continued the tradition of availing services of a full time Occupational Therapist ever since. Jagdishbhai found him sincere, honest and devoted but also knew he would not stay in the Blind Men's Association and or for that matter in the country for a long time. His prophecy turned true and Ashok left for U. K. after his 5 years stint with the organization. Jagdishbhai considers Ashok a good friend even today and remembers his five years at Ahmedabad very fondly.

Mr. C. N. Bhatt, B. Sc. (O. T.) joined the Multicategory Training Centre for the Handicapped as Occupational Therapist. Once again this was probably for the first time that a qualified Occupational Therapist joined an on-the-job training centre for the handicapped. Mr. Bhatt, however, subsequently left the organization to establish his private practice and is today a leading Physiotherapist with excellent practice.

Mr. B. K. Panchal, B. Sc. (O. T.) was the next professional who joined the Adult Training Centre (School) for the blind as Occupational Therapist. The biggest achievement of Jagdishbhai was getting this post sanctioned by the Department of Social Defense, Government of Gujarat. This is the only school for the adult blind in the country which has been sanctioned this post. Mr. Panchal subsequently took the additional charge as Honorary Coordinator of the Nandini Ramesh Gandhi School of Physiotherapy. This was the first school of its kind in the country which had been recognized by the Department of Education under Vocational Career Courses Stream and funded by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India under the Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Organizations for the Disabled.

Mr. B. K. Panchal has very successfully been coordinating this course. Recently he had been invited by the Helen Keller International to orient the faculty of the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paraplaegic, Bangladesh which had admitted three blind students for the physiotherapy course. Recently, the Director of the Centre, Dr. Haq paid a visit to Ahmedabad and appreciated the professional approach of the organization.

## Engineering Professionals

During the mid-seventies, the Blind Men's Association was growing at an astounding pace. As one batch of blind trainees moved out after successful training, others were taking their place. New projects like integrated education scheme (*helping the blind to study in a normal school*) were being launched. New buildings were coming up. Jagdish Patel thought it was time to streamline administration, set targets and work to a plan. It was time to involve the right kind of professionals in Blind welfare activities (**Blind Welfare: July, 1993**).

The first of the engineering professionals Jagdish Patel brought to BMA was Harish Panchal, an engineer, Bhushan Punani, an MBA, an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad joined BMA in 1979, and Nandini Rawal, another MBA arrived in 1981.

Anil Shah who had recently completed a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering joined the Light Engineering Department of the Multicategory Training Centre for the Handicapped as Foreman, a post approved and funded by the Ministry of Welfare. Anil brought a lot of dynamism and new thoughts to the organization. He played an instrumental role in developing a manually propelled as well as an auto-tricycle. The design developed and perfected by Anil was subsequently adopted by the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, Kanpur as its regular product range. BMA then helped the Andhra Pradesh Vikalangula Corporation to set up a tricycle manufacturing unit at Hyderabad.

So far the organization has fabricated and distributed about 11,000 tricycles mostly in Gujarat. The tricycle, brand-named as Handika can be easily seen across the State of Gujarat. With the financial support of the Department of Social Defense, Ministry of Welfare, Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs and variety of other service clubs, these cycles are reaching the disabled persons in the rural areas of all districts.

Chittranjan Das with a Post Graduate Diploma in Ortho-prosthetic Engineering from All India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation joined the Braille Aids Workshop, subsequently named as National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute as Ortho-prosthetic Engineering. Jagdishbhai, himself a leading Physiotherapist, arranged visits of C. Das to various physiotherapy centres in the city. C. Das played an instrumental role in developing nylotic calipers. These orthosis which are light in weight, easy to fabricate, low cost and elegant looking have gained nation-wide popularity. The Impact International accepted these orthosis for its Life Line Express, a project of extending services of corrective surgery and fitting of aids and appliances to the children near their homes by creating these facilities in a specially assigned train.

C. Das left the organization after ten years to establish a centre for providing orthosis, prosthesis and rehabilitation aids. This unit known as Ashu Rehabilitation Aids is today the most leading private unit of its kind in the city of Ahmedabad. The organization attracted

this young professional who revolutionized the field of low cost orthosis and subsequently emerged as the most leading agency for the sale of variety of rehabilitation aids.

Subhashish Mohanty, Diploma in Ortho-prosthetic Engineering from the National Institute of Research and Training in Rehabilitation (*NIRTAR*) joined the organization as Ortho-prosthetic Technician. He, however, left the organization within two years as he was home-sick and could not adjust with the local environment.

Jagannath Mullick, Diploma in Ortho-prosthetic Engineering from the National Institute of Research and Training in Rehabilitation (*NIRTAR*), at present, provides his part time services as Ortho-prosthetic Engineer. He provides technical support to the institute.

Vidyut Soni, Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical) joined the BMA IDBI Electronic Training Centre, Gandhinagar as Project Co-ordinator of this unique venture of the organization aimed at promoting employment of the blind and disabled persons in the electronic industry. After holding the reigns for five years, Vidyut accepted the placement in the Padmavati Electronics which came up in the same campus.

### **Management Professionals**

When Mr. P. G. Michael, Regional Representative for the South Asia Region and Mr. Oster Meir, Desk Officer (Asia) of the Christoffel Blindenmission, Germany visited the organization during 1979, Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, President of the Blind Men's Association and Jagdishbhai requested that the CBM should provide financial assistance for meeting the salary of an Administrator. which Mr. Michael gladly consented and pointed out that the premier management training institute was just opposite the Blind Men's Association, Jagdishbhai should appoint a young M.B.A. as the administrator who would be supported by the CBM to the extent of DM 1000 per month.

That was how the hunt for an M.B.A. began and it finally culminated in the entry of Bhushan Punani and Nandini Rawal followed suit. Ms. Smita Patel and Mrs. Niharika Dave, both M. B. As. from the B. K. School of Management joined the Rural Activities Committee for a short while as Project Coordinators. This book is authored by the remaining two management professionals - Bhushan and Nandini - a tribute to the Visionary who professionalized the services for the disabled and proved to the world that the professionals have a role to play in the initiation, promotion and implementation of comprehensive services for the disabled as well.

Jagdishbhai also proved to a sceptical world that MBAs are not opportunists or job-hoppers. They could remain in an otherwise unglamorous job provided they are given a conducive environment and challenging assignments.

Punani explains the role of Jagdishbhai in introducing and establishing professionals from his personal experience. He explains, "*Within a few minutes of our first meeting,*

*Jagdishbhai started expressing his desire and concern for professionalizing the administration of the school. Straight-away he made a firm offer and prevailed upon me to accept it unconditionally. Jagdishbhai had such a profound effect on me that I accepted the offer without even inquiring about the salary, perquisites and job responsibility etc. ”*

Punani further adds, “*On 15 September, 1979 when I joined the school as Project Manager, Jagdishbhai offered me salary equivalent to the Director of Social Defence of the Government of Gujarat and the responsibility for managing the whole organization as the administrative head. Nothing better would have been possible for a welfare organization to offer to an inexperienced, just out of college, young professional manager and that too with such a challenging assignment”.*

Jagdishbhai says that on 15 September, 1979, he found Punani totally raw, fresh and capable of being moulded if supported and motivated properly. He found him capable of emerging as a second line in the institutional hierarchy.

Jagdishbhai discovered a great desire in Punani to pursue a career in some unconventional field due to an incident in his life. This probably was due to an accident in Punjab in which Punani had injured his eyes and this probably laid the foundation for his work for the blind.

While Punani in this meeting was perplexed on facing a blind person, Jagdishbhai showed tremendous self-confidence. He never had any inferiority complex and considered himself capable of interviewing, appointing and taking work from the professional managers and other professionals. He felt that the entry of young professionals in this field may be a great risk, he was, however, prepared to take such a risk for the sake of growth of the organization.

Jagdishbhai recalls that over the next two years he had a tough time. The general atmosphere in the organization that time was that if he gave undue importance to Punani, his own position in the organizational set up may not be safe. He had to face tremendous pressure and resistance from all the staff members and the other Office Bearers. He had to handle the whole situation tactfully to overcome this resistance and to carve a suitable niche for Punani in the administrative set-up of the organization.

Jagdishbhai always felt that as he was honest and sincere, his position was not at stake. The support of Office Bearers of the Managing Committee always encouraged him to meet such challenges. After almost 20 years of his efforts of professionalizing various services of the organization, he feels content that his efforts were worth the pains he took and the meteoric growth of the organization is a living testimony to his gamble.

Jagdishbhai takes pride when he confirms that he has played a very important role in providing the right exposure to Punani and other select professionals including Harish



Panchal and Nandini Rawal. He had to virtually struggle to carve an appropriate place for these professionals.

### **Fund Raising Personnel**

Nautama Sandesara (*nee Shukla*) with a Masters in Social Work from the M. S. University, Vadodara joined the organization as the Fund Raising Officer. She was the first person to join this newly established department during 1980. By this time, the National Association for the Blind, Mumbai had established a very functional and effective Fund Raising Unit as well as the Revenue Unit for mobilizing public donations through innovative means. Jagdishbhai who was one of the Secretaries of the Managing Committee of the NAB wanted to replicate this success in Ahmedabad. Mrs. Rehmat Fazelbhoj, a professionally motivated voluntary fund raiser of the NAB volunteered to come to Ahmedabad and to launch the first professional fund raising campaign.

Jagdishbhai grabbed the opportunity and brought in Nautama as the first Fund Raising Officer of the BMA. The first launch proved successful and the organization decided to expand its organized fund raising activities. Shreyashi Parekh, Amrita Kaur, Pratima Panchal, Neelam Amin, Abbasi Haider joined the department and left due to personal reasons. The department, however, has remained functional and result-oriented ever since.

The fund raising activities for the past fifteen years have been handled by Mrs. Mira Shah and assisted by Daksha Dave. The Fund Raising Unit is known for its successful Match Box Competition for school children, Kite Flying Competition on the occasion of Uttarayan, Garba on the occasion of Navratri, *Samhita* - annual diary, Film Star Cricket Festival, direct mail campaign etc.

Jagdishbhai played an instrumental role in upgrading the knowledge of the fund raising personnel by deputing them to Asian Fund Raising Workshops, visits to other fund raising units etc.

### **Legal Professionals**

Encouraged by the performance of Nautama as Fund Raising Officer, the organization decided to professionalize its marketing services. Hansa Trivedi, Master of Labour Welfare and Bachelor of Law joined the organization as the Marketing Assistant. She was entrusted the responsibility of initiating the nutrition project. For that she paid a visit to Chikhodara and observed the nutrition project being run by Dr. Ramnikbhai R. Doshi. Hansa, however, left the organization for better prospects and emerged to be an Advocate for the High Court of Gujarat. She subsequently married Punani in 1984. She, has, however, continued to provide her voluntary legal services and resource mobilization from the legal fraternity.

Hasmukh M. Thakkar, a Master of Labour Welfare and Bachelor of Law joined the organization as Central Office Manager at a very critical juncture when the organization

was in a state of turmoil due to unrest among class IV employees and trade union activities. Almost all the educational and welfare organizations in Ahmedabad were facing a great deal of labour unions during 1984. Jagdishbhai decided to bring in Hasmukh as a full time employee to deal with all the legal and personnel issues. This decision of Jagdishbhai paid rich dividends and within the next five years, the organization could settle all the legal disputes amicably and mostly out of court. Today during 1997, the organization does not have a single pending litigation in any court of law excepting a few recovery suits which it has filed against erring debtors.

After Hasmukh realized that the organization has settled all its disputes and labour relations are at the best level, he decided to start his own legal consultancy. His services are available to the organization as consultant and retainer. He is very successful in his profession and is very close to the organization. He is also assisting the organization in resource mobilization.

### **Nutrition Professional**

Tejal Lakhia with a Post Graduate Diploma in Dietetics joined the organization as the Nutritional Assistant to handle a project for the prevention of nutritional blindness among children between 1 to 5 years of age. She handled the project for seven years. She also provided her expert services in Home Science to the blind students. As blindness due to malnutrition and vitamin - A deficiency was on the decline, the organization decided to discontinue the project. Tejal was shifted to the post of Public Relations Officer. She was also entrusted the responsibility of Honorary Coordinator of the Career Development Courses which were subsequently upgraded to the Industrial Training Institute, the first Government approved professional courses for the blind and disabled.

### **Social Work Professionals**

Vimal Thawani, a qualified social worker with a M. S. W. from the M. S. University joined the Adult Training Centre for the Blind as the Vocational Counsellor. This was probably the first time that an on-the-job training centre in the country appointed a full time qualified vocational counsellor. Vimal subsequently evolved and handled a five year UNICEF funded project on counselling the parents of disabled children. This was a unique project for parental training and awareness creation handling the parents of disabled children.

Encouraged by the results of this project, the organization established the Mental Hygiene Clinic with the financial support of the Department of Social Defence, Govt. of Gujarat. Vimal was assigned the additional responsibility as Project Coordinator. She successfully developed the Centre as the most functional and effective centre of its kind in Gujarat. She has been providing counselling to the mentally ill persons on an out-patient basis in the clinic.

During 1994, she was selected under the Colombo Plan to participate in a three month course in social policy at Swansea University, United Kingdom. Her performance was much appreciated and the concerned authorities selected her for a further one year course but she declined due to her family commitments. She has been selected for the Professional Development Programme to be conducted by the Sense International during September, 1997.

Ushma Das (*nee Shastri*) with a M. Ed. (*Special Education*) from the B. M. Institute joined the organization as Special Educator in the UNICEF funded Parent Counselling project. When the organization established the Mental Hygiene Clinic, she was transferred as the Play-room Worker. She has been providing instructions through play and such other means to the mentally handicapped children. She participated in a number of national seminars on mental retardation and has translated relevant material into Hindi and Gujarati.

Jyoti Doshi who completed her Diploma in Mental Retardation from the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Mumbai joined the organization as volunteer for the Mental Hygiene Clinic. She also assisted Vimal Thawani in the counselling and rehabilitation of the persons with multiple sclerosis. She identified and handled more than 50 such persons. She was deputed to a national workshop on the services for the multiple handicapped children. At present, she is working as Special Educator for the Hilton Perkins International Project for the blind children with additional handicap. She has been selected as a participant in the Educational Leadership Programme by the Perkins School for the Blind for the year 1997-98. The Perkins School also provided her a scholarship for pursuing her studies.

Bijal Mehta with B. Sc. (*Human Development*) from the Bombay University and Diploma in Special Education (*Mentally Retarded*) from the B. M. Institute of Mental Health, Ahmedabad had joined the centre recently as a Special Educator. She was handling the mentally handicapped as well as multi-handicapped children. As she got a regular job as a teacher, she left the institute.

Jayshree Modi, B. Com., Diploma in Special Education for Developmentally Delayed from B. M. Institute of Mental Health has joined recently as a Special Educator. She mainly works with children with delayed development and those with multiple disabilities.

Asha Khaitan, B. A., Diploma in Special Education for Developmentally Delayed from B. M. Institute of Mental Health has also joined as a Special Educator and is working with children with multiple disabilities.

### **Recognition as a Scientific Research Organization**

Jagdishbhai through his persistent efforts could manage to get recognition of the Blind Men's Association as a Scientific Research Organization on the recommendation of the

appropriate authorities. This recognition enabled the organization to extend cent percent tax exemption to its donors under the Section 35 (I) (ii) of the Income Tax Act, 1962. This probably was the only disabled welfare organization which enjoyed this status.

Jagdishbhai gives credit for this major achievement to Mrs. Nandini Munshaw, Secretary of the BMA and Mr. Lal Advani, Special Officer for Physically Handicapped of the Minister of Welfare. Nandiniben procured all the relevant papers and prescribed forms from the Cancer Society which had already availed this exemption. Jagdishbhai had the conviction of justifying the BMA as a scientific research organization. Through the efforts of Mr. Lal Advani, the BMA was approved by the Indian Council of Medical Research as a scientific research organization. The Department of Revenue and Insurance, Ministry of Finance issued a Gazette Notification on 24 October, 1966 declaring BMA as an organization approved under Section 35 Sub-section (i) Clause (ii) of the Income Tax Act 1961 (43 of 1961) which enabled the organization to extend 100 percent tax exemption from the income tax on all donations.

Thanks to the far-sightedness of Jagdishbhai, BMA was probably the only organization in the country which had been extended this privilege on a permanent basis. A large number of other disabled welfare organization tried very hard to avail this approval but of no avail. Due to amendments in the Income Tax Act, 1961, all the organizations registered under Section 35 (i) (ii) required renewal of its registration from the appropriate authority. BMA approached the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research for its approval as a Research Institution. The Department very gracefully recommended BMA as a research institution. The Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance on the recommendation of Director General of Tax Exemption notified BMA as an institution approved for the purpose of Section 35 (i) (ii) of the Act upto 31 March, 1997.

It is due to recognition of BMA as a scientific research organization that it could embark upon a variety of innovative pilot research oriented projects. These include multicategory training, on the job training, physiotherapy, teaching of science to the blind, community based rehabilitation, integrated education, development of educational aids for the disabled, development of ortho-prosthetic aids, services for the muti-handicapped children and professional training for the blind.

### **Research Professionals**

To encourage research in the disability related aspects, Jagdishbhai always wanted research scholars to join the organization. The first research professional to join the organization was Prof. Shrikant Shah, a Psychologist. He encouraged studies on psychological evaluation of blind students.

Jatin Joshi, a blind person and a doctoral student joined the organization to promote research in individual counselling. He pursued his doctoral thesis while working at the

institute. After Jatin earned his doctorate, he could manage to secure the post of a lecturer at a regular college at Dabhoi. He has, however, continued providing his honorary services in the area of individual counselling of blind persons and group counselling of their parents.

Ila Joshi with a Ph.D. joined the organization as Research Officer. She conducted research on crisis intervention and published a few research papers. She subsequently joined the Education Media and Research Centre, Gujarat University as Faculty Member. As faculty of the University she continued encouraging her students to undertake research projects in disability related subjects.

Krishna Kumari with a Ph.D. was another research scholar to join the organization as Research Officer. She planned a few studies on demographic pattern of blind and disabled persons in Ahmedabad. She, however, could not complete her research project and decided to quit the organization.

Niti Chopra (*nee Desai*) with Post Graduate Diploma in Communication from the Educational Media Research Centre, Gujarat University joined the organization for promoting public awareness about low vision children. She assisted a U. K. team in producing a television programme, known as '*graying world*'. With the objective of pursuing her studies further, she left the organization. She, however, assisted Suvik Communication in writing the script for a video programme on achievements of the organization.

### **CBR Professional**

Jagdishbhai was always keen on promoting services for the rural blind. He was appointed Secretary of the newly constituted Rural Activities Committee of the National Association for the Blind under the chairmanship of Capt. H. J. M. Desai. The Committee launched the first project for the social and economic rehabilitation of the rural blind with the assistance of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (*now known as Sight Savers International*) at Dholka in Gujarat during 1983. By 1995, the Committee has initiated, encouraged and coordinated such block level projects at 102 locations covering more than 25,000 incurable blind persons. This probably is the largest coverage of its kind in the world.

Capt. Desai and Jagdishbhai were very keen that some full time qualified and experienced person should join the Committee as All India Rural Rehabilitation Officer. The Committee launched a nation-wide talent search campaign. Mr. Bhaskar Upadhyay, a Graduate in Agriculture Sciences had played a significant role in developing agriculture training for the blind inmates of the Tata Agriculture Training Centre for the Blind at Phansa (Gujarat), which was a premier centre for the rural blind. Relevantly qualified and experienced Bhaskar was living a secluded life at his native village near Rajpipla in Gujarat. The Committee decided to appoint Bhaskar as the All India Rural Rehabilitation Officer. Bhaskar has devoted his life for the promotion of community based rehabilitation

of the rural blind. At the time of his retirement as per the services rules, Jagdishbhai managed extension of his service tenure by two years with a decent consolidated salary for him.

Next to join the NAB Rural Activities Committee as Coordinator was Dipika Joshi who had just completed her Master of Social Work from the M. S. University, Vadodara. She played a significant role in incorporating the social work component into the course curricula for the training of the field workers. Her matrimony took her to the U. S. A. and she parted company.

Madhukar Suryavanshi with Master of Social Works from Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai and Diploma in Business Management from Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management joined the Committee as Project Coordinator. He coordinated a large number of training programmes all over the country for the field staff. He also proved to be a very effective speaker on psychological implications of blindness, components of CBR and process chart of CBR. He actively participating in the activities of the NGO Networking Group of Ahmedabad.

Madhukar presented a paper entitled "*Revisiting Rehabilitation Concepts: Community Based Rehabilitation - Need of the Hour*" in the Asian Conference of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment, hosted by BMA at Ahmedabad during 9-11 January, 1995. The Blind Welfare has published this paper in its April, 1996 issue. An abstract of a paper on early intervention submitted by Madhukar was selected by the Scientific Programme Committee of the International Council for Education of the People with Visual Impairment for its presentation in the 10th World Conference to be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil during 3-9 August, 1997. Alas! Madhukar left for his heavenly abode on 20 February, 1997 after a brief illness.

Akhil S. Paul, Master of Arts (*Sociology*) from the Indore School of Social Work was the next to join the Committee as Project Coordinator. An all rounder Akhil - a photographer, videographer, driver, operator of audio-visual equipment, computer operator - has specialized in the field of rehabilitation of the multi-handicapped children. He successfully completed a specialized course for this from the Hilton Perkins International Programme of the Perkins School for the Blind, U. S. A. He has also been appointed as Regional Coordinator (Asia) of the International Council for the Education of the People with Visual Impairment Committee on Multi-handicapped Persons.

He has produced plenty of audio-visual material on services for the multi-handicapped children and community based rehabilitation of the visually impaired. He has coordinated three national level orientation programmes in the area of services for the persons with multiple disability. He also presented a paper titled "*Developing Functional Curriculum for Persons with Multiple Disabilities*" in the ICEVI Asia Conference. He is also coordinating

an international pilot project on community based rehabilitation of the persons with multiple disabilities. Due to his hard work and his achievements, Akhil was promoted as Senior Coordinator.

He conducted training for the CBR Field Workers in Malaysia. Recently he was invited by the Sight Savers International to conduct training of the CBR Field Workers for a CBR programme to be implemented in Malawi. He addressed a gathering of persons devoted to welfare services at Nairobi in Kenya. The Rotary Club is planning to sponsor two persons to come and visit BMA and to understand its various innovative approaches.

From 1 January, 1997, Akhil joined the Sense International, U. K. as Development Manager for India. The Sense International is the world's largest organization in the field of services for the deaf-blind. This is the first time that this organization has established any office abroad. It is a matter of great pride for BMA and Jagdishbhai that Akhil should be the choice.

Jasmine Sajit, Master of Arts (*Clinical Psychology*) joined the Committee as the Project Coordinator. She had played an instrumental role in transcribing the proceedings of the ICEVI Conference in record time. She was developing teaching material on psychology of the blind. She was also devoting her time on updating the CBR Manual. Due to family responsibilities, she resigned from her job. She, however, provides her honorary services. The cover page of this book has been designed by her husband, S. Sajit.

Ashok Kumar, Master of Social Work, joined the organization as Project Coordinator (*CBR Network - West Zone*) from 2 September, 1996. He has been entrusted the responsibility of compiling information about various disabled welfare organization in the Western zone. He is promoting community based rehabilitation for all categories of disability.

Brahada Shankar, M. A. (Economics) joined the organization on 2 September, 1996 as Project Coordinator (CAPART Project). She has been entrusted the responsibility of developing reporting formats for cross disabilities. She is also assisting in conducting training of the CBR functionaries.

### **Visiting Professionals**

From the early seventies, Jagdishbhai started inviting professionals on a visiting basis. Mr. Shrikant Shah started visiting the organization as a Psychologist for the psychological evaluation and individual counselling of blind students. Prof. B. S. Aggarwal, faculty from the L. D. Arts College visited BMA for teaching Hindi to the blind students as a visiting faculty.

**Physiotherapy:** The major thrust in this regard came with the introduction of Certificate Course in Physiotherapy. Jagdishbhai himself being a leading and very popular Physiotherapist

was very keen on establishing a recognized course in physiotherapy. After seven years of consistent struggle, the BMA established the first recognized Nandini Ramesh Gandhi School of Physiotherapy for imparting two years training to the blind persons. At this juncture, Jagdishbhai emphasized that to maintain quality of education, only qualified medical professionals should conduct the classes. As it was not feasible to appoint full time qualified medical professionals as faculty of the course, the concept of visiting faculty was introduced.

The medical professionals have provided their services as Visiting Faculty of the school are: Dr. Paresh B. Shah M.D.(Psychiatry), D.P.M. F.I.P.S. F.I.P.S. (U.S.A.), Dr. Pranav Shah M.S., Dr. D. T. Parmar M. S., Dr. B. D. Trivedi M. S

*M. S. (Orthopaedics):* Dr. A. K. Pathak, Dr. Yogesh Parikh, Dr. Paresh Parikh, Dr. Vicky Parikh, Dr. Pranav Shah, Dr. Apoorva Shastri

*Physician (M. D.):* Dr. R. I. Mehta, Dr. K. H. Shah, Dr. Dipti Mukim, Dr. Akhil Mukim, Dr. Nalin Gheewala,

*B. Sc. (Physiotherapy):* Dr. Ritu Kaul, Mr. B. N. Luhar

*Certificate in Physiotherapy:* Mr. Natwar Patel, Mr. Mahendra Patel, Mr. Dilip Shah,

*Qualified Ortho-Prosthetic Engineers:* Mr. Chitranjan Das, Mr. Subhashish Mohanty, Mr. Jagannath

*Osteologist:* Dr. Bharat Trivedi, Dr. Kantharia

*Others:* Ms. Nandini Pandya, Qualified Nurse, Dr. S. Rai, Occupational Therapist

The School of Physiotherapy has attracted a number of medical as well as para-medical professionals as visiting faculty. The concept of inviting professionals as visiting faculty is working so well that the organization is now inviting a large number of professionals for its Teacher Training, Mental Hygiene Clinic, Urban Community Based Rehabilitation Project, Computer Training, Braille Shorthand course, Telephone Operating Course, C. B. R. training courses etc. as visiting faculty.

*Audiology & Speech Therapy:* As BMA is now a truly multi-category disability organization, it established Chinubhai Bhikhabhai Memorial Services for the Deaf with the encouragement and support of Mr. Jayantibhai Bhikhabhai Shah, a well known philanthropist and industrialist of Ahmedabad. The unit is providing audiometry and speech therapy services to the needy persons. Encouraged by the success of once-a-week intervention for audiology and speech therapy, BMA is planning to establish a full fledged computerized audiometry intervention centre. Mr. Natwarbhai Kinariwala and his family have consented to donate Rs. 11 lakhs for this purpose.



The Audiologists and Speech Therapists who have provided their services include: Mr. Mallikarjun, Mrs. Madhavi Dhruv, Mrs. Minakshi Ghoda, Dr. Nandlal Mansetta (E.N.T. Specialist)

*Ophthalmology:* Since its inception, the BMA has been availing services of the leading Ophthalmologists for regular eye check of blind students at the time of school admission or subsequently whenever the students wanted ophthalmic intervention. After 1983, when the BMA established community based rehabilitation projects, it also started organizing eye camps at various locations in Gujarat. After 1992, it also initiated hospital based surgeries at Sanand and Ahmedabad.

With the establishment of Urban Community Based Rehabilitation programme, the BMA started cataract surgeries on a large scale. It finalized a regular arrangement with Sahyog Eye Hospital, Saraspur, Victoria Jubilee Hospital, Kalupur, and Lioness. Karnavati Eye Hospital, Stadium for cataract surgeries. It has also launched a drive designated as "Save Sight" for mobilizing resources for promoting such surgery. It has received overwhelming response to postal appeals mailed to prospective donors.

The Ophthalmologists who have provided their honorary services to the organization include: Dr. Sindhubhai Divetia, Dr. P. L. Desai, Dr. P. N. Nagpal, Dr. Shrenik Shah, Dr. Vinod Patel, Dr. Abhay Vasavada, Dr. Arti Dave, Dr. Tejas Shah, Dr. Ashish Diwetia, Dr. Vandana Nath, Dr. Ramnik R. Doshi, Dr. Jaymin Pandya, Dr. Umesh Parikh, Dr. Usha Vyas, Dr. Pravin Bhavsar

*Orthopaedics:* With the establishment of National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute and the School of Physiotherapy, BMA required services of Orthopaedic Surgeons for teaching physiotherapy and anatomy to the students and for evaluation of locomotor handicapped persons for the fitting of ortho-prosthetic aids and appliances. The BMA received excellent response and a large number of leading Orthopaedic Surgeons extended their voluntary services to the organization.

*Orthopaedic Surgeons:* Dr. Naresh Khandwala, Dr. Sumant N. Shah, Dr. Harsh S. Shah, Dr. Rakesh Parikh, Dr. Chhabaria, Dr. Dhiren Ganjwala, Dr. Apoorva Shastri, Dr. Monish Gariwala

*Computer Professionals:* With introduction and proliferation of personal computers, the BMA also decided to extend training facilities to the blind and disabled persons. It established the CAMA Computer Training Centre for the Blind and started imparting one year training in Basic Programming and Computer Operations with the recognition of Department of Employment and Training, Govt. of Gujarat under Career Development Courses. Subsequently, due to the efforts of Mr. A. I. Sheikh and other officials of the Department, this course was covered under the Industrial Training Institute from the year 1996. This is the first that any State Government has recognized courses for the disabled under the ITI pattern.

The Ministry of Welfare also came forward and supported this unique training centre during 1987 by extending grant for the purchase of computers, braille shorthand machines, special adaptations other equipment. It has been extending grant for the maintenance of the training activities ever since. Since its inception, the following professionals have been extending their services for the training of students for developing appropriate software for the BMA.

*Computer Specialists:* Mr. R. Natrajan, Mr. Ravi, Mr. Kanan, Mr. Rohit Patel, Mr. Jitendra Modi, Mr. Paresh N. Rawal, Mr. Vijay Sheth, Mr. Deepak Pandya

*Stenography:* Mr. R. P. Soni, Mr. T. K. Anilkumar, Mr. Indravadan N. Shah

*Other Professionals:* A large number of other professionals have provided their voluntary services to the organization for a variety of specialized services as listed below:

*Psychologist:* Dr. Bhalchandra Joshi

*Paediatrician:* Dr. Kokila R. Kapadia, Dr. Ashok Shah, Dr. Saroj Patel, Dr. Mahendra Mehta, Dr. Kumar Nathani,

*General Practitioner:* Dr. C. J. Parikh, Dr. M. B. Bhatt, Dr. Jitubhai J. Desai, Dr. Chetan Kapadia, Dr. Ashok Shah, Dr. Paresh C. Parikh,

*Physician:* Dr. Narendra Desai, Dr. Hans Kumar Patel, Dr. Lalla, Dr. Ramesh Jain

*General Surgeon:* Dr. Manoj Kapoor, Dr. Tushar Lakhia, Dr. A. S. Parikh, Dr. Manubhai Desai,

*Gynaecologist:* Dr. Sunita Bhandari, Dr. Anila Gor, Dr. Praful Munshi, Dr. Ramila Jain,

*Neurophysician:* Dr. Ajit Sowani, Dr. Bharat Shah, Dr. Premal S. Shah, Dr. Harshad D. Joshi, Dr. Sudhir Shah

*Radiologist:* Dr. Suresh Shah, Dr. Narendra Patel

*Cardiologist:* Dr. Sumant Shah, Dr. A. J. Bakshi, Dr. Ramesh Kapadia, Dr. Nitin Sumant Shah

*Preventive & Social Medicine:* Dr. Kiran Shah

Dr. H. S. Shah                      Superintendent : V. S. Hospital

*Dentist:* Dr. Jyoti Patel, Dr. Kalpana Pandya

*Others:* Dr. M. T. Bhatia, Anaesthiologist, Mr. Rajesh Mulwani, Educationist, Mr. Navnit C, Thakkersinh, Trustee, Thakkersinh hospital

## Prominent Volunteers

*Executive Committee Members:* Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, Mr. Jehangir J. Cama, Mr. Natwarbhai Kinariwala, Mrs. Nandiniben Munshaw, (Late) Kanubhai A. Thaker, Mr. Praful Vyas, Mrs. Karuna A. Shah, Mr. H. M. Joshi, Mrs. Sunitaben Thakor, Mr. Arvind P. Sheth, Mrs. Chandrika Suman Shah, Mr. Manubhai D. Shah, (Late) Mr. Indravadan P. Shah, Mrs. Pritiben D. Parikh, Mr. Kishor Goel, Mr. Chandubhai Satia, Shri Champakbhai Mehta, (Late) Shri Harshvadan N. Makim, Shri Lalitbhai N. Bhagwati, Shri Chinubhai Naranbhai, Mr. Prahalad Kalidas Panchal, Mr. Gautam Vimal Shah, Mrs. Vimlaben Sidharthbhai, Mr. Bhaskar Mehta, Mr. Ramnikbhai Halari, Mr. Nanalal Kanabar, Mr. G. J. Vachhani, Mr. Prakash Mankodi, Mr. Tarak Luhar, Mr. Yusuf Kapadia

*Readers:* Mrs. Archana Kanoria, Mrs. Parul Shah, Mr. Subbandhu Trivedi, Mr. B. S. Agarwal, Mr. Bhagwati Prasad Pandya, Mr. Chaturvedi, IG (Police), Mr. Dinesh Parikh, (Late) Ms. Gargi Sheth, Mr. Kalyan Raman Iyer, Dr. Nanda Sheth, Mr. Mishra, Ms. Parul Jaikrishna, Mrs. Surangi Mehta, Mrs. Daksha Niranjana, Mrs. Varsha Shodhan, Mrs. Priyabala Shah, Mrs. Purnima Kanhayalal, Mrs. Pratiksha Nitin Shah, Mrs. Bela Krishnakant Amin, Mrs. Jyotiben Latha, Mrs. Ranna Patwari, Mrs. Sheila Pasawala, Mr. Markand Shah, Mr. Shrikant, Mrs. Ajita Nilesh Shah, Mrs. Roxanna Bhattacharji, Mrs. Divya Palia

*Resource Mobilization:* Mr. Arvind Sahiba, Mrs. Urmila Kulkarni, Mrs. Vishakha M. Shroff, Mrs. Bhanu O. Parekh, Mr. H. L. Khar, (Late) Mr. Shantilal Patwari, Mr. N. Madhukar Pai, Mrs. Neera J. Sethi, Mrs. Vadivellu, Mrs. Govindan, Mrs. Minaxiben Dalal, Mrs. Shantaben Gandhi, Mrs. Maliniben M. Shah, (Late) Mr. Pallav Fadia, Mr. Virendra Chimanlal, Mr. Jayantibhai Bhikhabhai Shah, Mr. Ganesh Mall Chandora, Mr. Mayur Shah, Mrs. Devika Navnit Patel, (Late) Mr. P.C. Halakhandi, (Late) Mr. Satish Chona, Mr. Pradip Chona, (Late) Mr. Motilal Panchal, Mr. Baldevbhai Dosabhai Patel, Mr. Prafulbhai Shah (Upward Trends), Mrs. Pramila Talati, Mr. Kailash Chhapia, Mrs. Sarla Bhagchandani, Mrs. Rama Moondra, Mr. Shantilal Kothari

*Evaluation and Management Support:* Prof N. R. Sheth, Mr. Naresh Sheth, Mr. C. M. Shah, Mr. S. Sajit (Mudra Communication), Mr. P. M. Dalwadi, (Late) Mr. Chinubhai Vadilal, Mr. S. P. Shah (Nav Gujarat College), Mr. Vijay Shah (Vijay Plastic)

*Audit:* Mr. C. C. Shah, Mr. Rajendra D. Shah, Mr. Kaushikbhai Patel, Mr. Jayendrabhai Pandit, Mr. Hemanshu Shah

*Advocates:* (Late) Mr. C. C. Gandhi, Mr. Harin Bhagat, Mr. Vithalbhai B. Patel, Mr. Kanubhai M. Patel, Mr. Jaswant Patel, Mr. Devendra Chauhan, Mrs. Hansa Punani, Mr. Girish Pathak, Mr. Haresh Shah, Mr. Has Mukh Thakkar, Dr. Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Mr. Rajiv Datta, Mr. N. Wajiri, Mr. C. Mukhopadhaya, Mr. Manish Kumar, Mr. Prakash Thakkar, Mr. Bhavsar

*Architects:* Mr. Madhukar Thakor, Mr. Anantbhai Trivedi, Mr. Jitendra Mistry, Mr. Bakul Amin, Mr. Sukumar Parekh, Mr. Gautam Oza, Mr. Manibhai, Mr. Hemang Panchal

*Journalism:* Mr. Gautam Mehta, Mr. Umesh Ambebgaoonkar, Mr. Ramesh Menon, Ms. Angana Parikh, Ms. Neha Amin, Mr. Digant Dave, Mr. Jhaverilal Mehta, Mr. Kalpesh Dudhia, Mr. Kalpit Bachech

*Political:* Mr. Sanat Mehta, Mr. Chhabildas Mehta, (Late) Mr. Chimanbhai Patel, Mrs. Urmila Chimanbhai Patel, (Late) Mr. Babubhai Vasanwala, Mr. Devjibhai Vanavi, Mr. Mohansinh Rathwa, Mr. Natwarlal Shah, Dr. A. K. Patel, (Late) Mr. Kalyan C. Gandhi, Mr. Dilip Parikh, Mr. Nalin K. Patel, Mr. BrahmKumar Bhatt, Mr. Harin Pathak, Mr. Vijay H. Patel

*Others:* Mr. Suresh Patel (Banking), Mr. K. G. Badlani, M/s. Bhogilal Devchand, Mrs. Sunanda Vora, Mr. Rohit Natwarlal, M/s. Kant Desai & Co., (Late) Bhikhubhai Navindas, Mr. M. N. Khambatwala, (Late) Mrs. Shardaben Bhatt, Mr. Narendra Thakor, Miss Divyaben Marwadi, Mr. Shamboo Dayal, Mr. P. G. Ramrakhiani, Mr. R. G. Bhat, Mr. Awinash Kumar, Mrs. Renuka Nalinbhai Patel, Mrs. Daksha Magiawala, Mr. M. Z. Lalwani, Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas

### **Quest for Professionalism Continues**

The quest of Jagdishbhai for further professionalizing the services of the BMA still continues. He desires that the BMA must have social research professionals, ergonomists and bio-medical engineers, professional fund raisers, mechanical engineers and administrators. There should be more visiting professionals in the areas of physiotherapy, specialists in the area of deaf-blind, experts for providing services to the low vision children, manufacturers of low vision aids, ortho-prosthetic engineers etc.

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### **Professionalism Role Highlighted**

Subhash Datrang, Executive Director, National Association for the Blind, however, maintains that Jagdishbhai had achieved so much single-handedly before the professionals joined him. He had already created a platform, a launching pad for the professionals to perform. For many years, he was a lone hand at the BMA developing and initiating a variety of innovative programmes. He inducted a large number of professionals at the right time and gave a new dimension to the welfare spectrum in the country.

**Blind Welfare**, December, 1992 issue carried a cover page story on Jagdishbhai titled "*Jagdish Patel: Breaking Barriers*". It identified and highlighted this dimension of the Visionary and narrated that, "*The young professionals came with their own ideas. While transfusion of young blood was in the interest of BMA as a whole would the*

*old guard, those who had built BMA with personal involvement and with a missionary zeal, accept the new generation?"*

Fortunately, the young professionals were not hotheads and the old war horses came forward more than half way to accommodate the young. And Jagdishbhai was very much there as a shock absorber whenever sparks flew. Gently but firmly Jagdish Patel ensured that the young and the old accept each other, for he was convinced that the outcome would be synergic. And events that followed proved him right. Today, as an organization, BMA is very sound. It is one organization where a second line has been carefully groomed and nurtured. *"I do not have to worry about BMA's future,"* says Jagdishbhai in a relaxed manner.

Jagdishbhai maintains that generally it is very difficult for a young professional to adjust to the environment of the institute unless he is bent upon doing that, and \ or he gets unconditional and overwhelming support from his superiors. Because of this reason and conviction, Jagdishbhai always supports new entrants. In reality, the initial induction and growth in the mammoth organization is generally at the behest and mercy of Jagdishbhai.

This institutional process and phenomenon enables him to continue to hold the reins of the organizations and to bring ever-obliged young people in his fold. The feelings of being the universal and sole Godfather to all the new entrants is more or less a manifestation of unfragmented, undivided and unitary authority as well as power of the architect of the organization, Jagdishbhai. Notwithstanding the stronghold of an individual, this single

factor has contributed significantly towards the stability, cohesiveness and growth of the organization. It performs the balancing act between the old-timers and new-entrants; between the voluntary workers and paid employees; between the professionals and the social-do-gooders; between the devoted workers and beasts of burden.

With the induction of young professionals BMA expanded its



*Jagdishbhai Demonstrating Braille Reading to a Visitor*

activities rapidly. Adult Training Centre Workshop for the Blind began functioning in 1975, Higher Secondary School for the Blind was started in 1976 and a Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped was started in 1976.

Jagdishbhai confirms that Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, President; Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw, Secretary; and Manubhai D. Shah, former Chairman, Administrative Committee of the Blind Men's Association encouraged him to induct professionals at different levels of the organizational hierarchy. He acknowledges the assistance of Mrs. Nandini Munshaw in respect of fixing decent salaries for the professional and for supporting him in this regard in the meetings of the Executive Committee.

Jagdishbhai has risen to be an institution builder and preserver and, more important, can take pride in the fact that he has succeeded in creating a second cadre of workers for the institution. This is a fact that has been solely missing in other such institutes and which has been realized only recently. Motivating youngsters and getting work from them can be regarded as his forte and which shows his far-sightedness and genuine desire for ensuring that the field of welfare is not devoid of leaders.

Bharati Dalal, a teacher of the Secondary School for the Blind also feels that sincere efforts of Jagdishbhai of bringing professionalism in all operations, fore-sightedness and modernization of all activities are worth appreciating. Incorporating the concepts of scientific management in the administration of the organization would enable it to attain self-sufficiency in the near future. These efforts are the major assets of Jagdishbhai. The secret of his success is winning confidence of all the people and then getting the work done. He also has the capacity of crushing any resistance and breaking all the barriers in the path of the progress of the organization.

(Late) Mr. Alan Johns, Executive Director of the Sight Savers International and International President of the international Society for the Prevention of Blindness also acknowledged professional approach of Jagdishbhai. After a day-long field visit on 7 March, 1984 to the community based rehabilitation programmes initiated by Jagdishbhai with the financial assistance of Sight Savers International, Mr. Alan Johns and his wife Lady Johns commented, *"It is always a pleasure to make contact again with the lively minds of Jagdishbhai and his young colleagues and to review their latest activities. On this occasion, Joan and I visited the integrated education programme around Visnagar and the rural rehabilitation programme's first project around Dholka. Both have been brought into operation over the past year and both have enormous potential for replication across India, if done with the same professional approach and sensitivity that has been experienced here in Gujarat under the leadership of Jagdishbhai"*.

Jasu Kavi also feels that Jagdishbhai always wanted to attract professionals for developing and administering various services of the organization. The first qualified person to join

the organization was Mr. Anant Dhuri who devoted his life time for maintaining accounts of the organization. He retired as accountant of the Secondary School for the Blind during 1990.

Jasu Kavi recalls as to how Jagdishbhai attracted Anant Dhuri to the organization. During early fifties when the organization was still in the stage of infancy, Jagdishbhai was working as a Physiotherapist. Anant Dhuri developed severe pain in the joints due to arthritis. All the expert medical professionals could not provide any relief from this pain. Incidentally he happened to meet Jagdishbhai. In the first meeting itself, the latter exhibited self confidence in respect of relieving the former's pain. Then started the treatment and in a matter of few days, Anant Dhuri found himself relieved of pain.

During the physiotherapy sessions, Jagdishbhai learnt that his patient was a successful accountant. He attracted this young qualified accountant through his magnanimous personality to join the Blind Men's Association as accountant. Anant Dhuri remained devoted to Jagdishbhai and to the organization till the age of retirement and thereafter as well. entry of Anant Dhuri turned out to be the first step towards professionalizing the services of the organization.

The All India Confederation of the Blind conferred *Centennial Award* on Jagdishbhai on the occasion of *First Century of the Services for the Blind* during 1987. The citation read out on the occasion also pointed this quality of Jagdishbhai, *"He has been responsible for inculcating professionalization in the field of blind welfare. Under his dynamic leadership, the BMA has grown to be a stellar organization. He was probably the first to insist on ensuring viability and accountability of programmes for the blind"*.

Fr. Cutinha, President of the Divine Light Trust points out in this context, *"When all is said and done, no one is an island unto himself or herself. All require the help and support and creativity and commitment of others. There are persons with such qualities available. But it requires a charismatic leadership to identify such persons and to knit them into a committed team. The Blind Men's Association is a tribute to the commitment of highly trained and committed young persons of the team. Through their commitment these young people pay their unspoken tribute to the leadership of Jagdishbhai"*.

Harshad Joshi feels that Jagdishbhai has a clarity of thought and welcomes new ideas with an open mind. He has a will to put new ideas into reality. His aim is prepare a blind child to be a useful and contributive member of society and not a dead-weight.

Jasu Kavi observes that while Jagdishbhai believes in values and beliefs, he is open for any change which is in keeping with the changing scenario. He does not get tied down to the traditions. He matches traditional values with modern thoughts. Harish Panchal also appreciates this quality of Jagdishbhai.

Ishitiaq Haider appreciates that Jagdishbhai puts his best efforts in initiating innovative programmes for the blind. When most of workers of the blind were simply initiating traditional vocational trades and crafts, Jagdishbhai took lead in developing modern, scientific and technologically advanced training programmes.

Mr. R. T. Deshmukh, Secretary, National Association for the Welfare of the Physically Handicapped, Amrawati also observed administrative abilities of Jagdishbhai. To support his contention, he narrates an incidence:

*"It was in the month of March, 1989, I happened to be in Ahmedabad for attending a Workshop on Braille Mathematic Code sponsored by the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped. At that time the workers of the blind in Gujarat, organized the Shastipurti Mahotsat to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of Jagdishbhai, a grand function where the Governor of Gujarat was the Chief Guest organized at a grand scale. All the participants of the Workshop also attended the function.*

*When we returned from the stage function where Jagdishbhai was publicly felicitated, there was delay in providing the lunch at the institute. Once Jagdishbhai learnt about this lapse, he personally came to the guests and apologized for the delay. Actually it was a minor mistake but Jagdishbhai took it very seriously. This incident created an everlasting impression in my mind and gave me a clear and loud signal that an administrator must always be vigilant and alert about everything".*

Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, President of the Blind Men's Association points out that Jagdishbhai carries with him an infectious enthusiasm, coupled with determination, perseverance, doggedness that helps him to crush the obstacles that come up in his path. His ability to constantly learn and adapt to newer ideas, processes and environment, has kept him at the forefront of the professionals involved in rehabilitation of the blind in India and the world over.

Arvindbhai also feels that Jagdishbhai's creativity and idea generating capacity along with his knack of translating these into practical details, has been widely acknowledged and acclaimed. What is more desirable is his ability to guide, enthuse and hold together a group of dedicated professionals. Many of his innovations, like economic rehabilitation of the blind in their own environment, popularly known as community based rehabilitation, professional training, and integrated approach to vocational training are characteristic of the man and his vision.

(Late) Mr. Indravadan Pranolal Shah, Vice-President of the Blind Men's Association and a long time associate of Jagdishbhai also identified this quality of Jagdishbhai and observed, *"Jagdishbhai has initiated training centres run on professional lines of quality, job effectiveness and social accountability. He is a dynamic and dedicated champion of the blind and has been working hard for blind welfare and rehabilitation infusing new ideas."*



In the words of Sanat Mehta, former Finance Minister of Gujarat *"Jagdishbhai through hard work and perseverance has built up an appropriate net-work of dedicated workers which is crucial for sustaining the image and performance of the institute. He has become an institution by himself and there lies the uniqueness of his work"*.

Nandiniben Munshaw maintains that Jagdishbhai's understanding of banking intricacies, availing bank loan as the differential rate of interest, creating a sound capital base and evolving an effective system of money rotation, financial viability of production units, modern approach to training and rehabilitation have made the organization most functional, result oriented and most effective.

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### **Unique Style of Motivation**

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Akhil Paul recalls his field visit with Jagdishbhai in 1990 very vividly. During a visit to Rapar Community Based Rehabilitation being implemented under the auspices of *Gram Swaraj Sangh*, Jagdishbhai went down to the level of the blind beneficiaries and inquired about their level of confidence in independent mobility, skills of daily living and their degree of economic independence. *"Asking a young blind person to write him a letter after he starts shaving on his own is probably the most effective method adopted by Jagdishbhai of motivating self-reliance of blind persons"*, claims Akhil. In fact, this person truly acquired the skills of shaving on his own and wrote to Jagdishbhai in this respect.

Jagdishbhai is always known for supporting the decisions of his staff members. This factor not only stands the staff in good stead, it also promotes the concept of independent decision taking among them. During March, 1991 Akhil Paul, during his field visit to Barbatpur project found a lot of irregularities and decided then and there to discontinue the project. As the project was supported by Sight Savers through the National Association for the Blind, there was likelihood of strong objections and criticism from the funding agency as well as the National Association for the Blind in this respect. In this moment of crisis, Jagdishbhai, Chairman of the NAB Rural Activities Committee stood by Akhil's decision and supported him whole-heartedly.

This incident established the conviction that Jagdishbhai would always support his staff as a true General. This incident motivated Akhil to take independent decisions regarding CBR projects, selection of implementing agencies, their performance and such related aspects.

Akhil also recalls that the very fact that Jagdishbhai proposed his name for the five month training in services for the multihandicapped children at Perkins School for the Blind under Hilton Perkins International Programme turned out to be a great motivating factor and it

gave a new shift to his career. *“Jagdishbhai possesses a unique style of giving opportunity to young people and enabling them to reach the fore-front”* remarks Akhil. This style of motivation encourages professionals to put their best efforts in achieving the goals of the organization.

Tarak Luhar, a dedicated disciple of Jagdishbhai also feels that Jagdishbhai’s biggest achievement has been motivating other blind and disabled persons themselves to adopt welfare of the disabled as their life mission. As a result of this, a cadre of devoted and dedicated workers in the field of welfare of the blind have emerged. Through the hard work of these workers, services have reached each and every corner of Gujarat.

Through his experience, consistent efforts and sincere guidance, Jagdishbhai has developed a large number of leaders devoted to welfare of the blind. He considers every such leader as a *“pillar of his building”* devoted to welfare services. His style of motivating young people is very different from the text book approach. During the initial years, when he was staying in the campus, he should used to spend time with blind students. These students used to flock around him squatting on the floor. He used to argue with them, teach them the art of living, play a game of chess and share with them their social responsibilities.

He has a unique gift of recognizing hidden talents among his pupils. Due to this quality, he has identified a large number of prospective leaders from among the students and groomed them to be leaders of coming years. In the process, he has himself become a very successful leader and social worker. Subhash Datrang also supports this contention. He feels that Jagdishbhai has the knack of maintaining team spirit among people around him and he always takes people with him. All the people around him are willing to do anything for him at any time.

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### **A Successful Administrator**

Jayanti Panchal has always considered Jagdishbhai a successful administrator. Everyone always wonders as to how he manages the organization so well despite his blindness. A combination of all the qualities needed for an administrator - that is Jagdishbhai. He performs all his tasks with dedication, devotion, efficiency and with pre-determined targets and set objectives. While managing the organization which he has created, he clarifies his point of view clearly with the officials or the staff members and gives them opportunity to present their point of view as well. His most outstanding administrative quality is his uncanny or almost psychic ability to see through individuals and understand their intentions clearly.

No one ever dares to bluff before him as he can easily read between the lines whether the person is telling the truth or not. Thus everyone is wary of him and treads carefully. Are these not the qualities of a strong administrator ! If anyone tries to create obstacles

in the path of smooth administration of the organization, Jagdishbhai has the inherent capacity to crush the same.

As a successful organizer, Jagdishbhai has represented the organization at the national as well as international levels. He has adapted the innovative approaches he has learnt from these visits to make them conducive to our socio-economic conditions and the environment. To achieve these objectives, he creates leaders. He shares his philosophy, thoughts and experiences with these upcoming leaders and encourages them to experiment and start innovative programmes.

He disagrees violently with rehabilitation workers who merely believe in creating monuments with public money without paying attention to the achievement of objectives. Such organizers create buildings in the name of blind and disabled persons and never care whether this segment of society gets any benefits out of it or not. But Jagdishbhai is completely different from such organizers. He wants to develop a society which accepts the blind and disabled in its fold as equal and respected citizens.

Once he shared a valuable thought with Jayanti Panchal which reflects his outstanding abilities as a successful organizer in the field. He stated, *“Whenever you go for fund raising for the organization, you must explain to the people as to what would be gains to the children participating in various fund raising drives like the Match Box Competition or the Painting Competition. How such participation can mould the personality of the child, what are his responsibilities towards society. First you inform them as to how such participation would improve their analytical abilities and then talk about fund raising.”* These thoughts reflect the far-sightedness of Jagdishbhai who stresses upon character development and nation building even in fund raising.

Nandubhai Parikh explains this quality in these words, *“As an Administrator, he tries to understand each and every aspect of the problem or the proposal very minutely and carefully, thinks logically, discusses openly with the concerned officials and ultimately arrives at a decision which is generally fair, wise and just. Once arrived at a decision, Jagdishbhai sticks to it firmly without being subjected to vacillation, doubts, pressures and influences. It is this quality which has made him a most successful, efficient and capable administrator”.*

Hasmukh Thakker highlights the legal expertise of Jagdishbhai and remarks, *“His keen in-depth understanding of the law and its many intricacies, has left me spellbound many a times. His ability to handle grievances and his ability to maintain motivation and satisfaction levels of the staff are truly worth emulation by any legal or personnel man. His keen instinct of sensing trouble and his taking of precautionary measures speak volumes for his foresight”.*

Ishitiah Haider of the Ahmedi School for the Blind, Aligarh feels that Jagdishbhai would have very successfully handled administration of the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradun. In fact, if he is entrusted any responsibility, he discharges his duties with complete devotion and truthfulness. Had he shifted to Dehradun, it would definitely have been a disaster for BMA Ahmedabad but beneficial for the NIVH!

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## The Great Leader

Mrs Gool Ghadiali, Secretary, NAB Education Committee, also observes that as a human being, Jagdishbhai has proved to be a great leader. He has leadership qualities and he carries his people along with him. *"I have seen how his fellow people, fellow employees flock around him not only to assist him but to take his word of advice. Every word that he says is taken as God's word and he talks sense. Whatever he says has a deep meaning. He may have had short tempers at times due to his problematic condition, but on the whole he is a man par-excellence. God bless!"*



*Jagdishbhai Demonstrating Braille Reading to a Visitor*

*The main quality of a good leader is his own participation. If you want to be a leader, your participation, your involvement in the project is extremely important. Though you are at the helms of affairs, you can not sit in your ivory towers, dictate your terms to people and try and get the work done. What was most impressive about Jagdishbhai is that he himself is in the forefront. Therefore, when your leader is working, when your leader is facing challenges, people follow such leaders. Therefore he has people around him all the times agreeing to what he is saying because they have confidence in his work, his ability and his mannerisms. We know that he is going to produce results. He is going to come up with something productive. He is going to deliver goods. So people are with him."*

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## **No Charity But Opportunity**

Jagdishbhai is not happy that any organization should survive on charity alone. He suggests that donations to the institute should be regenerated so as to make a permanent source of income. He desires that the products manufactured at the training centre should be properly channelized into the market and sold at remunerative prices to render the institute economically viable and self supporting.

According to Praful Vyas, "*Jagdishbhai believes firmly that the disabled should not only always gain from society, they should also develop the tendency of contributing to the welfare of society*".

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## **Ever Lasting Friendship**

**Dr. Rajendra Vyas**, a life-time friend, co-worker and well wisher of Jagdishbhai recalls, "*In the summer of 1944, young Jagdish came to see me at my father's bungalow at Santacruz near Juhu. He introduced himself saying that he was going to Ahmedabad during his summer vacation, and he wanted to buy a carrom-board for his 11 year old brother Ramesh. With the help of my brother Harshad, he went to a nearby shop near Metro Cinema, and bought the carrom-board. This was my first encounter with Jagdish which developed into an ever-lasting personal friendship*".

On the personal front these two remained great friends and their respective wives, Madhaviben and Bhadraben also had a very close friendship. These two couples attended a number of conferences at the national and international levels. They jointly helped a number of leaders to bloom. Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben had a very loving relationship with Dr. Vyas and Madhaviben's three children. The two women shopped for each other and also exchanged recipes. Till date they stay at each other's homes whenever they are in Ahmedabad and Mumbai respectively. Both of are extremely worried about the health of the other and have long telephonic conversations whenever possible. Dr. Vyas always takes great pains to see that Jagdishbhai is put in an appropriate place in a meeting where he can hear and Dr. Vyas repeats everything for Jagdishbhai's benefit.

Natwar Patel, a life time associate of Jagdishbhai feels that both Dr. Vyas and Jagdishbhai have very close friends and have progressed together in the field of the blind welfare. Commenting on the great friendship of these two stalwarts in the field, Mrs. Gool Ghadiali feels that Jagdishbhai and Dr. Vyas make two sides of the same coin. If Jagdishbhai is synonymous to Ahmedabad, Dr. Vyas is synonymous to Mumbai and overall India. Seeing them together is a wonderful sight, how they communicate, how they interact with one another. Both being blind, it is a wonderful experience to watch them communicate, watch them agree and disagree on certain things, watch them trying to make their views known to the other,

finally they part with smiles on their faces with certain agreements or disagreements. But they have been great friends. Each one has been a supporting factor to the other.

Another close associate, follower and confidante, **Mr. Nanalal Kanabar**, General Secretary, *Sneh Nirjhar*, Rajkot recalls, *"I was a student in the Navrangpura Blind School, Ahmedabad in 1952 which Jagdishbhai used to visit regularly every Saturday. I heard him talking and guiding blind students there and secretly I yearned to get close to him - he was my idol on a seemingly unreachable pedestal. He was reputed to be brusque but all the students adored his dynamism and charisma"*.

Nanalal Kanabar always seeks Jagdishbhai's guidance and considers him his Godfather. He recalls his first meeting with Jagdishbhai *"At the first sight during my first visit to the Recreation Club being run at Maganbhai Kendra during 1956, I found him stubborn and a person with a harsh nature. During my next visit to his house in context of a job for Praful Vyas and for getting signatures of his doctor father on the railway concession form, I had an opportunity of understanding him better. I realized that I was wrong and that the man who I thought was harsh was loving and a straight forward person and a man of principles. I changed my earlier opinion and extended my hand of ever lasting friendship which has always been growing from strength to strength and today he is my closest and most respected senior friend. I am proud of that"*.

**Praful Vyas**, another life-long associate, met Jagdishbhai as a student at the Navrangpura School for the Blind where the latter came every week to meet blind friends. Prafulbhai played chess, gave a good fight, lost the game but developed a close friendship with Jagdishbhai. Since then he has been his close associate. Almost every Sunday morning, Jagdishbhai visits Prafulbhai at his house as a routine for years.

Praful Vyas found Jagdishbhai to be very knowledgeable as he had access to the latest information in the field of blind welfare and technological innovations in the field. Jagdishbhai was the first person from Ahmedabad to attend the Blind Administrators Course convened by the Sight Savers International in London during 1960. He brought with him the latest educational aids, mobility appliances and rehabilitation devices. All his friends were very impressed. This habit of sharing such information and demonstrating various aids and appliances won him many new friends during those formative years. All these friends remained loyal to him for their whole life.

Jagdishbhai helped Praful to get a job as a Music Teacher at the Light House for the Blind Girls, Ahmedabad. This centre also served as a meeting point for both of them as Jagdishbhai visited the centre on a regular basis to learn English from Mr. Manju Chacha, an educational inspector. During the course of employment, Praful picked up a quarrel with Smt. Vinodaben, Secretary of the centre and was about to resign. Jagdishbhai intervened

and could bring both of them to a mutually acceptable compromise. It was due to Jagdishbhai's persuasion that Praful continued working as Music Teacher till he retired in 1995.

Praful very proudly attributes his job success to his first encounter with Jagdishbhai during 1953. Due to the sudden demise of Kanubhai, the Executive Members of the BMA, for the first time in 40 years, were seized with the problem of co-opting an Honorary Treasurer on the Executive Committee. The unanimous choice fell on Prafulbhai who was co-opted as Treasurer from 14 March, 1997.

**(Late) Mr. Harshvadan Makim**, A blind entrepreneur, another ardent follower of Jagdishbhai also fondly remembered his first meeting with his role model Jagdishbhai, *"One fine evening during 1954, I entered Medico Massage at Khadia Cross Roads in the walled city of Ahmedabad and met Jagdishbhai for the first time in my life. It was friendship at first sight. He became my life-long friend and well wisher. We have been working all these years in unison for the comprehensive development of disabled persons"*.

He attributed his involvement in blind welfare activities and recalls, *"Due to his magnanimous personality, he involved me in his mission of promoting welfare of disabled persons. Our friendship is referred to as "birds with same feathers" and "two bodies with one soul", by many people who even envy our companionship"*.

Mr. Makim expired in December, 1990 due to a heart attack. His family members donated Rs. one lakh to the National Association for the Blind, Gujarat State Branch. To commemorate his memory, the Regional Braille Press has been named as H. N. Makim Braille Press.

**Futarmal J. Porwal**, Manager, Braille Press, another supporter of Jagdishbhai narrates that the Annual General Meeting of the Blind Men's Association used to be held in January every year. About 800 to 900 members used to attend the meeting. Every member was provided sumptuous meals after the meeting. The day was celebrated as the most important event. Almost all the members used to attend the meeting and participate actively in the meeting.

Futarbhai was the ordinary member of the General Body of BMA. Futarbhai's first proper encounter with Jagdishbhai's was during 1968 when he joined the Secondary School for the Blind for his secondary education. Jagdishbhai used to spend evenings on the lawn with the students. Futarbhai recalls that he had his first argument with Jagdishbhai regarding the school fee. At that time, the BMA decided to charge Rs. 10 as monthly fee which was too much for the students at that time. Due to efforts of Futarbhai and other students, the BMA decided to exempt the students from the payment of fee.

Futarbhai always appreciated Jagdishbhai's close interaction with students. Whomsoever he found deserving during such interaction, he always helped them to get settled in life. Jagdishbhai developed excellent relations with students during such meetings and helped them in all the possible ways.

Jagdishbhai reflected his concern for and confidence in Futarmal when he proposed his name for the post of Treasurer of the BMA's Executive Committee. Futarmal being a staff of the organization, Praful Vyas, however, emerged the consensus candidate for this position.

**Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw**, Secretary, BMA recalls meeting Jagdishbhai during 1966 at the residence of Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, textile magnate, leading philanthropist who went on to become President of BMA. During the first encounter, Nandiniben realized that Jagdishbhai who ran a small organization for the blind needed her services. She volunteered her services as reader to the blind students. She started teaching them English thrice a week. During her first meeting, she did not realize that a seemingly mild gentleman like Jagdishbhai would be able to encourage such an active participation and that she would subsequently become deeply involved in the running of the BMA and ultimately become Secretary of the organization.

During her initial visits, Nandiniben realized that money was a limiting factor to the progress of the organization. She compiled relevant information and proforma for seeking recognition as a Scientific Research Organization under Section 35 (i) (ii) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 so that all donations to BMA enjoy 100 percent tax exemption. Jagdishbhai also gives credit for this outstanding achievement of BMA's recognition to Nandiniben who initiated the process and Mr. Lal Advani who assisted at the ministerial level. The organization attained the status of a scientific research organization.

Nandiniben also studied other traditional methods of fund raising and evolved the system of soliciting donations as *Tithi Funds (Fixed Date Endowment)* and raised Rs. 1,33,000 during the first year of introduction of the same. This remains even today the major source of funds for meeting deficit on the hostel for the blind.

Nandiniben also recalls meeting (Late) Mr. Kanubhai Thaker and Mr. Jitubhai Trivedi who were deputed by Jagdishbhai to participate in the Teacher Training Course for the Blind at Perkins School for the Blind, Mass., U.S.A. during 1967. She was impressed with the quality of training they were receiving at this most prestigious school for the blind, she donated \$ 200 for enabling them to purchase two brailers. This visit also inspired her to put more efforts in modernizing services of the organization.

Subsequent visits and day to day dealing with Jagdishbhai brought Nandiniben so close to him that she stood by him and supported him whole heartedly during the 1974 *Nav Nirman* crisis. When the lock out was declared and the organization was handed over to the Government, Nandiniben virtually cried. Her faith in the proverb that the (*Satya Mev Jayte*) "*Truth always triumphs*" gave her some confidence and the administration of BMA was handed over to Jagdishbhai and his team including Nandiniben. Due to her consistent support and encouragement, BMA trustees with



Jagdishbhai as General Secretary and Nandiniben as Secretary remained as a very cohesive team.

Their professional relations bloomed into very close family relations. Jagdishbhai accepted Nandiniben as his *Rakhi* sister and visits her house on *Raksha Bandhan Day* to get a *Rakhi (sacred thread)* tied from her.

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### **Treader of Untrodden Path**

Robert Frost seems to have written his poem "*The Road Not Taken*" especially for Jagdishbhai as it exemplifies his life the most:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one Traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth:  
Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had really worn them about the same,  
And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black,  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads to the way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.  
I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
The two roads diverged in a wood,  
and I  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Jagdishbhai has always been a radical; an adventurer in quest of fulfilling a dream and succeeding in it! When workers in blind welfare were cautious, did the done things of

imparting training in music and weaving, he decided to forge into the untrodden territory of innovation and experiment. He decided to start light engineering, technical trades, physiotherapy, computer operations and shorthand for the blind.

He always says that a blind person has tremendous untapped potential. We who have sight unfortunately do not have the vision to see this potential nor do we have the unflinching faith.

This faith in the blind led him to start on-the-job training centres in place of sheltered workshops where blind persons were kept for a limited period for need-based training and then placed in the open industry. In an age, where sheltered workshops seemed to be the only answer to rehabilitation of the blind, the transitory employment cum training centres were viewed as far fetched, unrealistic and fanciful. It is a credit to Jagdishbhai's acumen and foresight that he foresaw the problems of sheltered workshops well before they became really rampant.

It was due to Jagdishbhai's initiative and effort that the grant-in-aid code for the disabled welfare organizations under the auspices of Department of Social Defence, Government of Gujarat was evolved, made uniform and subsequently improved to make it the most liberal such code in the country. Another laurel in his galaxy of achievements is his active role in enabling an agreement between the Textile Labour Association and the Ahmedabad Textile Mills Association for the preferential employment of disabled persons in each mill.

With his ability of cementing ideas into reality, Jagdishbhai could succeed in bringing out State Disabled Employment Act in Gujarat reserving 1 percent jobs for the disabled in the establishments employing more than 200 employees. This was probably the first Act evolved and enacted by any State Government in the country. Many other State Governments followed suit subsequently.

Achieving any of the things listed above involved a great deal of struggling, convincing, travelling while trying to suppress the depression and the feelings of hitting an unyielding brick wall. The spirit of fighting has always been his hallmark. He has never believed in mincing words or beating about the bush. His style is direct, confrontative and of taking the bull by the horns.

Undaunted and alone at many times, he has fought against ignorance and public apathy. He put in a seven years war with the Government for getting recognition for the first School of Physiotherapy for the Blind imparting a recognized training of two years duration. He also encouraged and initiated community based rehabilitation of all categories of disabled persons, integrated education, parent teacher training, services for multiple handicapped visually impaired persons and the deaf-blind.

He was the first individual from the field of welfare of the visually impaired to usher in modernization in operations, introduce cost effectiveness, and recruit professionals in the

field generally governed by social workers, philanthropists and do-gooders. He has always advocated continuous appraisal of oneself and one's activities to dissipate lethargy and stagnation.

His emphasis on perfection is well known and his obstinacy in achieving it equally renowned. In these efforts, he does not spare himself also. He lives, breathes, dreams blind welfare to the exclusion of everything else.

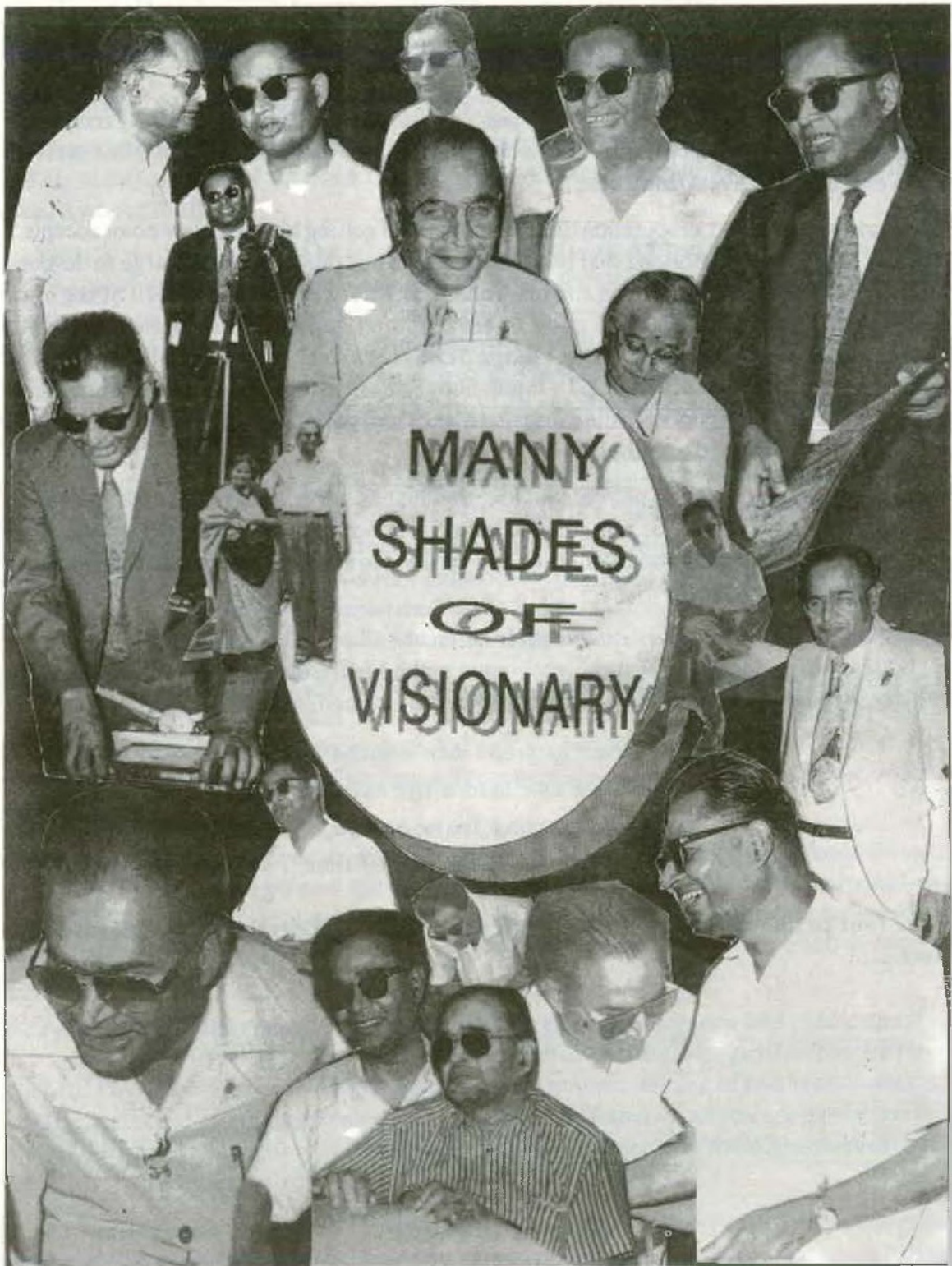
He has always acquired a reputation of being pushy and getting his own view point accepted. Nandini has, however, noticed that this is because he has this compulsive urge to do good for the visually impaired persons and his 'pushiness' is always for the benefit of the blind community and not for his own good or for personal gains. In this matter, he can be likened to Oliver Goldsmith's "*The Village School Master*" who is peculiar, "*The love he bore to learning was his fault*". In Jagdishbhai's case also, it is his single mindedness and unparalleled commitment to the cause that makes him peculiar at times but fundamentally sound in his beliefs and assumptions at all times.

He has tread an untraversed path in that too, that he has never tried to become an urbane, sophisticated worker. He has remained a natural worker, with his flaws and multifarious gifts, while remaining essentially human and earthy. He always belonged to the "*masses*" rather than the "*classes*".

Jagdishbhai's life and his departure from traditional and conventional paths has motivated his colleagues and workers to do something to make life more meaningful and promising and has inspired them in a way which can be best described in H. W. Longfellow's poem:

*"Lives of great men remind us  
That we can lead a life sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time".*

**Your foot prints will inspire posterity, your work and deeds will be ingrained in time.....**



#### Establishment and Development: Educational and Training Institutes for the Blind

Paper presented by

*Jagdishbhai at the seminar organized by the Netra Hin Seva Sangh, Ajmer at Kota on 22nd June, 1980. In this paper, Jagdishbhai highlights the need for defining the objectives of an organization, evolving appropriate organizational structure, promoting local leadership, adopting a comprehensive approach with emphasis on economic rehabilitation and carrying out periodic performance evaluation in respect of pre-decided indicators. He expressed these progressive thoughts when the BMA was at the launching phase of professionalizing its services. All the expansion and diversification programmes launched subsequently under his leadership incorporated these thoughts - Authors.*

Rajasthan has the tradition of achieving unparalleled heights with its limited resources. It is astonishing that this desert land supplies milk and food grains to other prosperous states in India. This seminar, I feel, is being held at the most appropriate time in context of development of education, training and placement facilities at the national level. The organization of the seminar would now help to bridge, in a modest way, the communication gap that hinders planned development of blind welfare institutions, its deliberations would serve as guidelines for establishing such institutions in Rajasthan and elsewhere.

The report of 1944, "*Blindness in India*" reveals that the highest incidence of blindness in the country is in Rajasthan at 750 blind persons for 1,00,000 population. The services for the education and training of the blind are, however, meagre and scattered. There are only five blind welfare organizations for reaching out to the scattered blind population.

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#### **Objectives**

The foremost pre-requisite for establishing any organization is clearly defined objectives. The major objectives for a blind welfare

organization ideally should be promotion of education and vocational, social and economic rehabilitation of the blind; provision of support services; creation of public awareness; and advocacy on behalf of the target group. Whatsoever objectives are set by an organization should be well defined. The fulfillment of the short term objectives should lead to the realization of the long term goals. For example, imparting of vocational training which is a short term objective must result into economic rehabilitation, a long term goal.

The felt-needs and ideas expressed by the target group should be given due consideration to make the institutions need-based. Another important objective of any welfare institution should be enhancement of the functional, occupational and social status and restoring the human dignity and self confidence of the target group.

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### **Organizational Structure**

Another important aspect is a well-planned organizational structure. The fulfillment of the goals of any organization depends to a great extent on the norms and procedures that are established to guide and control behaviour, functioning and interpersonal relations of the people within it. A blind welfare agency like any other establishment should also have well planned and well defined organizational structure. The status, role expectation, authority and job content at all levels of the organization should be well defined. As informal conventions subsequently become an integral part of the agency, these should be carefully laid, accepted and internalized.

The organization should emphasize service to the target group and the community. It should act as a guiding force to render the value system and ideology of people in consonance with overall objectives of the organization. Subsequently, the internal belief and value structure will become an ingredient of overall organizational structure.

Considering the enormity of the task, environmental constraints and limited financial as well as human resources, a linear type of organizational structure would be appropriate for a blind welfare organization. There should, however, be clear demarcation between the functional and the advisory roles of various constituents of the organization. The functional role should be entrusted to the qualified and experienced professional people. The level of competence of the people should be congruent with the tasks to be performed by them.

*Systemic Linkages:* The Organization should establish and maintain systemic links with the local administration, government departments, other social welfare agencies, district development administration and other such agencies which constitute the environment in which the organization is expected to exist and grow. It is the responsibility of the functional head of the organization to develop these systemic links, harmonious relations and congenial

atmosphere so that all these agencies are willing to extend their cooperation and support to the organization.

*Local Leadership:* Involvement of philanthropists, local opinion leaders and service-minded people in the administration of the NGOs is essential for enhancing their image, increasing public participation and mobilizing local resources. Generally, people are invited on the Trust Board or the Managing Committees etc. on the basis of their financial strength or social standing. Organizations should make efforts to develop local leadership by inviting well meaning and devoted persons.

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### **Operational Aspects**

The prevailing societal attitude is that children can be educated only in residential schools. Whereas the established fact is that the existing residential school can not possibly cover blind children scattered across the country. The only viable alternative could be to promote integrated education of rural blind children. In fact, such an approach should not be considered competitive and in conflict with the existing residential education. In fact, this approach should be considered complementary and supportive to educational efforts of age-old residential educational institutions. However, for a large number of children, integrated education may not be the right option. Thus the existing residential schools would need to continue to impart education.

For Rajasthan, the most appropriate approach would be establishing at least one comprehensive centre for imparting education, training and other services at the district level to cater to the needs of selected blind persons. At the village level, integrated education should be promoted. It is desirable to involve parents and community while imparting integrated education with the help of a resource or itinerant teacher.

Another operational aspect of the organization is the necessity to build adequate infrastructure facilities. Most of the residential schools for the blind have been started in rented or donated buildings which even lacked basic amenities. It is essential to provide appropriate infrastructure facilities like proper class rooms, hostel, educational as well as mobility aids, trained teachers and braille books etc. At the same time, it is not advisable to provide very sophisticated and advanced equipment which may result into children not learning the use of basic equipment etc. For example, providing recorded cassettes to primary level students may discourage them from learning reading and writing of braille etc. Thus a judicious selection of appropriate equipment and facilities is essential.

Another significant aspect is the appointment of qualified and properly trained teaching staff. During the initial years, as grant etc. was not available and such schools were started merely as charitable organizations, low paid and unqualified teachers have generally been

appointed. This factor has resulted into the deterioration of standard of education of the blind. It is essential to train the existing teaching staff and to appoint only properly qualified and trained staff. It is also imperative that every staff member of a residential school knows braille. All the students must be trained in reading and writing of braille and the use of special educational equipment and devices etc.

*Integrated Approach:* It is socially desirable and economical that the blind welfare agencies should shed the sectorial approach and evolve comprehensive programmes. For example, if education and training services are not supported with placement services, it may not be possible to enhance economic resettlement of the individuals. Similarly, provision of education without the support of individual counselling, orientation and mobility and activities of daily living may not enhance self confidence and social integration of the individual. Thus blind welfare organizations should provide a whole gamut of rehabilitative services including individual counselling, family counselling, evaluation, orientation and mobility, education, training, pre-vocational, vocational and professional training, career counselling, placement services, provision of educational and mobility aids, concession and facilities, and public awareness etc.

*Emphasis on Economic Rehabilitation:* The existing system of vocational orientation and training does not equip the individual with the skills required for appropriate open placement. Similarly, the existing sheltered workshops and on-the-job training centres have not succeeded in promoting effective open employment. The antiquated pattern of training, existence of only traditional trades and charitable outlook of such centres is responsible for steady deterioration in their economic situation and complete failure in respect of enhancing economic rehabilitation of the inmates.

Such workshops and training centres should opt for modernization of their operations, select job-oriented trades, improve the training techniques and provide placement services on a regular basis. These centres should be managed professionally incorporating principles of scientific management to render these self supporting. Efforts should be made to seek patronage of the State in respect of purchasing products on a preferential basis, extending financial support and enacting laws for promoting employment etc.

*Specific Coverage:* Generally parents are reluctant in sending blind girls to the residential schools. The parents should be approached personally and convinced that blind girls have a right to education. Such centres should include teaching of home science, daily living skills, child care and personal grooming in the teaching curricula to enable the blind girls to learn life skills. Various crafts and trades suitable for girls should be introduced to expedite their economic rehabilitation.

*Performance Indicators:* It is essential that a system for periodic evaluation of the performance of the organization should be evolved, implemented and reviewed. The following



performance indicators are appropriate:

- Social cost of development
- Social returns on development
- Achievement of short term objectives and realization of long term objectives
- Extent of utilization of infrastructure facilities
- Relevance of existing facilities
- Extent of observance or violation of formal as well as informal norms and their tangible and intangible consequences
- Qualitative and quantitative availability and utilization of material and human resources

*Social Interaction:* In order to have a fruitful relationship with the public, blind welfare organizations should publish a newsletter highlighting their activities and achievements. Such a publication should focus on the extent of public participation, support of government departments and other such aspects of community participation etc. It should seek views of readers on its activities, ideology, functioning and such related aspects. Such an endeavour would prove the transparency of operations of the organization and seek public participation in its administration. Public opinion as feedback would help to bring in public accountability of the organization and establish bonafides of the agency.

*Societal Attitude:* Each organization not only has its own environment but it also provides an environment to a wider system to interact. It may result into dissonance among its members if its set objectives are not in consonance with social objectives. Many a times, such institutions have to perform the role of a pace-setter for inducing various social changes. So far, blind persons have been considered an object of pity, charity and compassion. The age-old tradition of considering such persons unemployable should be changed. The existing as well as envisaged blind welfare organizations must strive to change this societal attitude.

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## **Conclusion**

To expedite complete rehabilitation of blind people, it is essential to evolve and implement individual need based, scientific and practical approach to education, training and economic rehabilitation. Unless we develop a cadre of dedicated, devoted, hard working, appropriately qualified and experienced workers, it may not be possible to realize the objectives, of social integration and complete rehabilitation of blind persons. The spirit behind the theme “*Full Participation with Equality*” of the *International Year of Disabled Persons* to be observed next year must be understood, adopted and implemented in the right earnest.

### Training-cum-Transitory Employment: A Striking Success

**Abstract:** *For promoting training and placement of disabled persons, it desirable to impart them on the job training and then provide transitory employment in a simulated industrial setting. It would also demonstrate their production abilities and their open employment. It is essential to apply principles of management in personnel evaluation, inventory, production planning, financial management and costing, etc. Such a centre must be economically viable.*

The history of the disabled reflects their rejection and isolation from society. Their plight, generally unseen or too painful for most people to acknowledge is, therefore, easily ignored. Of late, this situation has changed for the better. With the development of welfare state, the disabled enjoy the right - may be on the paper only - to live a full life contributing to social progress. The *United Nations*, which represents the aspirations of the international community, has been drawing the attention of the world to the severe problems related to disability prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of disabled persons during the past two decades. Increasingly, governments are trying to develop, improve or restore, to the fullest extent the effectiveness of all their disabled citizens.

There is no denying the fact that the disabled are confronted with a formidable problem of open placement because of limited opportunity and age-old tradition of considering them unemployable.

The available vocational training facilities do not equip the disabled adequately for open placement. Realizing the need for on-the-job training for the disabled and their vocational orientation and training, the *Blind Men's Association* started a *Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped* and *Adult Training Workshop for the Blind* (henceforth referred to as *Workshop*) to provide transitory employment to the disabled.

At the workshop, transitory employment is provided in the industrial setting. Well planned and concentrated efforts are made to improve production performance of the disabled. They are adequately trained and their production is made comparable to that of normal counterparts, after which they are provided open placement opportunities. So far, 176 disabled persons have availed themselves of employment facilities on the basis of merit after their transitory employment of 2 years at the workshop. Now they are members of society, contributing to its progress, and are productive assets for the nation.

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## Professionalized Training Centre

The workshop is professionally managed under the valued guidance of a dedicated team of leading entrepreneurs of Ahmedabad. All the production-cum-training activities are carried out under the supervision of experienced and qualified personnel. The workshop enjoys the unique distinction of having highly qualified managerial staff for its management.

At the workshop, well-planned efforts have been made to adopt modern approaches for the economic rehabilitation of the disabled. Attempts have been made to apply principles of management in personnel evaluation, inventory, production planning, financial management and costing, etc. This has resulted in the increased capacity utilization and better human resources management. Systematic monitoring of various operations and job enrichment has helped to achieve psychological growth of the disabled.

*The Student Organization for Managerial Assistance (SOMA)* of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad has taken keen and continued interest in various activities of the workshop. It has played a significant role in incorporating principles of scientific management.

*Modernization of Operations* : To increase efficiency and to extend facilities for transitory employment in machine operations, the workshop is planning semi-automation of the carpentry and printing shops. With the introduction of one semi-automatic printing machine, it will be possible to extend transitory employment facilities to 50 more disabled persons. Similarly, in the carpentry shop, at least 75 more such persons will be engaged after its mechanization.

*Increasing the Sales Turnover* : Over the years, continued efforts have been made to raise sales turnover per disabled person. This will help reduce overhead expenses. Consequently, more benefits may be passed to the disabled. The declining overhead will facilitate expansion of various activities, thus accommodating more disabled persons for transitory employment. During 1979-80, the sales turnover of the workshop was Rs. 4.45 millions. For the year 1980-81, it is expected to be Rs. 7 millions. Similarly, the transitory employment of the disabled may increase to 300.

To quote an article written by me, which appeared in a local newspaper, "*Apart from various other machine operations, plastic moulding provides ample scope for the successful employment of the blind and other handicapped. As the jobs are of a repetitive nature, visual discrimination is not of great significance*".

To provide transitory employment to the disabled, ten moulding machines have been installed. At present 24 disabled persons are engaged in operating these machines have been installed. Encouraged by their production performance on such machines at the workshop, other plastic manufactures are voluntarily employing the disabled as machine operators.

## Expanding Employment Opportunities

Over the years, the number of disabled persons availing on-the-job training and transitory employment facilities has increased manifold. As mentioned earlier, 176 disabled persons have been placed through the placement services, whereas many more found jobs on their own and some of them preferred self-employment. At the same time, the turnover of the trained disabled as well as the number of disabled persons availing transitory employment facilities have also increased. Various new projects have been developed to undertake new production activities for the horizontal expansion of the transitory employment facilities. Thus there has been a multi-dimensional growth in employment opportunities.

During the last five years, the number of disabled persons availing training-cum-placement facilities has increased gradually. At present, there are more than 200 disabled engaged in various production activities. The following is the number of disabled persons who have availed transitory employment facilities so far:

Year	No. of Disabled
1975-76	36
1976-77	94
1977-78	127
1978-79	147
1979-80	212

*Economic Independence of the Disabled* : The disabled at the workshop are paid monthly on the basis of their production performance. This payment varies from Rs. 125 to 350. The performance evaluation is done quarterly to revise the monthly payment. It is done scientifically, considering daily production, regularity, interpersonal relations, interest in the job, nature of the job etc. At present, on an average, a disabled person earns Rs. 186 per month which is above the scheduled minimum wages.

*Facilities for the Rural Disabled* : The workshop has arranged boarding and lodging facilities for the working blind at the Salvation Army Hostel. To extend similar facilities for the working disabled coming from other cities and villages, the workshop is planning to construct a hostel for them. It will enable it to provide transitory employment to the rural disabled also.

*Higher Turnover of Trained Disabled* : The trained disabled persons have been accepted for open placement in various industries in Gujarat. Over the years, the number of disabled persons finding suitable employment has increased. It is easier to provide placement opportunities for the disabled trained in treadle operations, composing, motor rewinding, book binding, machine operations, screen printing etc.

To enable the disabled to find jobs in various operations, the workshop has expanded its production activities considering their work potentials and the opportunities for open placement for the same. During the last year itself, the following production and other activities have been introduced:

- Packing product unit for training the disabled for manufacturing cartons, envelopes, paper bags, etc.
- Plastic moulding for providing transitory employment for operating injection and blow moulding machines.
- Screen printing on PVC sheet, fabric. etc.
- Salesmanship of consumer goods counter selling as well as door to door selling.
- Fabrication of steel furniture, etc.

The expansion of production activities will enable the workshop to explore new avenues for the employment of the disabled.

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### **Achievement Appreciated**

On 2nd April, 1980, two of the disabled of the workshop were given the "*Most Efficient Handicapped Workers*" award and citation by the President of India. The citation on Mr. Ghanshyam Kantilal Desai (Blind) reads, "*Adjudged a regular, punctual and well-disciplined worker, Desai has proved that deprivation of sight is not a handicap and given an opportunity, blind men do a variety of jobs even under competitive conditions*".

Miss Aditi Bupatrai Vaidya, a mentally handicapped person and another award winner is working in the tailoring section. Her citation reads, "*Now she is performing the tailoring production tasks independently in the Multicategory Workshop and her productivity is reckoned as normal*".

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### **Conclusion**

The Blind Men's Association has achieved its objective of training and placement of disabled persons by evolving a new concept of imparting them on the job training and at the same time providing them transitory employment in a simulated industrial setting. This unique experiment of running a training-cum-transitory employment centre on the basis of economical viability has proved to be a striking success. At the workshop, the organization has not only extended training and employment facilities to the disabled, but it has also demonstrated their production abilities. Innovative and dedicated people at the organization are entrusted with the task of social integration and economic rehabilitation of the disabled through their on-the-job training, transitory employment and open placement. This concept is based upon the motto: *the disabled need opportunity, not charity.*

## Paper III

### Education and Training not Enough

*This article published in the March, 1984 issue of Social Welfare, reflects the far-sightedness and vision of Jagdishbhai. He had predicted more than a decade ago that organizations of and for the blind should work in close cooperation. In fact, the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind and the International Federation of the Blind were merged to form the World Blind Union in 1988. He had also hinted that low cost programmes should be initiated - community based rehabilitation is a proof of this foresight. - Authors*

The existing programmes for the economic independence of the blind are woefully inadequate and need revolutionizing. A blind person is always regarded by the public as an expert only at weaving, caning or music. Can the blind do mechanical and repetitive jobs only? Most organizations still continue to provide them the training in traditional crafts only.

Though there are several new professions such as physiotherapy, stenotyping, bank jobs, telephone operating, motor rewinding, carpentry etc., where the blind could be employed after appropriate training, such jobs are not within the reach of many blind. Similarly, such occupations as poultry, dairying, fishing and piggery can be thrown open to the rural blind to ensure their economic independence.

Training programmes are inadequate and do not lead the blind anywhere. At the same time, many blind persons are unable to get employment although they possess the necessary qualification. This leads to frustration, withdrawal from society and manifestation of dissatisfaction in various ways. They have reached a juncture where they do not know where to go and what to do. The sense of insecurity about their future is one of the greatest problems the blind face today.

The second problem of the blind is their own attitude. It has been found that though they often talk of their own efficiency and ability, demand equal rights, they also ask for equal rights in respect of education and employment but in reality they exploit their blindness and whenever opportunity is available, they falsely play on the sentiments of the community and the government.

Blindness is a physical nuisance and, no doubt, causes trauma and maladjustment with society but it should be accepted by the blind person. This acceptance will lead him to conquer his handicap, making the best of his present situation. Blindness does not hamper the growth of personality or abilities. The blind persons have abilities which

are at par with those of any sighted individual; it is just that they have to be carefully nurtured and developed.

If blind persons develop a sense of self-respect and can prove their talents, all their problems will be solved. I feel it is the attitude of expecting sympathy and special concessions that should be avoided. To overcome their problems, the blind should have associations of their own where they can voice their opinions and prove their talents and skills from time to time. There should be solidarity among various organizations of and for the blind and they should work together for the creation of facilities for training the blind in employment-oriented occupations. These organizations should also have programmes for the socio-psychological adjustment and integration of the blind.

There should be cooperation between organizations for the blind, voluntary organizations and the community. Each should understand more about the other by a two way system of exchange. This way, the problems and limitations of each group could be solved the easier way. More realistic and low-cost programmes should be developed whereby a greater number of blind can be economically rehabilitated.

Teaching in schools for the blind needs to be completely upgraded so that the blind can be more equipped for handling jobs. The present system of education serves to encourage the blind to go in for higher education and take teaching as a career. More blind should be encouraged to go in for technical trades and employment-oriented training by providing for technical courses.

In many instances, whatsoever programmes on rehabilitation of the blind have been implemented have simply raised their expectations. Creating awareness among them about their needs has made them more dissatisfied. Thus more education and training may not lead them anywhere unless programmes on their economic rehabilitation viz. open employment, self employment, etc. are introduced. No rehabilitative measures will be adequate unless they help in developing self-confidence, making the blind socially integrated and economically independent.

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### Expansion of the Term "Employment"

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### Employment of the Blind - A New Perspective

**Abstract:** "A nationwide, concentrated effort aimed at changing the attitudes of the people about the potential of the blind and bringing about awareness is the need of the day ...An environment has to be created that causes blind persons to naturally pass from the stages of schooling and training to that of employment." Jagdishbhai in his article - "Employment of the Blind - A new perspective", published in the *Blind Welfare*, Volume XXV, No. 1 (April, 1983) issue shows us the way of building a new system, conducive to placement rather than simply outlining jobs for the blind.

Article 46 of the *Constitution of India*, on *Directive Principles*, enjoins on the State to promote with special care the education and economic interest of the weaker sections of people, including blind persons. The State has recognized the significance of providing each and every person, including the blind, with the opportunity to acquire education, technical and vocational knowledge and skills, and thus become ready for employment. There has, however, always been a wide gap between targets, expectations and reality.

*The International Year of Disabled Persons* succeeded in bringing into limelight this neglected segment of society and people became more aware of needs and aspirations of the disabled. The blind were suddenly focussed upon and much publicity was undertaken for convincing society about their latent talents and potentials.

Amidst the fanfare and publicity, actual good work has also emerged. There emerged, for example, legislations for employment of the disabled in a few states, concessions in various fields and the establishment of special employment exchanges. But the actual benefits generated and passed on to the blind through these schemes have been debated, derided and acclaimed at length. The article considers employment in its total perspective, i.e. not merely as an income-generating activity but as a spectrum of interaction of various socio-psychological pressures.

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#### **Expansion of the Term "Employment"**

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Why do we stress employment as the ultimate step in the spectrum of rehabilitation? The importance of employment is derived not merely from the economic independence it bestows on the blind person but from various interacting economic and psycho-social pressures of society.

In the first place, most blind persons and their families come from the lower rungs of society. In fact studies in many countries disclose a high correlation between poverty and



disability. When there is a blind person in a poor family, the cost of maintaining that member adds to the burden of the family. Thus economic independence of a blind person does not remain an individual need, it becomes a question of survival for the family.

*“Work satisfies fundamental human needs of developing and enriching life,”* says an official Swedish report. Nearly every culture assigns a very important weightage to work as part of a complete life. When a blind person does not work, he is failing in one of the important standards laid down by society and he is not performing the traditional role of a bread winner. Thus employment becomes the most important part of any rehabilitation programme.

Employment also helps to integrate a blind person in the mainstream of society and gives a meaning to his existence. It gives structure and discipline to his thinking, helps to mould his thoughts and actions constructively and prevents him from developing introversions or complexes in his personality. In a country plagued by unemployment, disguised employment and the curious phenomenon called ‘*stagflation*’, where employment even for the able-bodied is difficult, generating employment for the blind is a herculean task. Also one can not suggest radical or new and unheard of ventures of employment for the blind because such measures would be abortive.

One has to make do with the existing conditions as uncontrollable variables and try to explore avenues of employment from ‘*within*’ the system, instead of imposing a set of new principles on the existing system. Employment is nevertheless a very potent problem when one considers that there are a large number of blind persons in India are in employable age. As this number is expected to increase every year, efforts must be made to evolve a system by which placement can be accelerated. It is proposed to build up a system which is conducive to placement rather than simply outlining jobs for the blind. Three factors viz. counselling, training and general services are some of the most important ingredients in the spectrum of placement.

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## **Counselling**

Man by nature is afraid to implement anything new; he is inherently resistant to change. One of the most important deterrents to employment of the blind is the lack of awareness among public regarding the potentials of the blind. A blind person is protected by his family, regarded as useless and pitiable by the general public and an unproductive element by the employers. Thus the most important stumbling block is the communication gap in terms of misconceptions regarding the abilities of the blind in the minds of the concerned reference groups.

**Reference Group I - Parents:** Since parents affect the decisions and life patterns of blind children the most, widespread and massive efforts should be made to educate them

about the abilities of their children, the possibilities of their employment and the agencies working for their rehabilitation, through the following measures:

- *Training* : Short-term courses on parent counselling should be organized at regional basis. The parents should be encouraged to visit various institutions, programmes and activities related to rehabilitation of the disabled.
- *Awareness* : The parents should be provided appropriate information related to programmes and concessions available to the blind. The regional level seminars, symposiums and workshops should be organized for the parents to discuss various problems related to the blind. Similarly, various services clubs should be encouraged to organize lectures by experts in the field of rehabilitation on prevention of blindness and on general care of the blind.

**Reference Group II - Fellow Workers:** A Blind employee has to work with other able-bodied workers as a part of a group. If the other workers do not understand his psychology or his typical attitude to life and work, he will not be able to find his work environment congenial and will be frustrated. The following measures should be taken for the counselling of workers so that a conducive work environment is developed.

- *Counselling* : Fellow workers should be given counselling about the characteristics of blind persons, their strength and weaknesses. This can be done through lectures, talks, activity profiles, demonstration etc.
- *Visits* : The trainees and instructors of Labour Training Institutions and trade union leaders may be invited to visit various institutes for the blind.
- *Acceptance on Co-workers* : All leading trade unions should be encouraged to employ relevant staff for the training of workers as regards acceptance of the blind as co-workers.

**Reference Group III - Employers:** Blind persons face problems of employment because employers are not aware of their skills. They do not know how a blind person comes to the place of work and performs necessary duties. Employers are justifiably concerned with the profit motive as they run industries for making profit and not for providing services. They will employ the blind only if they are convinced that the profitability of their unit will not decline. Thus what is needed is counselling the employers on the lines suggested below:

- *By Demonstration*: National level bodies entrusted with the work of blind welfare should have units or wings for demonstration and publicity. These units should demonstrate the abilities of the blind through live demonstrations, brochures and other pictorial publicity showing the blind working on machines and allied operations.

- *Forming a Forum of Satisfied Employers:* Those who have employed the blind and are satisfied with their progress should be invited to form a forum. These employers can act as catalysts in influencing other employers to consider the blind for employment.
- *Incentives for Employment of the Blind:* Provisions have been made under the Income-Tax Act to exempt wages paid to the disabled to the extent of Rs. 20,000 per year from the income tax. Similarly, some more incentives such as provision of direct monetary benefits for loss incurred during the training period etc. can be given to employers for employing the blind. Government can arrange for an Orientation and Mobility Cell to send officers to train the blind employed in such mills or factories. This will help more blind people to be quickly acquainted with the layout of the place of work and move about easily.
- *Formation of an Employment Cell:* There are many service minded employers who desire to employ the disabled but they do not know how to start. With the starting of employment exchanges for the physically handicapped in some cities, a unit of information has already been established. This unit can give information about places where the disabled are available. The concerned employers can contact these places for further information. Such employment exchanges should be established at other cities also.

## Training:

Much has been discussed about the need for training the blind and equipping them with appropriate skills. What is being proposed here is a training package that should be adopted, either in total or in part, by all organizations for the blind. The training should be imparted over a fixed period and at convenient intervals. The groups to be trained would be blind persons, the blind placement officers and labour welfare officers.

**Group I - Blind Persons:** To expedite employment of blind persons, it is essential to equip them with requisite skills, enhance their self confidence and to improve their personality. The following measures should be taken in this regard:

- *Self Care Training :* A blind person faces problems of integration in his job due to his dress, mannerisms, peculiar habits etc. Thus every school or rehabilitation institute should necessarily impart training in orientation and mobility, home economics, personal grooming etc. Such training will help to inculcate confidence in such a person.
- *Vocational Training :* More and more organizations should initiate vocational training in technical trades, physiotherapy, telephone operating etc. This will help the blind to be equipped with necessary employment-oriented skills.

- *On-the-Job Training*: 'On-the-job' training centres for imparting transitory employment should be encouraged. Such centres should be economically viable and self-supporting. On-the-job training in such workshops should be matched with employment opportunities. The ultimate objective of such centres should be to provide on-the-job training to the blind so that they can be placed in open industry without any competitive disadvantage.
- *Training in Rural Crafts*: Centres for training the rural blind in rural crafts and agriculture should be encouraged. Efforts should also be made to rehabilitate the rural blind in their home situation itself, through non-institutionalized home bound programmes.

**Group II - Placement Officers:** Many agencies have appointed Placement Officers who are neither adequately trained nor understand the blind well enough. The Placement Officers must necessarily know work-evaluation techniques of testing the skills and residual abilities of the blind. This knowledge will help them to scan the environment for possible jobs and place the blind person properly, finding the right job for the right man.

The National Association for the Blind has started a training programme for Placement Officers in Bombay. Other national-level welfare organizations should also introduce such training programmes. Various voluntary organizations and government bodies should take advantage of this training and sponsor their Placement Officers to such training programmes.

**Group III - Labour Welfare Officers:** The Labour Welfare Officer in the units which have employed blind persons should also be trained in dealing with the blind employees. This does not mean that the blind workers should get any privileges; it is just to help them to be a part and parcel of the system. The *Labour Welfare Departments* and the *Labour Welfare Boards* should be approached for this purpose. Various Universities running courses on labour welfare should be approached to include welfare of blind employees in the course curriculum.

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## **General Services**

*Job Identification:* Continuous efforts should be made by all parties concerned to identify more and more jobs which the blind can perform. The lists which include only certain jobs for the blind should not be encouraged because this means a compartmentalization of jobs. New jobs which have not been traditionally performed by the blind should be encouraged. Whatever jobs have been identified for the blind, the public should be made aware of them. As mentioned earlier, efforts should be made to convince people as regard potentials of the blind, at least for the jobs identified for them.

*Public Awareness:* The main thrust of any programme for the employment of the blind should be the creation of public awareness. A number of programmes have been launched

for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind. But very few persons have availed themselves of such programmes, due to lack of awareness. The government, with the help of voluntary agencies in the field, should implement programmes on creating public awareness.

*Quality of Jobs:* Certain jobs have been traditionally associated with the blind, such as caning, music, weaving, etc. Such stereo-typing of jobs should be avoided by regarding all jobs which require mechanical dexterity and where visual discrimination is not important as open to the blind, provided they can prove their worth.

*Legislation on Employment of the Handicapped:* Mr. S. Loveraj, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour has pointed out at a meeting of the *Central Advisory Committee on the Physically Handicapped* that the *Ministry of Social Welfare* was considering a proposal for bringing out a comprehensive legislation covering all aspects of the welfare of the physically handicapped.

Although no legislation has been enacted on employment of the blind, some executive orders have been issued by various Ministries requesting concerned State as well as Central Government Departments to employ the disabled on priority basis. While such executive orders are not obligatory on the concerned departments, some noticeable results have been achieved whenever there has been a follow-up of such orders. During the *International Year of the Disabled*, Mr. C. M. Stephen, the then Minister for Communications issued such orders and showed personal interest in the self-employment of the disabled on public telephone booths. The results were encouraging, and during 1981, some 634 disabled persons were employed on public telephone booths, with Andhra Pradesh topping the list with 171, followed by Tamilnadu with 120.

Recently the Government of Gujarat has enacted a law reserving one half to one percent of the jobs for the disabled, in existing factories having 200 or more workers. This has resulted in better employment exchanges for the handicapped in Gujarat. When one makes a comparison over the last three years i.e. from 1979 to 1982, one notices that the employment due to reservation has increased from less than 100 persons in 1979 to 1672 persons in 1982.

I hope, encouraged by the performance of employment exchanges for the physically handicapped in Gujarat, the Central Government will enact a comprehensive and comparable legislation including reservation of jobs for the disabled. (*This has been enacted in January 1996 - Authors*).

*National Placement Grid:* Till today, there has been a significant void in the placement scene. There has been no nation-wide planned effort made in co-operation with voluntary agencies to evolve a scheme for employment. A *National Placement Grid* should be established to facilitate employment. It should have representatives of the

Central Government, State Governments, employers, trade unions, voluntary organizations and other concerned institutions.

*Building of Infrastructural Facilities:* Most of the blind in our country come from the rural areas where rehabilitation services are difficult to obtain. The rural blind desire to migrate to the cities for employment but due to lack of lodging and boarding facilities, they cannot avail themselves of rehabilitation services. The government, having a strong base, should work at establishing an infrastructure to enable the blind to obtain temporary shelter. The work of the *Salvation Army* in providing such facilities is commendable. All voluntary organizations working for the economic rehabilitation of the blind should endeavour to provide such facilities to serve as temporary shelters for the blind.

*Compulsory Registration:* The country, inspite of having an efficient public administration system, does not have reliable statistics on the exact number of employable blind. Thus lack of statistics makes it very difficult to formulate any realistic plan of employment. The government, through its machinery, should see that every blind person is compulsorily registered. This will enable employers and institutions for the blind to arrange for rehabilitation of the blind.

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## **Conclusion**

A nationwide and concentrated efforts aimed at changing the attitudes of the people about the potentials of the blind and bringing about awareness is the need of the day. Sporadic efforts at placement will neither alleviate nor reduce the problem of unemployment of the blind. What is needed is a coordinated systems approach that will bring together the concerned reference groups and evolve a system that will be conducive to enlarged employment opportunities.

What has been advocated so far is a path of establishing a new environment for bringing about necessary changes, so that placement of the blind becomes part of a natural sequence of events and does not remain a problem that has to have contrived and imposed solutions. An environment has to be created that enables blind persons to naturally pass from the stages of schooling and training to that of employment. At present, employment has to be forced upon the employers; they have to be cajoled and coaxed. In years to come, with the several reference groups being properly trained and motivated, employment of the blind will become a smooth and continuous process.

## Paper V

# Employment of the Visually Impaired

*A paper presented by Jagdishbhai during the Seminar on NAB State and District Branches held on 2-3 March, 1996 at Jamnagar, Gujarat. His most recent paper advocates exploring all avenues of employment, promoting appropriate skill development and professional training and evolving a co-ordinated approach to training, and employmen. -Authors*

Employment is the single largest factor in enhancing the earning capacity, social status, social esteem and social integration of an individual, hence every organization devoted to the welfare or rehabilitation of the visually impaired must aim at expediting their employment. All the educational, training and rehabilitation programmes should be geared to making employment the ultimate objective.

### Disability Act

The newly enacted *The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995* makes provision for reservation of 3 percent of vacancies for the persons with disability in the posts identified for each disability. In other words, one percent of vacancies in the posts identified for the disabled at large, would be exclusively reserved for the visually impaired for them in every establishment. The key words in this respect are: every establishment, identified posts and reservation of vacancies. Thus reservation is only in the identified posts, 1 percent of vacancies only but in every establishment.

Firstly, the NAB State and District Branches must prevail upon the Appropriate Government, mostly State Governments, to appoint State Coordination Committees, *State Executive Committees* and *Commissioners for the Handicapped*. The Appropriate Governments must also be prevailed upon to identify appropriate authority and appoint committees for the identification of posts suitable for the persons with disability in every establishment and notify the same.

Secondly, the NAB Branches should form advocacy groups with the involvement of other leading disability organizations to ensure that the concerned authorities expedite the process of posts identification; convince and encourage employers to employ visually impaired at least in the posts so identified. It may also be desirable to knock at the doors of appropriate legal authorities to seek directions against the concerned authorities regarding effective implementation of various provisions of the Act in respect to job reservation.

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## **Exploring All Avenues**

It is not possible to seek formal, institutional, industrial and government employment, often termed as open employment, for every individual. According to available estimates, hardly 10 percent sighted individuals are able to avail such employment. Thus depending exclusively on open or formal employment may not extend adequate employment opportunities to the visually impaired. It is desirable to explore avenues of self employment, employment in informal sector, community based gainful occupation and other options which enhance the earning capacity of the individual.

*Appropriate Training* : The existing training facilities are not appropriate and are grossly inadequate. It would be essential to match the training facilities with the nature of posts identified and number of vacancies likely to accrue in those posts in the near future. The NAB Branches must encourage development of appropriate training facilities at the regional and local levels.

This would require a multi-pronged approach:

- of developing appropriate recognized vocational and employment-oriented courses;
- extending facilities for need and individual based appropriate skill development;
- imparting training in orientation & mobility, self care and related aspects;
- providing counselling to the individual, family members and employers and also by actual demonstration of abilities of the blind;
- systematic and scientific follow up of the placed persons at regular intervals;
- and creating public awareness about successful employment etc.

*Professional Training* : Encouraging employment of the visually impaired in various professional jobs would not only create suitable employment opportunities for them, it would enhance their self-esteem and would change stereo-typing attitudes of considering them suitable only for repetitive, semi-skilled and traditional crafts. The placement of the visually impaired as physiotherapists, stenographers, computer programmers, telephone operators, management professionals, public relation officers and counsellors has created a new awakening and hope among the visually impaired persons as well as amongst the public by and large.

Promotion of professional employment would require the development of suitable infrastructure, recognition of courses, provision of special equipment, adaptation of curricula and suitable trainers. Each NAB Branch must aim at developing at least one professional training course in their area of operation. NAB Gujarat Branch would be pleased to extend the fullest cooperation and guidance in this regard.



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## **Coordinated Approach**

Extending open employment to the visually impaired requires the active involvement and participation of State Departments of Employment & Training, Education, Labour, Social Welfare; Vocational Rehabilitation Centres, Industrial Training Institutes, Polytechnics, disability organizations, employers federations, industries federations, employment exchanges, educational institutes, state administration and such other authorities. Similarly extending self employment would require coordination with banks, financial institutions, local municipal authorities, telephone department, local transport authorities, suppliers of consumer products, disability organizations, service clubs, parent associations and such other bodies.

Thus NAB Branches must involve these authorities, organizations and individuals actively in the process of promoting open as well as self employment services. Formation of regional and local level Placement Committees, organizing various employment promotion programmes, creating public awareness about successful placements, use of print and electronic media are the steps in the right direction.

The other areas which need adequate consideration in respect of promotion of open and self employment include:

- Special efforts for promotion of employment of blind women.
- Efforts for job reservation on the basis of number of posts and not the vacancies.
- Efforts of seeking job reservation as a percentage of total number of posts and not only one percent of vacancies in the identified posts.
- Development and distribution of suitable manual on promotion of employment of the visually impaired.
- Reintroducing the system of appointing Employment and Placement Officers under the auspices of NAB Branches with the financial support from NAB(I).
- Seeking recognition of the Employment and Placement Services run by the NGOs at par with the Government Employment Exchanges.
- Creating nation-wide awareness about the most successful initiatives on employment.
- Initiation and promotion of employment related research aimed at task analysis, job identification, ergonomics, product development.
- Development of centres of excellence for the training of human resources, use of special equipment, adoption of technology and promotion of innovations.
- Reactivating the NAB Employment and Placement Committee, making it more functional, result-oriented and national in character.

## Paper VI

# Self Employment of the Visually Impaired

*While Jagdishbhai is known for developing a variety of professional as well as vocational training programmes for the blind, he has always advocated promotion of their self employment. He had realized during the beginning of his career that this avenue has vast potential for expediting economic independence. As a self employed person himself - a physiotherapist by profession - Jagdishbhai has been an ardent supporter of self employment. Establishing of a Vending Stall Project, Temple of Hope Committee for promoting public telephone booths, School of Physiotherapy etc. are the milestones in the development of lucrative self employment services under his patronage.*

*During the early 1980s, he chose to present this paper, at a National Seminar organized by the National Association for the Blind in Bombay, to echo his thoughts on the subject. - Authors.*

**Abstract:** *Self employment is the only alternative for reaching out to a large number of blind persons. Such ventures are generally low investment oriented, cost effective, socially desirable, economically viable and help to generate sound financial returns. For promoting self employment, a variety of individual, local, national as well as global efforts need to be initiated at the earliest. The individual, however, must remain the focal point and all methods must be client oriented and centred around his needs, his potentials, his strengths and his environment.*

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### **Need for Promoting Self Employment**

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The world over there is a general consensus among the workers of the blind that employment is the most essential but the toughest aspect of rehabilitation. The approach, method, nature, and level of employment may vary from country to country. Employment is a more potent problem for the countries where incidence of visual handicap is higher, social security benefits are non-existent, onslaught of blindness is generally in the working age group and employment of the sighted is a major problem. These are the characteristics of developing countries which account for more than 80 percent of the population of the blind of the world.

The education and training facilities in the developing countries are so meagre that only a negligible proportion of the blind can get access to the same. Due to resource constraint, ignorance and general apathy towards the blind, majority of them are illiterate, confined to their homes, totally at the mercy of their families or community, generally considered as a burden on society and have no hope for the future. To talk of formal employment is highly utopian when even self employment is a far cry.

In developing countries, gainful employment of the blind gains prominence as there are too many persons dependent on too little land in the face of mounting economic pressures. Contributing to the family income would facilitate the adjustment of the blind in his family and pave the way for his acceptance in society. In these countries, the unorganized or the informal sector accounts for 90 percent of employment. With increasing mechanization and lopsided development, formal jobs are becoming more scarce while on the other hand the population of the blind is steadily increasing. To add to this, the existing training programmes for the blind are not employment oriented and self employment of the blind seems to be the only viable alternative.

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### **Explanation of the Term Self Employment**

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The term "*self employment*" generally implies "*self-initiated, self-developed and self-regulated income generating opportunities where the individual plays the role of the investor, employer and employee.*" This understanding of the term, however, ignores the community which offers a wide spectrum of opportunities where the blind may be absorbed in gainful occupations.

Rehabilitating Manjula, a 50 year old blind women, residing in a remote village in India does not need any specialized training but helping her to take care of her household activities as she used to perform prior to her visual impairment. Women in rural areas are generally engaged in cleaning their homes, cooking meals and taking care of household activities thus enabling men to undertake income generating activities. Enabling Manjula to perform all these activities and helping her to become economically independent by starting a rural occupation is rehabilitating her in the true sense of the word.

Similarly, training Shankerji, who used to work as a casual agricultural labourer before his blindness, in orientation and mobility and various farm operations, and then enabling him to get a bank loan for purchasing a buffalo is definitely meaningful self employment. Shankerji is economically resettled and contributes very substantially to the family income.

Similarly, Kanti Patel at the age of 20, on completion of his schooling and after gaining a certificate course in telephone operating found that it was nearly impossible to seek open employment as a telephone operator in the organized sector due to a variety of reasons. With appropriate counselling and launching grant, he was helped to set up a public telephone booth near a theatre. He got the telephone connection under the scheme of Public Call Office for the Handicapped on a call sharing basis. With the active patronage of the department, support of local administrative bodies and involvement of blind welfare organizations, hundreds of blind persons like Kanti have turned to manning public call offices as a source of livelihood.

Thus self employment, in the urban as well as rural settings, is the only alternative for reaching out to a large number of blind persons who have remained bereft of any rehabilitative services ever since.

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### **Pre-requisites for Self Employment**

It has been observed that the successful operation of a small business or self employment venture will depend upon the following factors:

- Initiative and active involvement of the individual.
- Business acumen, foresight and knowledge of the particular occupation.
- Capacity and desire to work and to take up the venture as a challenge.
- Understanding of the environment and the individual needs.
- Conducive environment and consonance of the venture with the family background.
- Counselling and guidance of family and its level of support.
- Involvement, support and active participation of community.
- Convincing of the concerned officials and level of support of local bodies, state administration and organized sector.
- Availability of education and training facilities and existence of support network.
- Compatibility between training facilities and specific requirements of the venture.
- Availability of funds, market competitiveness, prevalence of ventures in the area and economic viability.

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### **Examples of Self Employment Ventures**

The various factors described above are exemplified by the occupations in which the blind persons have been successfully self employed in various countries namely telephone operating, physiotherapy, salesmanship, music, courier services, insurance agency, teaching, touch typing, stenography, plastic moulding, motor rewinding, cycle repairing, weaving, block printing and recaning of chairs etc.

It may be useful to list rural crafts or trades in which the blind have been gainfully occupied in various pilot community based projects in the developing countries viz., duck keeping, fishery, sharpening of agricultural implements and tools, making and selling of pickles,

making of leaf plates, growing vegetables, poultry, rice puffing, rope making, selling incense sticks, pottery, making bricks, skinning of dead animals, petty shop keeping and sericulture etc.

These ventures involve low investment, are cost effective, socially desirable, economically viable and help to generate sound financial returns. As these ventures are group oriented, the entire family of the blind person can take up the same as a joint venture and play a complimentary role to each other.

It is not advisable to approach a blind person with a list of trades or occupations. On the contrary, our approach should be client centered and individual need based. As every blind person has his own values, expectations and potentials, the individual should be the focal point of the employment process. The residual potentials, expectations, family background, past experience, and other such factors should be the pivotal point of our approach to his employment.

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### **Efforts for Promoting Self Employment**

The following individual, local, national as well as global efforts need to be initiated at the earliest for promoting self employment of the blind.

**Individual Efforts:** In a process of change, the individual must himself be geared towards making the necessary overtures for enabling the change to become a reality. No extraneous or external factors can work unless the blind person himself understands the necessity of self-employment and makes concrete efforts towards achieving the same. Thus the process should be initiated at the level of the individual himself and then expand from this micro level to the macro level.

As pointed out earlier, the blind person must be considered as the most vital component of the rehabilitation process. It is for him that planning has to be done, hence his views, potentials, likes and dislikes would be of paramount importance. It is equally necessary for him to put in efforts for his own rehabilitation, so that it is a process that evolves from within rather than being imposed by an outside agency.

The following steps should be taken at the individual level for expediting self employment of blind persons:

- *Counselling* : The individual should be counselled and convinced to direct his potentials for initiating, developing and regulating gainful occupations.
- *Training* : The education and training of the individual should be occupation oriented and there should be compatibility between training facilities and self employment opportunities. The individual should be equipped with appropriate skills to compete for employment.

- *Family Trade* : The family members and community should be approached to absorb the blind person in the family trade, craft or occupation.
- *Social Reinforcement* : The successful self employed blind individuals should encourage other blind persons to take up such ventures. This sort of social reinforcement may be instrumental in expediting self employment.
- *Group Approved* : Individuals should form their associations at the local as well as the national level for the purpose of collective bargaining; economies of scale and unity of operations; assertion of their rights; and for preservation and enhancement of the physical efficiency and resourcefulness as a group.

*Institutional Efforts*: In developing countries, institutions have always remained at the foray of rehabilitation work. They have evolved policies, programmes and have regulated the rehabilitation of the blind. They have been instrumental in focussing attention on the needs and talents of the blind. It is thus essential that blind welfare and other such institutions should be taken into confidence and convinced of the benefits of this innovative approach to enable a shift from employment to self-employment.

They should shoulder the mantle of popularizing the concept and prove its worth by resettling blind persons in a variety of self employment ventures and should take the following measures in this regard:

- *Support Services* : The blind welfare organizations should develop, along with their existing education, training and such other services, a net work of support services in terms of counselling, job-oriented training, finance and marketing.
- *Vocational Guidance* : Vocational guidance and counselling programmes should be arranged for motivating the blind to initiate self employment ventures for social integration and economic rehabilitation. Existing placement services should be upgraded to incorporate self-employment immediately.
- *New Initiatives* : Community based rehabilitation programmes should be initiated, implemented and financed with the ultimate objectives of economic rehabilitation. Systematic linkages should be developed with other financial, marketing and administrative bodies for facilitating self-employment. Extensive survey and research should be undertaken to identify new avenues of self-employment. Public awareness should be created regarding potentials of the blind, social desirability and propriety of self employment ventures.
- *Institutional Support* : Trade unions, employers' federations, funding organizations and state administration should be encouraged and counselled to extend suitable employment opportunities. Monitoring, control and evaluation of self employment programmes should be carried out regularly.

**National Efforts:** Rehabilitation services the world over have been initiated, implemented and controlled mainly by voluntary or non-governmental organizations. In recent years, there has been an increasing degree of governmental involvement in terms of extending financial assistance to voluntary organizations, providing administrative, legislative and constitutional support and adopting a variety of other measures for extending employment opportunities to the blind. The government should take the following measures in respect of encouraging self employment:

- *Training* : Intervention should be undertaken for augmenting and upgrading employment oriented educational and training facilities and for encouraging placement services.
- *New Initiatives* : Community based rehabilitation programmes should be initiated, encouraged and funded with the ultimate objective of promoting economic resettlement. Seed money should be provided for launching the ventures on self employment.
- *Adaptations* : Research and development on adaptation of equipment and techniques of promoting work effectiveness of the blind should be encouraged with the involvement of the research, industrial training and higher educational institutes.
- *Special Cell* : Self employment bureau should be set-up on a priority basis with the active participation of the non-governmental voluntary organizations, local bodies and development administration. Self employment cells should be set-up under appropriate Ministries and employment committees for inter-ministerial co-ordination.
- *Legislative Measures* : A comprehensive legislation for providing equal opportunities to the disabled or suitable laws on employment or job reservation should be enacted and enforced. Various resolutions or conventions on employment adopted by the *United Nations* bodies or other international organizations should be ratified and implemented in the right earnest.

**Global Efforts:** With the increasing awakening in the field of blind welfare, organizations working for the blind at the global level have emerged to assume the roles of policy makers, advocacy, coordination and resource mobilization. These bodies enjoy a great deal of prestige, status and influence which can be used in accelerating the self employment of the blind. International funding agencies have contributed immensely to the prevention of blindness and development of education and training facilities by providing financial assistance and consultative inputs. These agencies should be motivated to change this antiquated pattern to incorporate newer vistas which are low cost and reality oriented such as self-employment and community based rehabilitation. At the global level, the following measures need to be undertaken:

- *Pilot Project* : Time bound self employment programmes should be launched around the world on a pilot basis with the active involvement and participation of international organizations entrusted to employment as well as the welfare of the blind. Member countries as well as other categories of members should be encouraged to initiate and implement suitable programmes on self employment. These organizations should be motivated to allocate funds for this purpose on a top priority basis. Concerned national as well as international labour as well as employment organizations should be convinced to establish self employment bureaux.
- *Publicity* : Concept of self-employment should be popularized through publicity in mass media, publication of periodicals, production of suitable audio-visual material and documentation of human interest stories etc. Effectiveness of self employment as well as community based rehabilitation programmes should be demonstrated by highlighting the achievements of successful experiments at appropriate international forums.
- *Appropriate Resolutions* : Policy guidelines for self-employment should be set through resolutions in international meetings and implementation of the same should be governed.

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## **Conclusion**

I have striven to point out the vast possibility of self employment, its appropriateness and contemporary relevance. I have also emphasized the various tiers and echelons involved such as individual, the institution, the country and the world. If we adopt this multipronged strategy, I am sure our efforts would bear fruit. To ensure success, I stress once again that the individual must remain the focal point of our work, all our methods must be client oriented and centered around his needs, his potentials, his strengths and his environment.

I am sure by this time, all of you must be convinced of the immediate need as well as the merits of encouraging self employment of blind persons. Let us make a firm resolve to all work together to make this dream a reality. Let not our discussion become a paper tiger, let us not make dreams our masters and thoughts our aim.

Let us make a determined and concentrated effort to identify newer avenues of self employment and impart adequate training to enable resettlement of the blind persons in these occupations to achieve our long cherished goal of imparting economic independence and hence self respect to blind persons who have remained bereft of these ever since.



## Paper VII

# Community Based Rehabilitation

*Jagdishbhai is known the world over for promoting community based rehabilitation services for the visually impaired in India. The National Association for the Blind constituted a Rural Activities Committee during 1982 to promote services for the rural blind under the Chairmanship of Capt. H.J.M. Desai with Jagdishbhai as the Secretary. Subsequently Jagdishbhai became Chairman of the Committee.*

*This paper is based on the thoughts of Jagdishbhai pertaining to the concept of community based rehabilitation. The paper was formulated and presented by (Late) Mr. Madhukar R. Suryavanshi, Project Coordinator of the NAB Rural Activities Committee during the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment Asian conference held at Ahmedabad during 9-11 January, 1995 with Jagdishbhai as Chairman of the Host Committee. - Authors*

### **Existing Scenario**

From the analysis of the existing statistics about the demographic details of the visually impaired in the developing countries, the following significant features emerge:

- In majority of cases, visual handicap is adventitious and after forty five years.
- The rehabilitation centres are few, confined to urban areas and cover a few hundred people in the working age group of 16-35 years.
- The distribution of the population of the visually impaired persons follows the general distribution pattern, i.e. 84 percent live in rural areas.

### **Analysis of Existing Rehabilitation Services**

*Limited Coverage: Education:* The existing special schools in India, at present cover only 15,000 visually impaired children. Even if special education is extended to all blind children of the school going age (*which is never going to be possible*), the coverage would be only 3.2 percent of the total population of the visually impaired.

*Training:* The existing vocational as well as on-the-job training centres at present cover merely 3,000 blind persons. The trades are urban-oriented and do not necessarily result into employment.

*Category of Disability:* Most multi-category rehabilitation programmes mainly cover the locomotor handicapped only. The glaring examples in India are the Vocational Rehabilitation Centres under the Ministry of Labour and District Rehabilitation Centres under the

*Ministry of Welfare.* These programs were launched for all categories of disabled but at present major coverage is the locomotor handicapped.

*Lack of Social Security:* Most developing countries have not yet introduced social security measures for assuring a minimum standard of living for the disabled. Some State Governments have introduced disability as well as old age pension schemes. Due to limited budget allocation, cumbersome procedures, lack of public awareness, and lack of an effective delivery system, the coverage has been limited. A visually impaired person is left at the mercy of family members and the community.

Thus the only way of reaching out to the unreached persons in rural areas is to initiate and implement CBR programmes for the visually impaired.

### **Components of CBR**

Thus due to cost constraint, commonalty of services, scattered target group and state policy, it is essential that the CBR should:

- be exclusively for the visually impaired
- cover persons of all age groups
- include all aspects of:
  - prevention and cure of curable blindness
  - certification of incurable blindness
  - social integration including orientation & mobility, activities of daily living, psychological reinforcement
  - integrated education
  - economic rehabilitation
  - support services and concessions, and
  - public awareness

### **Concept of CBR :**

Here it is pertinent to mention the definition of CBR provided by the *World Health Organization* - "*CBR involves measures taken at the community level to use and build on the resources of the community, including the impaired, disabled and the handicapped persons themselves, their families and their community as a whole*".

In context of developing countries, the definition of CBR can be modified. It should be cost effective, individual need based and result oriented. It should result into complete

integration of the individual into the community. Once rehabilitated, the visually impaired person should lead a more productive life, thus helping the community economically. It should enable the individual to stay within the fold of the family and contribute towards the family income. Rehabilitation should aim at helping people to function and to perform as they used to function and perform prior to blindness, that is restoring the fullest use of the senses to compensate the loss of vision.

From the experience of implementing CBR projects exclusively for the visually impaired persons at 97 locations in India, it has been established that a group of 8 Field Workers and 1 Supervisor can easily cover 200 visually impaired persons within a period of two years. The per capita cost of such services is less than Rs. 1000 (about 34 \$), which is one-tenth as compared to institutional programmes.

### **Implementation Plan**

Based on the foregoing discussion, the process charts for the CBR, medical rehabilitation and integrated education have been evolved. The process charts reflect the envisaged sequence of activities, responsibility areas and the aspects of rehabilitation.

In the case of medical rehabilitation and integrated education, the Project *Implementing Agency* should confine its role to referral to the respective specialist agencies. Integrated education is handled by the itinerant teachers by admitting children to accredited educational institutes preferably in the same village. Similarly, prevention and cure activities are exclusively handled by the ophthalmic surgeons or eye hospitals or such other institutions.

*(Process Chart included as Annexure - I)*

### **Identification of the Incurable Visually Impaired Persons**

The first stage of classification is during the eye check-up to divide the visually impaired persons into:

- Curable
- Incurable

It is essential that every person with eye defects or having no light perception should be examined by a qualified Ophthalmic Surgeon (not by the Field Worker by any chance). The curable blind persons should be taken up for further treatment, whereas the incurably blind persons should be certified as a blind person.

### **Cure of Blindness Process**

The role of field staff for the purpose of prevention and cure of blindness, should be limited to:

- Identification (*not even initial screening*) of persons with eye-ailments or vision defects
- Referral of such cases to a qualified Ophthalmologist
- Acting as link between the individuals and the Ophthalmologist or such specialists
- Acting as a motivator and guide.

Our experience of implementing CBR at 90 locations in India reveals that involvement of eye hospitals or eye specialists is essential for effective project implementation. In fact, wherever the *Project Implementing Agency* is a rural eye hospital, the results have been very encouraging. As eye hospitals enjoy better social acceptance than a rehabilitation organization, the whole concept is easily accepted by the beneficiaries.

In the process chart for medical rehabilitation, Field Workers are assigned the role of identification only. The eye check-up, eye care, certification and cure of blindness is carried out by the eye hospital or a specialist agency. In this case also there is clear demarcation between the roles of the Field Workers and the ophthalmic staff. (*Cure Of Blindness Process Chart included as Annexure-II*)

**Social Rehabilitation:** Every incurable visually impaired person should be provided individual need based services of social integration as listed earlier. The nature of services would depend upon:

- Age of the individual
- Sex
- Age of on-set of visual handicap
- Level of any earlier training and potential of the individual.

Almost all the visually impaired persons need training in activities of daily living, orientation and mobility and personal grooming to be independent. The following services should be provided according to individual felt needs of the person:

- Psychological reinforcement
- Individual counselling
- Parent counselling
- Daily living skills training
- Occupational training
- Communication skills
- Orientation & mobility training
- Provision of statutory benefits

- Training in social graces and etiquette.

The Field Workers need to be adequately trained for imparting such training to the individuals. Many a times, it is essential to avail services of experts, particularly in case of counselling and communication skills. It is, absolutely essential that the family members be involved at all stages of such training.

### **Integrated Education**

On completion of social integration in terms of training in orientation & mobility, activities of daily living, and counselling, the incurable persons are divided into:

- School going age, and
- Higher age groups

At this stage, blind children are referred to agencies implementing integrated or semi-integrated education. Whereas other cases are taken up for further rehabilitation.

In the process chart for education, the identification and social rehabilitation is handled by the Field Workers. Eye check-up and certification is done by the Eye specialists. With the admission of children into the village school, the role of the Itinerant Teacher begins. There is clear demarcation between the roles of the Field Workers and the Itinerant Teachers.

*Role of Field Staff:* As Integrated education needs specific inputs, the field workers should perform only following roles.

- Identification of visually impaired children
- Their referral to the eye hospitals
- Imparting them training in various aspects of social rehabilitation, and
- Parent counselling

With the admission of the child into the village school, the role of the Itinerant Teacher begins.

*Role of Itinerant Teachers:* The role of itinerant teacher is not only to support the child in educational activities, but to perform the following roles:

- Pre-braille tactual activities
- Teach braille
- Counsel family members
- Establish a rapport with fellow students and teachers of the child, and

- Encourage the child to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Hence it is essential to appoint only qualified and specially trained Itinerant Teachers. (*Integrated Education Process included as Annexure - III*)

**Economic Rehabilitation** : The third classification is done for cases for:

- Only social rehabilitation, and
- Social as well as economic rehabilitation

The age, physical capacity, family background and interest of the individual should be considered. Most persons who are above the age of 60 and who have multiple handicaps fall into the first category i.e. provision of adjustment training for independence.

The persons falling into the category of economic rehabilitation are young, physically fit and need the utmost attention and intensive coverage. Involvement of local administration, banks, craft training centres and family members is essential in this case. Many a times, the local crafts-men are also needed to be involved.

*Ultimate Goal:* The economic rehabilitation should be the ultimate goal of a CBR programme. Every person who is otherwise eligible and capable should be provided such a service. The main avenues for economic rehabilitation include :

- Traditional rural crafts and activities
- Small business and petty shops
- Small co-operatives
- Agriculture and horticulture
- Technical and professional activities
- Dairy and animal husbandry.

*Use of Community Resources:* While imparting vocational training, every effort must be made to utilize existing community services. It is recognized that the community resources by themselves will most likely not have the ability to effectively assist the visually impaired persons. The Field Workers should impart appropriate training to the individuals.

*Local Resources:* A blind person and his family members must be encouraged to utilize the local resources as listed below to the optimum level:

- Agriculture extension services
- Local craftsmen such as weavers, basket makers, potters etc.

- Existing co-operatives
- Co-operative banks, nationalized banks, rural development banks and other loan giving agencies
- Technical and craft training institutes
- Labour and employment agencies
- Community development, health and agriculture workers
- Various rural and community development and subsidy schemes

*Rural Crafts:* Examples of various traditional rural crafts or activities currently being pursued by visually impaired persons around the country are :

- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| - carpentry         | - broom & basket making |
| - poultry keeping   | - knitting / sewing     |
| - farming           | - dairy farming         |
| - bread making      | - brick making          |
| - forestry          | - leaf plate making     |
| - pottery           | - food processing       |
| - bone setting      | - weaving               |
| - rope making       | - goat/sheep keeping    |
| - preaching         | - pump repairing        |
| - bicycle repairing | - fishnet making        |
| - duck keeping      | - petty shop keeping    |
| - foot wear making  | - inland fishing        |

*Role of Field Worker:* He is expected to perform the following functions for expediting economic rehabilitation:

*Selection of Activity:* Most visually impaired persons would find the above mentioned activities appropriate. It is essential that the Field Worker makes a thorough assessment of the potentials, interest and capacity of the individual before deciding suitability of the trade or the activity. It is also essential to consider family background of the individual as many rural crafts are caste-oriented.

*Training of the Individuals:* The Field Worker should organize training of the individual in the selected activity. The family should, however, be actively involved in such training. Also, the market must be researched to ensure that the activity is viable and income generating.

*Organizing Inputs:* The Field Worker should also assist the individual in availing:

- bank loan

- subsidy, and
- other financial inputs for the activity.

It is essential that the Field Worker does not create any dependence upon himself or undertake the responsibility for purchase of raw materials and sale of finished products. These areas should be assigned to the individual or the family members. The Field Worker may, however, assist:

- in compilation of relevant market information, and
- liaison with any appropriate agency to enable the individuals to get
  - launching grant
  - other monetary incentives, and
  - relevant inputs and market information.

*Non-income Generative Activities:* It is not always possible to find suitable formal or paid employment in the rural areas. The visually impaired should be taught the income generating tasks or gainful occupations undertaken by the household and save hiring a daily wager. The opportunity income should thus be considered a step towards economic rehabilitation.

In many instances, ability of a visually impaired women to manage and maintain the household is equally important to the survival of the family as is paid employment. Therefore, the Field Workers should make all the efforts to encourage informal, unpaid and gainful employment of the individuals.

## **Integrated Approach**

The envisaged CBR process charts reflect that the field staff, Itinerant Teachers and the ophthalmic staff have to work as a team in the beginning of the project. As the project advances, there is complete decentralization of their roles. However, the *Project Implementing Agency* continues to coordinate the functioning of these functionaries.

## **Manpower Requirement**

*Field Workers:* A key element in providing a rehabilitation service would be to ensure that such service is appropriate to the individual felt needs of a visually impaired person. For providing these services, a team of Field Workers is required. Our experience has proved that a team of 8 Field Workers, who have completed their schooling, is a viable and appropriate unit. A qualified, preferably a graduate, and trained Field Supervisor is also required to monitor the functioning of the Field Workers.

*Itinerant Teachers:* As integrated education requires specialist inputs, two Itinerant Teachers



are also required. As we require one itinerant teacher for every eight children, the number of such teachers would, however, depend upon the number of children identified and enrolled in the regular schools in the project area.

## Conclusion

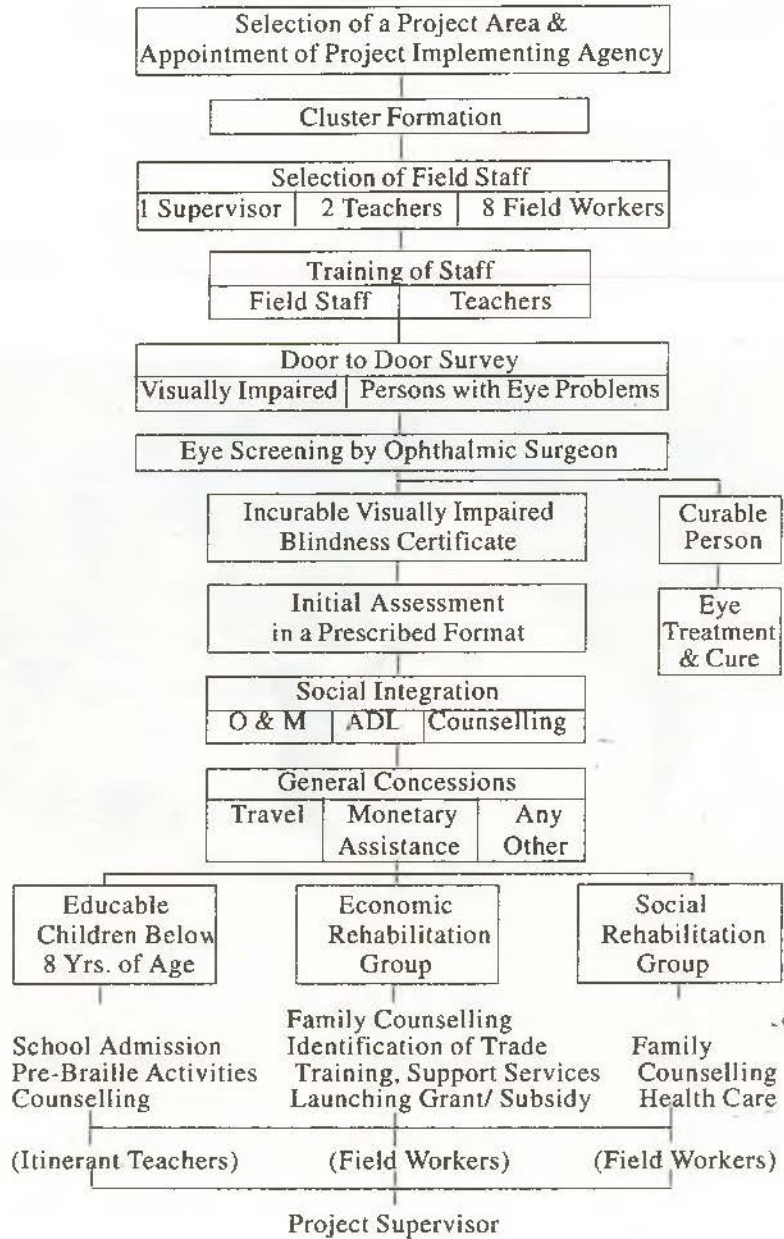
The only way of reaching out to the millions of the unreached visually impaired persons in rural areas is by initiating CBR programmes. The theme of this conference is "*Reaching the Unreached*" and I think it is appropriate. If we are to liberate visually impaired persons, we must go to them in their villages, convince the community and enlist the support of the family. This will be the only lasting method of rehabilitation which can be replicated in all the countries of Asia. It is also necessary that we rope in prevention organization as well as other welfare organizations, village and district administrative bodies to enable fruits of comprehensive rehabilitation to reach visually impaired persons in rural areas.



*Jagdishbhai Presenting a Paper with Ishtiaq Haider on left and Dr. Rajendra Vyas on his right*

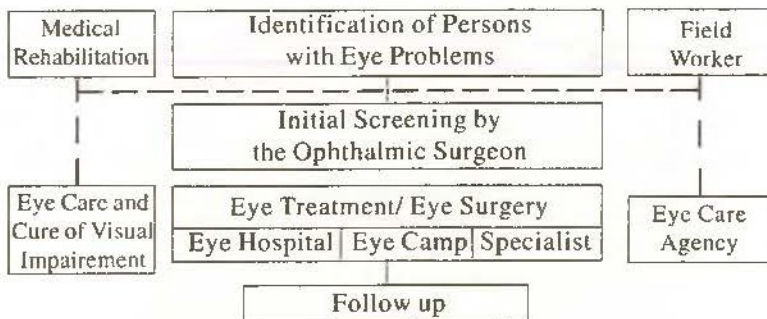
## Annexure I

### CBR PROCESS



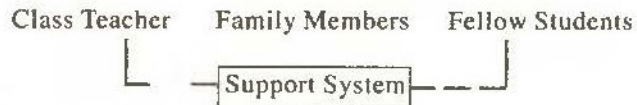
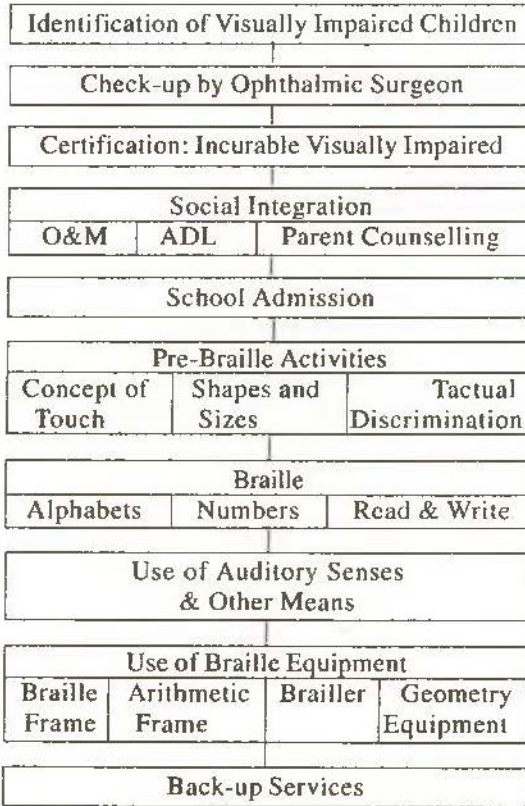
## Annexure II

### CURE OF BLINDNESS PROCESS



### Annexure III

## INTEGRATED EDUCATION PROCESS



Implementing Agency  
(Project Supervisor)

### Community Based Rehabilitation: Management Perspective

*A paper presented by Jagdishbhai in the National Conference organized by the All India Confederation of the Blind, Patna. This paper with modifications was also presented in the Asian Conference of the World Blind Union, Karachi, Pakistan, 1989. This paper was published in the World Blind, a publication of the World Blind Union during 1990. Jagdishbhai updated the content during 1995 and sent it for publication in a book to be published by the Christoffel Blindenmission, South Asia Regional Office. - Authors.*

The agricultural population accounts for 68 percent of the total population in the developing countries. Though this proportion is decreasing in almost all the developing countries, this population is increasing in absolute numbers. Over the years, a shift from farm production to allied agricultural pursuits, rural crafts and agro-technical programmes has been observed, in spite of which the dependence upon agriculture, allied pursuits and agro-based small industry continues. This sector, termed as the agriculture and the rural economy sector, along with other self employment ventures, has been collectively termed as the unorganized sector which accounts for 90 percent of employment in the developing countries.

The unorganized sector is thus also the most important avenue of economic rehabilitation of blind persons. This is more so because only a negligible proportion of the blind population can gain access to educational and training facilities. Due to limited financial resources, ignorance and apathy of family members and lack of rehabilitation programmes, majority of them are illiterate, confined to their homes and survive only at the mercy of their families and community. To talk of their formal education, training or employment in the organized sector is highly impractical.

In India, the incidence as well as prevalence of visual handicap in the rural areas is reported to be higher as compared to urban areas. Similarly the on-set of visual handicap takes place predominantly after the age of 45. It has also been reported that the prevalence of visual handicap rises steadily with increasing age. It is reported to be 84 percent in the age group above 45. Similarly 83 percent of the blind persons reside in rural areas only. Thus the majority of them are above the age of 45 and reside in the rural areas. While planning rehabilitation programmes for the blind, it is essential to consider this group - the rural aged blind persons - also and their socio-economic conditions. As majority of sighted persons in the rural areas depend upon the unorganized sector, it also emerges the most ideal avenue for the rehabilitation of the rural blind as well.

The most significant aspect is that these ventures are generally low investment oriented and help to generate sound economic returns. These ventures are family oriented as all the members are actively involved in the economic activity. Thus the resettlement of blind persons in these ventures would ensure active family as well as community involvement. As only preliminary training is adequate, induction of blind persons would be speedier and at very little cost. Most of the times, all that is required is motivation and counselling of the family members and mobility training to the individual.

As majority of blind persons have acquired visual handicap at a later age and were pursuing agriculture or allied occupations before on-set of visual handicap, they have knowledge about these occupations, their socio-economic feasibility and economic viability. They only need to be re-inducted into these occupations once again. As there is multiplicity of operations in agriculture, their acceptance in this sector would be much easier. The familiarity of the environment and the rural set up would also facilitate their resettlement in the rural economy which would generate a new urge and an inspiration for better living among the family members, a desire to improve their material conditions and to have a more constructive outlook towards their future. It will thus make a meaningful beginning of true rehabilitation.

Thus the only viable approach to comprehensive rehabilitation of the rural blind is evolving an individual need based, community based, result oriented rehabilitation programme. Such a programme should involve the community actively at all stages like base-line survey, identification, eye screening, counselling, social integration, economic rehabilitation, provision of various concessions and other such facilities. Thus the management of community based rehabilitation programmes would require active involvement of the community, use of local resources and planning according to the individual felt needs of the blind person himself.

The extent and nature of services depends upon the socio-economic conditions, individual felt needs, work potentials, past experience, family background, local customs and such other factors. As far as possible, such services should suit the individual felt needs of the blind person and it should be in consonance with the environment.

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### **Experience in India**

The Rural Activities Committee of the National Association for the Blind has successfully implemented a nation-wide project on community based rehabilitation of the rural blind. Through a net-work of local blind welfare, rural development organizations and eye care agencies, the Committee has successfully implemented the project at 97 locations in India covering 14762 villages and 25742 blind persons. Similar projects have already been initiated in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Srilanka.

A large number of international funding agencies including Christoffel Blindenmission, Danish International Development Agency, Helen Keller International, Helpage International, Hilton Perkins International, Misereor, OXFAM, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Sight Savers International, Swedish International Development Agency, South Asia Partnership, and World Blind Union have already extended financial assistance for promoting this approach.

The approach aims at the active involvement of local organizations and their officials in the management of the project and community for the provision of services. The system of holding weekly review meetings of the field functionaries and submission of monthly reports of physical as well as financial performance by the project implementing agencies has enabled the Committee to monitor the performance of the project regularly, systematically and effectively.

Based on the experience of implementing community based rehabilitation programmes at 97 locations in India, it has been realized that while initiating such programmes, the following aspects must be given due consideration:

*Rehabilitation to the Extent Possible* : A good programme should enable the blind person to stay within the fold of the family and contribute towards the family income. Rehabilitating a blind farmer in a community simply means helping him to function and perform as he used to function and perform prior to blindness.

*Rehabilitation from Within* : Most of agro-technical operations are family as well as community oriented, it is, therefore, essential to involve family members, community, opinion leaders and local administrators at all stages of rehabilitation. This will enable the community to act as rehabilitation agents and accelerate the process of meaningful economic resettlement. As far as possible, only the local resources should be utilized for the purpose, trades or activities which are alien to the community should not be imposed.

*Multipronged Approach* : Agriculture is seasonal in nature and remunerative work does not continue round the year, small farmers and landless labourers have thus to rely upon income from other sources as well. This seasonality would also have a bearing on the rehabilitation programme for the blind persons. They should be given training in two or more trades to enable them to earn a livelihood throughout the year. A suitable combination of such trades should be adopted depending upon the individual felt needs and the environment.

*Individual Centred Rehabilitation* : The blind person must be rehabilitated according to his dexterity, potentials, social customs, desires and aspirations. The rehabilitation strategy should centre around the individual himself. A blanket approach of providing the same rehabilitation services to every individual should not be followed. Every blind person should be considered an individual in his own right and rehabilitation

should be planned accordingly.

*Coordinated Approach* : Most blind welfare organizations generally operate in isolation. As the task of reaching blind persons in the far-flung rural areas is gigantic, it is desirable that all governmental as well as non-governmental agencies entrusted to social welfare, rural development as well as disabled welfare in the area should be approached, convinced and motivated to extend their services to them also. This will enable them to avail multifarious benefits. In turn, they should be encouraged to avail of concessions, loans, grants and subsidies given by these agencies.

*Support Services* : While economic rehabilitation should be the ultimate objective, the programme should also aim at comprehensive rehabilitation. It must have a provision for integrated education, appropriate training, social and economic rehabilitation and follow up services. It is also essential to provide training in orientation and mobility and activities of daily living. However, the extent and nature of such training would depend upon the type of services to be extended for economic rehabilitation.

*Adaptation of Equipment and Production Techniques* : Efforts must be made to modify farm equipment, stationary machinery and implements to enable blind persons to perform various farm operations and carry out agro-based pursuits effectively. Suitable research through product development, ergonomics and task analysis should be carried out for this purpose. Bio-medical engineering institutes, scientific research organizations, agricultural universities, science & technology missions and blind welfare organizations should be actively involved in the process.

*Broadening the Production Base* : It is true that the absence of appropriate technology and lack of supportive services impose constraints on the blind farmers and they can not adopt farming or allied pursuits as means of livelihood. But none of these constraints are insurmountable. These can be relaxed through suitable means in terms of appropriate training, allocation of cultivable land, provision of farm inputs and handling of output on a priority basis.

A variety of poverty alleviation programmes have been initiated in the country. Measures have also been taken under these programmes to benefit the blind persons. In some countries, the landless labourers who acquire blindness are allocated land on a preferential basis. The small farmers who acquire blindness are provided financial assistance and subsidy etc. for initiating self employment ventures.

It is generally contended that blind persons are eligible for all the benefits available to sighted persons under poverty alleviation and rural development programmes. However, due to lack of proper system of delivery of services, they are generally not able to avail the benefits. It is essential to make special provisions for enabling them to avail benefits under these schemes and also evolve special schemes for them in view



of their specific needs.

*Evolving Appropriate Training Facilities* : All the persons who were pursuing agriculture or allied pursuits before acquiring blindness or visual loss are generally aware about farm operations and related activities. As loss of vision results into lack of confidence, it is essential to provide appropriate training and counselling inputs along with scientific training for compensating for the vision loss.

In this respect, a centralized training centre in agriculture may be established or a rural based training programme may be evolved. Both these approaches have their own merits and demerits. However, in view of cost effectiveness, consideration of individual felt needs and diverse training needs of blind persons in different areas due to vast regional differences in crop patterns and farm operations, the second approach of extending training services at the door step is more desirable. In the countries where the population is scattered, it may not be possible to evolve rural based training services, the possibility of establishing regional rural training centres may also be explored.

The rural based training services should be evolved considering local geographical, demographic, social and economical conditions. The individual should always be the focal point of the programme. The community and the family should be actively involved at all stages of rehabilitation.

*Follow up* : While the short term training course would be sufficient for induction of the blind persons into the farm operations and allied pursuits, it is desirable to provide consistent follow-up for sustaining the interest of the individual and supporting him further in this respect. The follow up should be in-built into the comprehensive approach to rehabilitation.

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## **Conclusion**

The unorganized sector is definitely the most ideal avenue for the economic rehabilitation of blind persons. The strategy of their resettlement into these occupations should be well planned, individual need based, client centred and should involve family, community and local administration at all stages of rehabilitation. These efforts should be supported with appropriate research and development.

The community based rehabilitation programme should encompass all aspects of rehabilitation including prevention of blindness, integrated education of blind children, social integration through orientation & mobility training, training in activities of daily living, counselling and economic rehabilitation. As far as possible, the economic rehabilitation should be in the family occupation or trade and it should be within the community.

# The Situation of Deaf-Blind in Developing Countries - An Overview

*A paper presented by Jagdishbhai in the 5th Helen Keller World Conference on The Quality of Life on Deaf-Blind People: Realities and Opportunities at Osimo, Italy during 25-30 September, 1993. While he participated in a number of world conferences, he presented only this paper in any world conference.*

**Abstract:** *Services for screening, assessment and early intervention of the deaf-blind in the developing countries are almost non-existent. Lack of programmes, paucity of funds, limited human resources, and lack of inter-agency coordination have resulted into this situation. New strategies should aim at promoting skills of total communication as well as independent living. These should expedite their social integration through result-oriented, community-based, client centered and cost effective programmes.*

The organizers should be complimented for including this topic in the World Conference. Hopefully, it will stimulate meaningful and thought provoking discussion regarding needs of a large number of deaf-blind persons in the developing countries. While encouraging efforts have been made and a variety of innovative programmes have been developed for such persons in the developing countries, such countries have yet remained bereft of such services due to a variety of reasons as listed below:

### **Lack of Early Intervention Services**

At present, even the services of early intervention for the blind and other disabled persons are almost negligible, the services for screening, assessment and early intervention of deaf-blind in case of developing countries are almost non-existent.

One report has pointed out that one-third of the total population of the visually handicapped in the U. K. is multi-handicapped. Another report establishes that in the Netherlands in the age group of 0-6 years, about 60 percent of the visually handicapped children are multi-handicapped. However, no reliable estimates for the deaf-blind, particularly in case of developing countries, are available.

Hence, it is not possible to establish the magnitude of the problem and develop the services commensurate to the extent of the problem. Thus our first and foremost focus should be conducting surveys for establishing magnitude of the problem, developing assessment tools and promoting services for early screening and early intervention.

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## **Lack of Programmes**

The only prevalent approach to rehabilitation of the deaf-blind in developing countries is establishing residential training institutions for them. Such institutions are urban-based, meagre in number, have a negligible coverage and these services normally exclude the family and the community completely from the programme. The services of such institutions are generally available to a very small proportion of the population of deaf-blind persons. For example, for a country like India with a total population of 932 million, the institutional coverage of deaf-blind is so scarce i.e. less than 100 at any point of time.

Thus it is essential to develop individual need based rehabilitation and training services, which should involve the family and community in the programme. Such involvement and participation may be achieved through counselling and guidance of the family members of such persons.

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## **Lack of Human Resources**

Another major problem in the developing countries is the non availability of trained manpower. There is hardly any programme for imparting training to the instructors, trainers, rehabilitation workers and interpreters of the deaf-blind. One very welcome change is the promotion of training services for the multi-handicapped blind by the *Hilton Perkins International Programme, U.S.A.* Under this programme, a few selected Master Trainers from developing countries have just been trained. In a recently concluded training programme, 3 persons from India have also availed such training. These trainers are in turn imparting training to rehabilitation workers of the multi-handicapped blind at the regional level.

It is, however, pertinent to mention that such Master Trainers must further lay emphasis on the need for developing appropriate training programmes for instructors, trainers, and rehabilitation workers and interpreters of the deaf-blind. Such programmes should be area specific and in consonance with the socio-economic environment of the target group.

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## **Paucity of Funds**

It is a well established fact that the training of deaf-blind persons is very intensive, prolonged and needs a one to one coverage. Thus a large expenditure on staff, training material, boarding and lodging and other incidental items is required. The training programmes for such persons thus work out to be very expensive for obvious reasons.

In developing countries, the allocation of funds for welfare services and particularly disabled welfare services is very low and comparatively declining. The system of special allocation of funds for developing services for deaf-blind persons is not prevalent. Due to lack of

funds, it is not possible to promote institutional or non-institutional programmes for them.

It is essential to prevail upon international funding agencies, developmental agencies and national governments to make special allocation for this purpose. Similarly, leading blind welfare organizations should also earmark special funds for promoting such services. It is also desirable to evolve and implement low cost as well as cost effective result-oriented programmes.

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### **Lack of Total Communication**

The complete lack of functional communication is the plight of most of the deaf-blind in the developing countries. It completely isolates such persons and they develop feelings of rejection. Persons with this type of condition have difficulty in developing even rudimentary communication skills on their own without a well designed and effectively administered curriculum.

The first and foremost objective of any rehabilitation programme for the deaf-blind should be promoting social and communication skills. It should also focus on improving their functional skills of orientation & mobility, self-help and independent living.

For enhancing social integration and effecting socio-psychological adjustment of a deaf-blind person, it is essential to promote the concept of total communication. The sign language book titled "*The Talking Hands*" developed by *Helen Keller Institute for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind, Bombay* is a step in the right direction. It is essential to develop such area-specific sign languages for enhancing functional communication of such persons.

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### **Lack of Inter-agency Coordination**

In developing countries, most programmes are disability specific. Generally a school for the blind would cover only blind persons. Similarly a school for the deaf would cover only deaf persons. Both these schools would generally function in isolation. There is hardly any scope for coordination among these two parallel streams of special education. By developing coordination among disability specific institutions, it may be possible to promote individual need based programmes for persons with multiple disabilities. It is essential that the specific needs of deaf-blind persons be understood by the disability specific institutions.

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### **A Note of Optimism**

As mentioned earlier the *Hilton Perkins International Programmes* has initiated training of Master Trainers in the area of multi-handicapped blind including the deaf-blind. Already a group of motivated young persons from the developing countries have undergone such training. The *Hilton Perkins International Programme* is also planning to extend financial

assistance for establishing such programmes on a pilot basis. It is heartening to know that a few community based rehabilitation programmes for multi-handicapped blind may also be developed and supported on a pilot basis.

## **Conclusion**

The prevailing situation regarding services of the deaf-blind in the developing countries is dismal and needs immediate attention of rehabilitation planners, funding agencies and national governments. Let us not be content by showing a few high cost institutional programmes for the deaf-blind on the map of our countries. We should instead develop cost effective programmes for their screening, identification, appropriate training and complete rehabilitation. Such programmes should aim at promoting skills of total communication as well as independent living.

Let us now shift our focus from merely creating institutions to understanding needs of the individuals. Let us not remove them from their homes and familiar environment, for the sake of confining them to the four walls of the institutions. We should expedite their integration into mainstream of society through result-oriented, community-based, client centered and cost effective programmes. Our theme should be - **from home to community, from solitary life to complete integration.**



*Bhadraben leads the way*

### Problems Faced by Handicapped Consumers

*A paper presented by Jagdishbhai during the National Workshop on the Handicapped as Consumers organized by the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad and funded by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Koenigswinter, Germany at the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Ahmedabad during 28-30 October, 1994. (Late) Madhukar Suryavanshi, Project Coordinator NAB RAC assisted Jagdishbhai in preparing this paper.*

The fundamental rights enshrined in our constitution, particularly the right to equal protection of the law under Article 14, appear to lose their meaning when we deal with persons suffering from natural handicaps. These persons face an unequal fight, against heavy odds, which are not faced by normal persons. Therefore, even though a law may be good enough to protect the interests of a normal human being, it may, however, fall short of safeguarding the interests of the handicapped.

Since I belong to the field of welfare of the blind and have been dealing with the visually handicapped and I am a blind person myself, I would speak with particular emphasis on the requirements of the blind consumer.

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#### **Contract of Sale**

The transactions of sale and purchase of goods in our country are regulated by the *Sales of Goods Act, 1930*. The contract of sale between the buyer and the seller relies heavily on the celebrated dictum of Roman Law - '*Caveat Emptor*' - which means '*let buyer beware*'. This Act envisages that the buyer, upon examining the goods and feeling satisfied with their fitness for use, cannot subsequently hold the seller responsible for an apparent defect.

However, if the buyer has not examined the goods and has made the seller aware of the particular purpose for which the goods are required, the seller becomes liable under Section 16 of this Act. In other words, the buyer in this case does not examine the goods and relies solely on the seller's skill and judgement for the soundness of the goods. In that event there would be an implied condition that the goods should be reasonably fit for such a purpose.

The provision of Section 16 of the Act has implications on the needs of the visually handicapped. It is well known that a large majority of visually handicapped persons come from the poor strata of society. Their purchasing power is restricted. They purchase simple articles of common use such as food grains, vegetables, inexpensive fruits, linen, lanterns, kerosene,

cots, tables, chairs etc. The blind purchaser is wholly incapable of conducting any examination of these articles. Therefore, he has to rely on the good sense and judgment of the seller regarding their fitness for use. It is our unfortunate experience that unscrupulous elements among the sellers fully exploit this handicap of the blind. There are numerous instances of defective material being sold off to the blind consumer. The plea always taken by the seller in such cases is that he had offered the goods for examination to the blind purchaser.

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## **Legal Consequences**

It is, therefore, necessary that this Section is amended in favour of the blind consumer. The implied condition as to the fitness of goods should be made obligatory on the part of the seller when the buyer is blind. The seller in such cases should be deemed to act on behalf of the blind purchaser, and should be solely liable for obvious defects in the goods sold. He, therefore, should be bound to replace the defective article or face legal consequences.

The other important piece of legislation protecting the interests of the consumer is the *Consumer Protection Act, 1986*. This Act also does not seem to adequately account for the fact that a blind consumer has no means of adjudging the soundness, quality or fitness of the article purchased or even ascertaining the correct price printed on the wrapper. Repeated references have been made in the Act to the term '*article displayed for sale*'. That the blind purchaser cannot see this display has been lost sight of. The Act, therefore, purports to protect the interests of a normal consumer who has been deceived despite being sighted. Imagine the plight of the consumer who can be deceived far more easily!

It is, therefore, necessary to insert an overriding clause in this enactment that, in the case of a blind purchaser, there shall be an implied warranty as to the fitness, quantity, quality and correctness of the price charged. If a blind person is a complainant before the District Forums or the State or National Commissions, the burden of proving that no breach of this implied warranty occurred should rest on the seller.

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## **Complaint by Post**

*Procedure:* Section 12 of the *Consumer Protection Act* lays down the procedure for filing a complaint with the District Forum. The same procedure applies when a complaint is made to the State Commission or the National Commission depending upon the valuation of the goods purchased. It is heartening to note that a complaint can be made not only by a consumer but even by a recognized consumer association on his behalf. I have gathered from the Ahmedabad District Forum that complaints received even by post are recognized, but verification has to be done through an affidavit filed before a Notary. All this involve documentation and legal formalities for which a blind

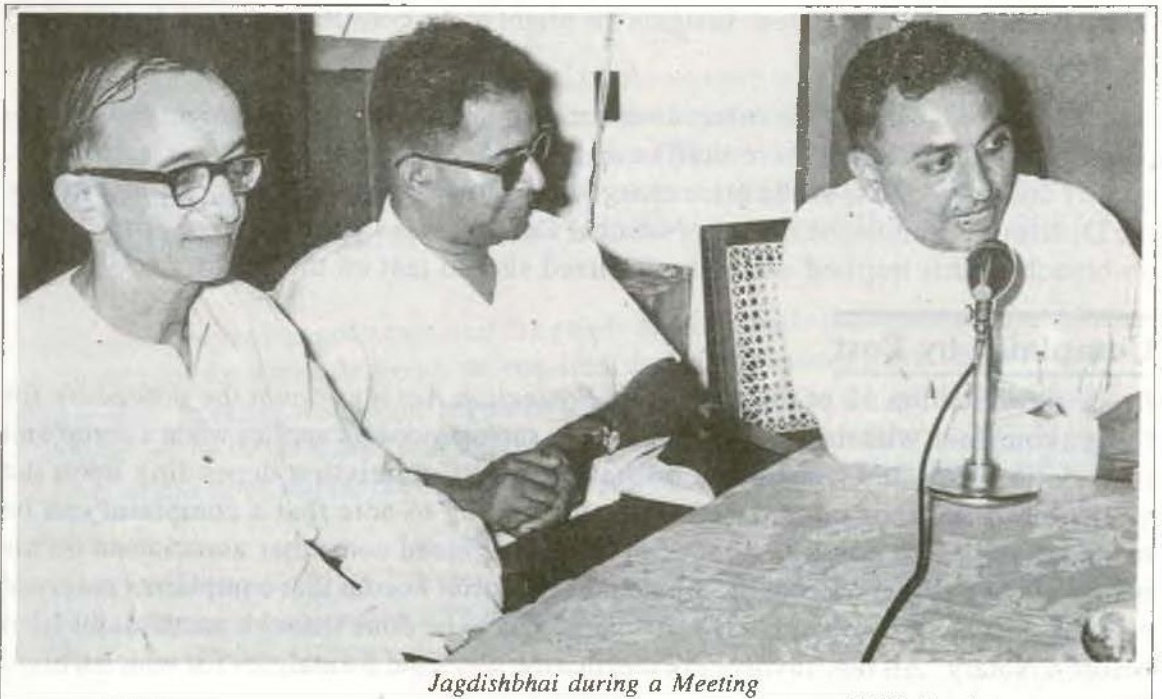
consumer has to be provided legal assistance.

Majority of blind consumers are from the economically deprived sections of society. Inexpensive legal aid extended by public spirited advocates prepared to work for the blind at a nominal fee would be a welcome measure. The name of such advocates may be circulated among *Voluntary Consumer Associations, Blind Men's Organizations* and such other bodies. It is also expedient to seriously consider having a blind representative on all Advisory and Consultative Committees engaged in consumer protection activities.

### **Role of Media**

The media has an important role to play in mobilizing public opinion with regard to the attitude of sellers to blind consumers. The blind consumers should also be enlightened through radio and television as to their legal rights and the protection accorded them as consumers. It is left to the legal luminaries to give shape to the above mentioned proposed amendments in law. The age old dictum of '*let buyer beware*' needs a reversal towards '*let seller beware*' when the buyer happens to be a blind person.

There should be detailed discussions and a meaningful exchange of ideas aimed at achieving this new principle, which also would greatly strengthen the hands of consumer associations, including the Consumer Education and Research Centre. The time has come when the moral obligation of the society to deal with the blind in an honest manner becomes legally enforceable duty.



*Jagdishbhai during a Meeting*



## Spotlight on Visionary - Breaking Barriers

*Article on Jagdishbhai published as cover story in BLIND WELFARE Volume XXXIII No. 3 December, 1992, a publication of the National Association for the Blind (India). Mr. Subba Rao, author of this lead story paid a visit to Ahmedabad, met officials of BMA, conducted a few interviews of Jagdishbhai and his wife Bhadraben. The article is a brief biographical sketch of Jagdishbhai and it enlists his various achievements etc. - Authors*

**Jagdish Patel** is a man in a hurry. Last August (1991), he suffered a paralytic stroke and was hospitalized. He was out of the hospital in less than 10 days. And the very next morning, defying doctor's orders, he was in his seat in Vastrapur office of Blind Men's Association at 9 sharp. "Yes, I'm impatient - I want to get results," admits Jagdishbhai, now 64. And no one disputes that Jagdishbhai gets results.

What is the secret of his success? Recognizing a need, formulating a concrete plan of action, and putting the right man on the job. That is Jagdish Patel's formula for success. "All our programmes are need based. In fact our very first project was a Recreation Centre for the Blind," recalls Jagdishbhai. Jagdish was twenty-six years old at that time.

After early education in Calcutta and Bombay, he had shifted to his native city of Ahmedabad and had started his practice as a Physiotherapist. One of his patients was Ambalal Sarabhai, a leading industrialist. "For 14 years, Monday to Saturday, every morning at 4.30, I used to visit Mr. Sarabhai for his daily massage. I charged him Rs. 7 per visit - in those days doctors used to charge about Rs. 10 per home visit. More than money, what I valued most was hearing Mr. Sarabhai speak on a variety of subjects", Jagdishbhai recalls.

Ambalal Sarabhai was a voracious reader. He had a collection of select books. As young Jagdish massaged him, the old man would speak about the books he had read, men he had met, the deals he had struck, and discuss various political and social issues. He would advise the young Physiotherapist how to deal with people, the importance of grooming and social etiquette.

In the early fifties, Jagdish had passed Matriculation. He started interacting with bright young men. He read in the Times of India about a young blind man who could repair radio and telephone and drive a motor car. He sought out such men and they turned out to be Rajendra Vyas.

In 1954, Jagdish and his friends founded Blind Men's Association. They would meet in the evening to play cards and to listen to books and records.

There was no fixed meeting place, as the Association did not have a building of its own. Then, in 1956, Ambalal Sarabhai offered his ancestral house to BMA. Rajendra Vyas negotiated the deal and the house was handed over to BMA, Ahmedabad.

*"He gave us a start,"* Jagdish Patel says gratefully.

In 1954, M.N. Chhatrapati (*whose father had founded Victoria Memorial School for the Blind in Bombay*) offered Rs. 2500 to start a school for blind girls in Ahmedabad. Jagdish Patel, as General Secretary, started looking for the right persons to teach at the school. One of the candidates whom he interviewed was Bhadraben.

Bhadra belonged to a family of freedom fighters. Her father, a cloth merchant, heeding Gandhiji's call to practice *Swadesi*, stopped selling foreign cloth and plunged into the freedom movement. When freedom came, he was no longer rich and he found it difficult to send Bhadra to college. But Bhadra was determined to resume her education which was interrupted during the days of the freedom struggle. *"I told my father that by giving tuition, I would earn enough to pay my college fees and he agreed."*

After taking her M. A. in Psychology, Bhadra secured a B. Ed. and here she was, facing a young man in dark glasses who wanted her to join the Light House for the Blind Girls as a teacher.

Bhadra was willing to shoulder the responsibility but was in no position to work on a low salary, as she had to educate her younger sister. *"I had no other alternative but to turn down Mr. Patel's offer, as the salary he offered then was very low and I had to support my family, particularly my younger sisters,"* Bhadra says.

A few months later she ran into Jagdish Patel again. This time it was Bhadra who sought the young Physiotherapist's help. Bhadra's younger sister was hurt in a freak accident when a stray cow gave her a push. After initial medication, she was advised to undergo physiotherapy and the Physiotherapist turned out to be Jagdish Patel.

*"He recognized me by my voice,"* recalls Bhadraben.

During the physiotherapy sessions, Jagdish learnt that Bhadra was now a lecturer in a college. Now that she was earning enough she did not mind doing social work. She started dictation and typing letters for the young General Secretary of BMA.

Around this time Kanubhai Thaker, a young science graduate who had lost his eyesight while working for M. Sc., came to meet Jagdish Patel. For six long years, Kanubhai had been brooding about his 'lost paradise' and wallowing in self-pity.

*"It was Jagdishbhai who, in a way, opened my eyes,"* says Kanubhai, now 64. *"He was radiating confidence despite loss of sight and some of it rubbed on to me, I think. Slowly but surely I came out of the shell."*

Jagdish asked Kanubhai to team up with Bhadraben and start a coaching class which turned out to be a success. It brought money. And it helped Kanubhai to regain his confidence. *"Yes, it gave me tremendous satisfaction. When I lost my sight, I thought it was the end of the world. And the coaching class experience proved that I could do things...I was not a hapless vegetable.."*

However, Kanubhai had to close his coaching class when Jagdishbhai involved him in education of the adult blind, and later asked him to head the *Technical School for the Blind*. (Kanubhai subsequently became Principal of the *Secondary School for the Blind*, after his retirement took over as Director, *Education and Support Services* of the BMA)

Jagdishbhai had other plans for Bhadraben too. *"He wanted to marry me,"* says Bhadraben.

What was Bhadra's feelings when Jagdish proposed to her ?. *"I was flattered,"* she says.

Didn't she have any hesitation in marrying a blind man ?

*"I was no doubt conscious of his blindness when I met him for the first time and perhaps for a few more months. But as I got involved with blind welfare work it (blindness) ceased to bother me. I was no longer conscious of Jagdish's blindness."*

But it did bother her parents who asked her to reconsider, and to wait for some time. And Jagdish's parents were not willing either, as the bride, (a Jain), was from a different religion and was not bringing a dowry.

*"One morning we quietly got married on our own and sought the blessings of the elders"* says Bhadraben.

Meanwhile Jagdish was doing very well as a leading Physiotherapist. He had equipped his clinic (*Medico Massage*) with all kinds of gadgets - infra-red, short-wave diathermy, ultra-violet and so on. He had bought a car. His father, a doctor, had retired from practice. It fell on the young couple to educate his younger brothers and sisters, who all lived together as a joint family.

In spite of a busy practice, Jagdish used to find time for BMA. Ambalal Sarabhai had introduced him to many businessmen. Around this time, he got to know Arvind Lalbhai, another leading industrialist, and the two had become very close friends. With friends like Arvind Lalbhai to back him up and colleagues like Kanubhai Thaker to support him, he had started building up BMA. He launched a periodical, 'Usha.' in Braille in 1963, started a *Secondary School for the Blind* in 1967, *Employment and Placement Services* in 1968 and *Talking Book Library* in 1973. And in the midst of all the activities he took B.A. degree in Sociology and Psychology from the *Gujarat University*.

Meanwhile the State of Gujarat had come into being and Dr. Jeevraj Mehta had assumed office as the Chief Minister. Jagdish Patel, along with Rajendra Vyas, called on the Chief Minister and requested for allotment of land for building the BMA complex to house its various activities. Impressed by the activities of the BMA, the Gujarat Govt. allotted a substantially large site at Vastrapur on the outskirts of Ahmedabad and soon the construction began.

BMA was growing at an astounding pace. As one batch of blind trainees moved out after successful training, others were taking their place. New projects like integrated education scheme (*helping the blind to study in a normal school*) were being launched. New buildings were coming up. Jagdish Patel thought it was time to streamline administration, set targets and work to a plan. It was time to involve the right kind of professionals in blind welfare activities.

The first of the professionals Jagdish Patel brought to BMA was Harish Panchal, an engineer, Bhushan Punani, an MBA, an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad joined BMA in 1979, and Nandini Rawal, another MBA arrived in 1981.

The young professionals came with their own ideas. While transfusion of young blood was in the interest of BMA as a whole, would the old guard, those who had built BMA with personal involvement and with a missionary zeal, accept the new generation?

Fortunately, the young professionals were not hot heads and the old war-horses came forward more than half way to accommodate the young. And Jagdishbhai was very much there as a shock absorber whenever sparks flew. Gently but firmly Jagdish Patel ensured that the young and the old accept each other, for he was convinced that the outcome would be synergic. And events that followed proved him right. Today, as an organization, BMA is very sound. It is one organization where a second line has been carefully groomed and nurtured. "I do not have to worry about BMA's future," says Jagdishbhai in a relaxed manner.

With the induction of young professionals, BMA expanded its activities rapidly. *Adult Training Centre Workshop for the Blind* began functioning in 1975, *Higher Secondary School for the Blind* was started in 1976 and a *Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped* was started in 1976.

In the midst of hectic day-to-day activities, Jagdishbhai would make efforts to find time to evaluate various projects. While he was convinced that every project BMA has undertaken was need-based, he was unhappy that for the effort BMA was putting in, its reach was very low. He was concerned about the rural blind who appeared to be beyond the reach of BMA which was situated in Ahmedabad city.

The plight of the rural blind became a recurring topic for discussion during the tea-time

mecting. (At BMA, the senior executives take tea with Jagdishbhai at 3 in the noon, every day. Tea time is used for a quick review and times snap decision).

Then one day in 1981 Jagdishbhai, Bhadraben, Bhushan Punani and Nandini Rawal were driving back to Ahmedabad after attending a function to inaugurate a school for the Blind. In the car, while they were talking about various things, someone posed a question:

*“What’s this school doing? What’s its future? How many will really benefit?”*

It was on this day that the BMA team decided to give a serious thought to the rural blind.

In the early eighties, in various fora, the plight of the rural blind was being discussed and solutions were being offered. Yet a concrete plan was yet to take shape, although efforts were being made on a small scale.

At that time, the *National Association for the Blind* (NAB) had set up a *Rural Activities Committee* with Captain H. J. M. Desai as its Chairman. The *Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind* (now known as *Sight Savers International*) had agreed to fund the rural project and Dr. Rajendra Vyas, the Asia Director of RCSB was looking for a suitable organization to implement the project.

*“Here was an opportunity I was looking for and I grabbed it,”* says Jagdishbhai referring to the launching of the CBR project for the rural blind in 1983 in Dholka.

The CBR programme provides for education and training on rehabilitation of a blind in his own environment without uprooting him from his immediate surroundings. The CBR programme involves community as a whole - family members, neighbours and local people in rehabilitating the blind and in the process creates greater awareness among people and helps to generate their active participation instead of passive acceptance. In the last 10 years, over 20,000 rural blind spread over 11,300 villages in different parts of the country have benefitted by the CBR programme.

In 1981, BMA took another significant step - opening of a division for marketing produce of various organizations. BMA’s Handika showrooms at three places in Ahmedabad attract customers from all parts of the city.

In 1989, the CBR programme was extended to cities to reach out for the urban poor resulting in UCBR - *Urban Community Based Rehabilitation of Aged and Disabled*. This programme was sponsored by ‘*Helpage International* through *Helpage India*’.

The philosophy of UCBR was the same as the CBR for the rural blind, only its scope was larger to include the aged in general. Eventually, the service Jagdishbhai rendered to the aged won him the coveted *Golden Award for Community Development Services* from the *Help the Aged*, an international non-governmental organization based in the United Kingdom. Jagdishbhai received the award from Princess Diana on November 4, 1991.

Only a few months earlier, the President of India had conferred on him the *Padmashri* Award for his meritorious services in the field of disabled welfare.

Jagdishbhai has now developed a hearing problem. Blood pressure and diabetes are the other two companions he has to live with. To top it all, he suffered a paralytic stroke last year (1991). None of this has kept him down. *"I have been a fighter all through my life."* says he with justifiable pride. While he continues to work tirelessly for Community Based Rehabilitation, he wanted to go a step further.

*"The CBR programme should eventually pave way for COR - Community Oriented Rehabilitation Programme,"* says Jagdishbhai. When the initiative for rehabilitation comes from the community itself, Jagdishbhai feels, the rehabilitation process becomes more meaningful and hundred percent effective.

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## **Second Line**

*The article "Jagdish Patel: Breaking Barriers" published in the Blind Welfare, December, 1992 issue by Mr. Subba Rao also carried an item in the box "Second Line" highlighting tenacity and far-sightedness of Jagdishbhai in respect of inducting professionals for developing a functional and effective second line. - Authors*

**Bhushan Punani** is perhaps the first ever MBA to take up a full time job with a voluntary organization in the field of rehabilitation of the disabled. After taking the B.Sc. degree in Dairy Science, he worked for a couple of years for Milkfoods Ltd. Patiala in Punjab. His job as a Dairy Development Officer brought him into contact with villagers in Punjab and Haryana. Bhushan took on break from service to do his MBA in the prestigious *Indian Institute of Management* in Ahmedabad. Incidentally IIM and BMA are located on either side of the main road in Vastrapur. After his MBA one day in 1979, Bhushan just walked across the road to take up a job with BMA as a Project Manager.

Dr. V. S. Vyas, the then Director of IIMA, was surprised to hear that one of his students was joining a voluntary organization when MBAs were in such high demand. Dr. Vyas sent for Bhushan to make sure that he was not making a mistake.

But Bhushan knew what he wanted. *"I was looking for a career opportunity in virgin territory. Social work was far from my thoughts. As a management man what fascinated me was the challenge a professional manager faces in a voluntary organization active in rehabilitation work,"* says Bhushan.

After 11 years with BMA, Bhushan has no regrets. And Dr. Pradeep Khandwala, the present Director of IIM proudly mentions that some of the alumni of IIM like Bhushan have brought glory to it by their distinguished service in the field of rehabilitation!

Bhushan was promoted as a Project Director in 1981 and two years later was made the Executive Director.

Bhushan points out that by the time he joined BMA *“the process of professionalizing the BMA had begun and Jagdishbhai had already set the pace.”*

*“In those early days,”* Bhushan recalls, *“Jagdishbhai fought to establish me at BMA. He was a sheet-anchor for me.”*

Jagdish Patel used to take his young colleagues to places he visited, introduced them to people he knew and sent them abroad repeatedly to attend conferences, to read papers and to participate in workshops.

The strength of BMA, according to Bhushan, lies in the fact that while individuals have set up a system, the system itself does not depend on individuals. *“I am leaving for Madras tomorrow. No work will be held up on account of my absence. No work was halted or staggered when Jagdishbhai was in hospital. The system we have developed makes allowance for absence of key office-bearers and ensures that the work does not grind to a halt.”*

This at BMA has been made possible by giving the staff freedom in operation. *“And we had to train our people to use the freedom given to them,”* points out Bhushan.



**Nandini Rawal**, unlike Bhushan, had exposure to the blind before she joined BMA. She used to read to the blind college students.

Nandini was looking for something exciting. She wanted to take up a job which would give an opportunity for personal growth. And this prompted her to take up the job with BMA. She spent the first year in office to study her organization and to understand how it worked. *“There was no laid out system. We did not even have leave records!”* recalls Nandini.

While introducing the many new systems Nandini had to strive hard to gain acceptance. *“It took quite some time for others to accept a woman executive,”* says Nandini without rancour.

In the early eighties, Nandini noticed a paradox. While the number of institutions were going up, the capacity - utilization of these institutions was going down! Add to this, the demographic profile of the blind available for the first time as a result of the 1981 survey showed that no help was available where it was required most i.e. in the villages where 83 percent of the blind live.

*“It was obvious that we had to reach out to the blind in villages.”*

With Jagdishbhai and Bhushan, Nandini worked hard to set up a CBR programme for the rural blind. Referring to Dholka, Nandini proudly mentions, *“We withdrew in 1985, but the local people have been continuing the work”*.

While CBR Programme is admittedly cost-effective and meaningful to the blind who are trained to lead an independent life in their own environment, the greatest challenge, according to Nandini, lies in human resource development training.

Nandini looks upon the first four years of her work for CBR as experimentation and the six years that followed as a period of consolidation. *“Now is the time”* says Nandini, *“for evaluation. And we are in the process of initiating it.”*



**Harish Panchal**, the Director (Training) in charge of Engineering, used to deal with BMA from the other side of the table when he used to give job work to BMA in 1974-75, in his capacity as an engineer working for a die casting factory. When Jagdishbhai requested him to join BMA, Harish hesitated, *“I did not quite know how I could be useful to the blind.”*

And it was a difficult decision for the young engineer to give up a job in industry. Harish finally made up his mind to plunge into the unknown territory and joined BMA in 1975 as a Workshop Superintendent.

Harish decided on a simple approach, *“While all opportunities had to be given to the blind, we would not compromise on productivity and quality.”* At BMA the apprentices are trained to work in an atmosphere as close to the factory floor as possible. While no pressure is brought on an apprentice he knows that his take home pay is in proportion to his output. This enables him to understand the basic law of industry. *“Nothing comes free. One has to earn his salary.”*

Jagdishbhai encouraged Harish to take people with all types of disability. Deaf and physically handicapped of Ahmedabad found their way to BMA. So did the able-bodied.

*“Ours is an integrated approach, helping the blind and the other kinds of disabled to rub shoulders with the able-bodied,”* explains Harish.

*“There was a time when the only job the blind were trained to do was weaving and recaning chairs. As the expectations of the blind rose, we had to provide other alternatives. We now have an Electronics Centre and a Computer Division”* Harish points out.

Carpentry, Light Engineering, Printing, Book Binding, Electric Motor Winding, Plastic Moulding, Toy making, Tailoring, Painting and Greeting Cards are the other activities which fetch revenue for BMA.



When Harish Panchal joined BMA, the annual turnover of its workshop was Rs. 30,000. Today it exceeds 20 millions. About 60 percent of its income is through sale to various government departments and public sector industry and 40 percent is generated by counter sale at Handika, the BMA showroom.

The work ethic at the BMA workshop is very high. *"We are not covered by government grants. We are not protected. We are on our own"* says Harish. *"I work because otherwise I won't get my salary."*

Bhushan, Nandini and Harish all emphasize that working for BMA is a matter of commitment for them. And their own career growth at BMA could inspire other professionals to enter the field of rehabilitation. As Nandini points out, **all three had other job offers and continue to receive similar offers.** But they have chosen to work at BMA because here they have found job satisfaction.



*Jagdishbhai Explains the Braille Production Facilities*

## INDIA TODAY (May 15, 1984)

Photo Feature by : Bhawan Singh

### *Abstract*

When the BMA started 33 years ago, it was as a recreation club, and so its name was appropriate. Today, it is an absolute misnomer-the BMA has grown into a massive organization with an amazing gamut of activities...

Through the years, the BMA has expanded beyond the wildest expectations of its founders (including Jagdishbhai). In 1950 its bank balance was mere Rs. 50 with no assets. Today, the association has fixed deposit of Rs. 20 lakhs (1984) and total assets of Rs. 2.5 crores. Its annual turnover which was just Rs. 10 lakhs in 1977 as now touched Rs. 1 crore.

And yet BMA would have ended up as a social club for the blind had it not been for the vision of one man, Jagdishbhai Patel. Meningitis deprived him of his eyesight when he was eight but he refused to abandon his will to live a normal life. Today, he is the head of the physiotherapy department of the L.G. Hospital at Ahmedabad, and has been the moving spirit behind BMA since its inception. Twenty-eight years ago, Jagdishbhai started a braille library with only 30 books. Today the association has over 10,000 titles as well as another library with 10,000 cassettes on various subjects for the blind. Any blind person, by paying a membership fee of Rs. 5 can barrow these cassettes. By next year, BMA plans to get another 30,000 tapes.

What is so striking about the four acre campus of the Blind Men's of helplessness anywhere. The place hums with activity as the handicapped workers manage the most dexterous jobs with ease, learning for the first time, perhaps, the joys of independence.



# CHAPTER IV

## Tributes to the Visionary

20 August, 1965

**Prof. P. H. Prabhu**  
Gujarat University  
Ahmedabad

Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben seem to be devoting their entire energy and heart to make BMA an ideal institution. Already as it is, I believe, this is developing into a model institution, though it has started so recently. I wish and pray that this institution makes rapid progress so that our manpower resources which go under the name of "*handicapped*" are enabled to make their own contribution to society and social progress.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

17 September, 1965

**Mr. Indraprasad B. Desai**  
1448/1 Golwad, Khadia  
Ahmedabad 380 001

Great credit goes to Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben for their painstaking work in building up this institution. I longed to see this institution for a long time. It has excellent building, fine equipment and devoted staff who works with great zeal.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

24 June, 1966

**Ms. Dorothy Isabel Hitching**  
Immediate Past President  
Association of Inner Wheel Clubs  
Bowdley, 7 Beech Road,  
Saltiford, Bristol, England

I am heartened by the efforts that are being made to provide a new life for blind people. I congratulate Mrs. Chandrika Shah and Jagdishbhai for doing splendid work and their enthusiasm must inspire others to help in their many projects.

30 November, 1968

**Jagdish R. Sondhi**  
Mombasa, Kenya.

Eastern people are often accused of possessing spiritual faith and demonstrating inability to translate their emotions into practical works of good. After observing various activities of the BMA and meeting Jagdishbhai, I am reminded of a famous poem.

*"God created beauty in the flowers,  
He made us good and evil too;  
the spirit that above us towers  
in those that serve who are so few;  
those that see and those who can't  
those that do and those who won't  
And the good need He did plant  
to help those in need and want."*



24 May, 1969

**Major Ranjeet Singh, M.P.**  
160 South Avenue  
New Delhi -11.

No amount of praise can do justice to the greatness witnessed here; a great institution, a noble aim, devoted directors and equally devoted to pupils. I feel that highest Sadhana is being done here by all those responsible for running this institution, specially Arvindbhai and Jagdishbhai.



4 October, 1969

**Smt. Vidya Vati Rathor**  
Minister for Social Welfare, U.P.

Jagdishbhai and his team are doing valuable services to the institution which is unique in its approach. They know very well how to tackle the problems.

12 November, 1972

**Dr. K. K. Trivedi**

Dist. Governor

District 304 W2

Eye Clinic, Dewanpara Road

Bhavnagar.

Smt. Bhadraben and Lion Jagdishbhai are really putting their best efforts with a missionary zeal and I am sure this institution will rise still to new heights to deliver "goods" to the blind citizens of our country.



30 November, 1972

**Mrs. F. A. Fazalbhoy**

95-E Oomer Park

B. Desai Road

Bombay -400 036.

The organizational structure of the BMA is certainly one of the best I have seen and it is a tribute to the organizational ability of Jagdishbhai. Social work and particularly rehabilitation of the handicap is probably the greatest human service one can do.



24 April, 1976

**Comdr. Kaiki B. Godrej**

Past Dist. Governor

Lions International

Pune

Dr. and Mrs. Jagdishbhai, devoted workers, only they could have achieved what has been achieved in the BMA. I am thrilled to see what wonderful work is being done in this God given place. God's blessing be on all inmates and all workers of the institution. May light dispel darkness.



8 May, 1976

**Mr. S. K. Kazerooni**

Director: Lions International  
Khyaban Bahar No. 10  
Teheran - 15 Iran

Jagdishbhai and his wife are most praiseworthy. I am most happy that I have been given the opportunity to see this institute, I am astonished by the excellent work that is being done by the blind. I pray to God to give him more strength to do even more for the deprived people.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

January, 1980

**Mr. Shambhoo Dayal, I.A.S.**

Director, Employment and Training  
D-3-11, Vastrapur Government Colony  
Ahmedabad

I was impressed by the enthusiasm of Jagdishbhai and his sense of devotion to the cause of the blind. I had assumed before I came here that the organization he was running might be run with great difficulty because of the handicaps of the persons getting training here. I was not prepared for the scientifically organized training and job work which is being done under the supervision of highly qualified staff. Credit for all this goes to Jagdishbhai.

**24 October, 1986:** I have been observing the organization grow day by day. It has been performing yeoman service to the physically handicapped. My association with Jagdishbhai is also as old as with the institution and we had many fruitful moments together to bring Gujarat still higher in the world of the physically handicapped.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

24 May, 1984

**Dr. Julius Karunakaran**

Development Officer  
Christoffel Blindenmission  
South Asia Regional Office  
75, Ellai Amman Colony  
Madras 600 086

Tremendously impressed with the highly imaginative organization of the multifaceted activities for the meaningful rehabilitation of the visually and other physically handicapped persons. The dedication and perseverance of Jagdishbhai, his wife Bhadraben and a team of selfless colleagues, especially the young ones, is heart warming, remarkable and striking. It also speaks of the great hope ahead of the handicapped in future. This place stands out as a model to many other institutions seeking to serve the handicapped. My only hope is that the organization would strive to reach those unreached so far, especially those in the rural areas.



12 December, 1985

Hon'ble (Late) Giani Zail Singh

**President of India**

Rastrapati Bhawan, New Delhi 110 001

I am glad that the BMA is rendering valuable services to the nation by helping the blind and the handicapped. Service to humanity is service to the God.

Noticing the presence of Jagdishbhai on the dais, Hon'ble President remarked, "*Do not call them blind who cannot see; they are blind who have turned away from God*".

Gianiji implored the blind not to think of themselves as being inferior. He said many great men have achieved greatness inspite of their handicap. He gave the example of Surdas and said that the blind persons should adopt Surdas's philosophy which is "*I do not want to become sighted because in that case I will see the world but lose sight of my Creator*". Gianiji encouraged blind persons to think positively and work hard and place their trust in God.



July, 1986

**Times of India, Ahmedabad**

Jagdishbhai is an institution by himself. He has waged a one-man battle to set up the BMA. He never bothers about results; he is only keen in his efforts to do something for the fellow handicapped persons.

While dialling the telephone, passing on instructions to his assistants, keeping a watch on the BMA's on-going projects, listening to music and tuning to BBC for the latest news, he seems to be a normal individual.

4 January, 1987

**All India Confederation of the Blind**

Braille Bhawan, Institutional Area  
(Near Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute)  
Sector V, Rohini  
Delhi, 110 085

The Citation of the Centennial Award presented to Jagdishbhai on the occasion of the Centenary of Services to the Blind in India, reads, "*Jagdishbhai has been a pioneer in many ways. He has been responsible for inculcating professionalization in the field of blind welfare. Under his dynamic leadership, the BMA has grown to be a stellar organization. He was probably the first to insist on ensuring viability and accountability of programmes for the blind. The BMA has also been recognized and conferred several awards under his able guidance*".

**Note: The tributes that follow were sent on the occasion of Jagdishbhai's 60th Birthday celebrations in 1989 - Authors.**



March, 1989

**Ms. Santok P. Bengali**  
Superintendent  
Andh Mahila Vikas Gruh  
Dhebar Road, Rajkot

Jagdishbhai - a name that is known, admired and revered all over Gujarat. His achievements are endless - he has done all the things that rehabilitation practioners cannot even dream about - what others considered impossible - Jagdishbhai has achieved and made it look so easy.

He has impressed everyone by his willingness to learn new concepts and experiment and then selflessly share the fruits with other workers. He champions the cause of the blind dauntlessly and fights the odds of prejudice and small mindedness.

Salute to a true leader!





March, 1989

**Dr. Usha Bhalerao**  
Madhya Pradesh

The benevolent activities of Shri Jagdishbhai are not restricted only to men but he pays equal attention to the problems and well being of blind women. He has enkindled light in their lives and made them happy and successful.

He is not only a dominant personality in the field of blind welfare but takes a prominent part in other social welfare activities as well. His services are not limited to India but these cross its borders.

Jagdishbhai is a true lion and his followers - the disabled persons and self-less and dedicated workers - always flock to him when he roars.



March, 1989

**Col. Santosh Chandra**  
Managing Director,  
Artificial Limb Manufacturing Corporation of India  
G. T. Road, Kanpur

It is indeed a matter of great pride that a person of the stature of Shri Jagdishbhai is engaged in the field of rehabilitation of the disabled especially the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Kalyan Singh Chudavat**  
Attendant  
BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

During the initial years of my career, Jagdishbhai looked after me like a local guardian. He always considered me as his family member and stood by my side during thick and thin. I have always enjoy working with him. Whatsoever I have achieved in my life, it is all due to his encouragement and support. His role in my life is that of a benevolent and caring father.



March, 1989

**Fr. R. Cutinha**

President

Divine Light Trust for the Blind

Whitefield, Bangalore

*“Charity is the single greatest obstacle to any meaningful service for disabled persons in the country”* - a recent statement made by one of the commentators during the International Year of Disabled Persons - 1981.

Therefore to dream of *“equality”* and *“opportunity”* to people without sight almost 25 years before this statement was made, and to persevere with that vision and to labour for it till today without wavering, is by any standards a monumental achievement.

The results of that vision, actualizing itself in a package of services to persons without vision and reaching out in ever-widening circles, in spite of all the vicissitudes that are implied in such bold endeavours is there for all to see encapsulated in that acronym: BMA Ahmedabad. Founding of such an organization during the early fifties was itself a pioneering venture in an age when charity was the be - all and end all - of the concern for disabled persons in the country.

Today one is amazed at the battery of services provided by this organization, not only for its breadth and variety but also, and more so, because it points to the commitment and daring of the person who dreamt of such services - Mr. Jagdish K. Patel, the General Secretary of the BMA.

Thought, it is truly said, is the parent of all actions. Only human beings can think and only great persons can make their thoughts a gift to enrichment of many. Therefore, the thought of such great persons is embodied in the various services, developments, innovations and other measures that come into existence that reach out to many persons in need. Jagdishbhai belongs to this genre of human beings who believe that they live only once and want to have the place and the people better and richer because of their presence.

The impact of Jagdishbhai on the BMA will be obvious in the range and variety of services the organization provides today and intends to provide in the coming years. The fine blend of the traditional and the modern services is the product of the thought of Jagdishbhai. This *“product”* and *“blend”* has inspired and will inspire many companions all over India and in other developing countries.

It is a matter of great appreciation that Jagdishbhai has taken the cause of the blind in India not only to the national but also to international forums across the continents. Wherever he has gone, he has left his imprints through the papers he presented and recommendations he suggested. The raising of the awareness of national as well as international community, to the needs and aspirations of blind persons in collaboration with similarly committed people all over the world, and the role of Jagdishbhai in this task is for more informed people to judge. It is, however, relevant to state here that Jagdishbhai's message in essence has always been, "*Blind persons refused to be marginalised*".

In the words of Khalil Gibran, the Iranian Poet, Jagdishbhai can say most sincerely: *To All That Has Been - Thank You!* The challenges that lie ahead are greater and more complicated and more urgent. But the past is the matrix of the future and one feels confident the Jagdishbhai will continue to provide the leadership in the future as well. May the same poet inspire him to say: *To All That Will Be - I Say Yes!*

If incidentally one discovers that Jagdishbhai is blind, please do not look at his eyes, but at the person - **Sixty Plus: Not Out!**



March, 1989

**Mrs. Bharati Dalal**

Teacher

Secondary School for the Blind

Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai, Godfather of the blind and the disabled, believes in plain-speaking, and is constantly striving for promoting target-oriented welfare services for the disabled. Appears to be a strong-headed person but in reality he is a kind hearted person.

He is always concerned about the well-being of all the staff members, students and trainees. He encourages all the new entrants, provides them appropriate guidance and maintains close personal relations. The secret of his success is winning confidence of all the people and then getting the work done.



March, 1989

**Mrs. Rehmat Fazalbhoy**

Former Secretary, NAB, India  
Multiple Sclerosis Society of India  
Clematis Gardens, Plot No. 6, Ground Floor  
12, Boat Club Road, Pune 411 001

Resourcefulness and enterprise have been the two qualities by which Jagdish has undertaken and successfully implemented a variety of programmes of which our country can be justly proud of. It is always a pleasure to meet Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben. Over the past three decades their warmth and friendship has never flagged and their hospitality is always lavish. His greeting to me whenever we meet is a standard comment, "*Mother Superior, first give me chocolate and then we will talk*". I am always careful to ensure that I have some chocolates in my bag when I know that Jagdishbhai is going to be around.

Under his guidance, we have seen small projects in Mount Abu, Phansa and scores of villages throughout Gujarat grow into a vast network of services benefiting blind children and adult blind of Gujarat. His work is known both nationally and internationally through his participation in workshops, seminars and conferences in India and other countries of the world.

Well done Jagdishbhai - keep it up.



March, 1989

**Mr. Purshottam N. Gandhi**

Rashtriya Shala  
Rajkot

Jagdishbhai has made progress in his life through developing his inner sight. Through his hard work, he has developed not only himself but has developed self-respect, courage and patience among the blind youth. He has devoted his whole life for developing self-respect and self-confidence in the blind. He is a classic example of complete devotion to a cause. He is the guiding spirit for anyone who is working for improving the lot of disabled persons. His efforts and achievements are worth appreciating and he is great source of inspiration.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Alan Johns**

Executive Director

Sight Savers International - Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind

P.O. Box 191, Haywards Heath

West Sussex RH16 4YF

United Kingdom

I have worked with Jagdish over the past ten years and wish to offer personal tributes to his breadth of vision and his understanding of the needs of blind people in seeking a highly professional approach to developing resources for their education, rehabilitation, training and employment in the urban as well as rural environments of India.

The Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (now known as Sight Savers International) salute Jagdish for all his efforts and trust that they will continue to multiply and to act as an example throughout South Asia - a process in which we are proud to be associated with and all his colleagues.

*(During his last visit to India when Mr. Alan John was about to relinquish his charge as Executive Director of the Sight Savers International, the first thing he inquired was whether Jagdishbhai was well. He fondly remembered his association of many years with Jagdish and regretted that he would not be able to meet him this time. He mentioned that if he happened to pay a visit to India, he would love to call upon Jagdishbhai).*



March, 1989

**Mr. E. M. Johnson**

Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind

Jail Road, Ludhiana

Jagdishbhai has emerged as a national leader of the blind and disabled. Due to his efforts, scores of blind and disabled have been trained and found a position in the open industry thus leading a dignified and independent life. Jagdishbhai and his wife are really a dedicated couple and both of them along with a team of social workers have started many useful schemes which are assisting our blind and disabled sisters and brothers in becoming self-reliant and acquiring the place of pride for themselves in society. I salute his long and dedicated service to the blind and disabled persons.

March, 1989

**Mr. Harshad U. Joshi**

Former Principal

School for the Blind

Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 390 009

Jagdishbhai always has a keen desire of doing something concrete for the uplift of the blind. He is always of the firm opinion that the economic independence can not be achieved by a blind person unless he is educated and professionally trained, so that he may gain his rightful place in society as per his capacity and capabilities. Jagdishbhai, though sightless himself, has always possessed this foresight. In spite of the psychological opposition and many physical obstructions, he paved his way out and became an ardent propagative leader of the modern trends in the field of education of the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Nanalal M. Kanabar**

General Secretary

Sneh Nirzhar

P. D. Malavia College

Rajkot

What could I say in a tribute to Jagdishbhai? I have a debt of gratitude - for arranging my marriage, for supporting me when my mentally retarded son was born, for taking me on a number of holidays, for loving my family - the list is endless. He gives his friendship unconditionally and with full of loyalty. He has stood by me in my times of distress and shown me a path unerringly. He has succeeded in helping me to initiate a centre for the mentally retarded - that is the most tangible of Jagdishbhai's influences in my life.

A most outstanding human being, Jagdishbhai is the most dependable, trust-worthy and reliable friend - a friend in need.



March, 1989

**Mr. Jagdish Kapoor**

President

National Association for the Blind,

Delhi Branch

Sector V, R. K. Puram, New Delhi

I have always known Jagdishbhai as a man with great dedication and innovative ideas towards the cause of the blind and the disabled. He has a number of projects to his credit which he has initiated and completed aimed at promoting comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind and the disabled. In spite of being a handicapped person himself, he has never lagged behind in enthusiasm. Due to his bent of mind, he always adopts a policy of "do or die" for accomplishing any programme or project on rehabilitation of the blind and the disabled. With the successful implementation of every project which might have seemed impossible to begin with, his enthusiasm has grown manifold.



March, 1989

**Mr. Jasubhai B. Kavi**

Principal

Secondary & Higher Secondary School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Consistent hard work is the firm resolve of Jagdishbhai. He faces all the situations with courage. He appears strongest in the face of adverse situations. His indomitable courage has enabled the organization to face rough weathers squarely. Winning over odds is his forte!

He analyses each opportunity threadbare and takes action appropriately forgetting the happenings in the past. His ability to build on past experience and fuse it with the present needs is appreciable.

He has a tremendous capacity for understanding people immediately. He develops close relations with any person after a few moments of interaction, evaluates the person in the right perspective and gets his work done tactfully.

The life-time contribution of Jagdishbhai lies in the establishment, nurturing, developing and administering such a large and well established organization, popularly known as BMA.

March, 1989

**Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai**

President: BMA

Arvind Mills Ltd.

Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009

Jagdishbhai is a man whose career I have followed closely over the past three decades with immense satisfaction and interest. The one thing which never ceases to surprise me is the ease with which one forgets, in his presence, the fact that Jagdishbhai had lost his sight at the age of eight. He is so much alive, creative and determined than most sighted persons, that it seems to me that the loss of eyesight was for him only another constraint or challenge to be overcome. Even as he stood before me during my first encounter during 1962 at the Ashoka Mills, he had already a physiotherapy practice of almost one decade behind him, through his own clinic, Medico Massage. He was the most well known and successful Physiotherapist of Ahmedabad at that time.

I see in Jagdishbhai a man with tremendous potential still waiting to unfold itself - a man who has achieved considerable success in his field but is not willing to rest on his laurels and is facing the future with confidence and hope.



March, 1989

**Mr. Tarak K. Luhar**

Development Officer

National Association for the Blind

Gujarat Branch, Ahmedabad 380 015

A man lost in a desert for days, thirsty, weary and hapless, suddenly finds a stranger who leads him to an oasis.... only the thirsty man knows the greatness of this stranger. Such has been Jagdishbhai's impact on many lives. He has been responsible for remaking of many broken lives and the uplift of broken spirits. Even more creditable is that he has inspired the public at large to work for the blind and disabled. His magnetic personality has enabled many workers to emerge as leaders in the field.

His greatest gift to posterity is the fact that he has created leaders in every nook and corner of Gujarat. I think, he is the most outstanding institution builder in the field of blind welfare.

His most outstanding quality is encouraging other blind and disabled persons to adopt welfare of other disabled persons as mission of their life. Jagdishbhai has successfully developed a cadre of such devoted workers. He is a great source of inspiration for these



workers. If we balance all his achievement vis-a-vis his being a source of inspiration to other workers, his latter quality would easily outweigh all his achievements. It is desirable that more and more workers should join his mission to keep the spirit of devotion and service before self alive for ever. Jagdishbhai deserves full credit for this achievement.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Harshvadan Makim**

Entrepreneur (Trustee, BMA)

Radhe Shyam Kunj

Near Manek Baug Hall

Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai and I have been tied in the friendship knot since 1954. I am a businessman, he a dynamic thinker and worker of the blind - so different and yet so close in our mission of helping the blind - I was drawn to him by his love for the blind, his untiring efforts, his impatience and sometimes restless nature which urged him to keep planning.

Jagdishbhai is sometimes curt but his thoughts are so clear and his arguments so convincing that the listener absolves him of his curtness. I sometimes feel that we are drawn in an indivisible bond - that transcends life and death.



March, 1989

**Mr. Prakash J. Mankodi**

Principal

Anhjan Vividhlakshi Talim Kendra

Aerodrome Road, Jamnagar - 6

Blindness is a physical disability which affects the life of an individual in every respect. As it restricts development, his whole life is shattered. But there are individuals like bright stars in the sky who provide a ray of hope and encouragement to such disheartened people so that they may also progress in life. Jagdishbhai is one such shining star who has given a new hope, a new lease of life to thousands of blind persons through his untiring efforts. Through his progressive and modern outlook, Jagdishbhai has opened innumerable new vistas for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind through introduction of physiotherapy, computer training and electronics.

March, 1989

**Mr. John Mayo**

Director General

Help the Aged

St. James's Walk

London U. K.

I first met Jagdishbhai in 1985, and since that time it has been my privilege to be associated with him in his great work with the BMA.

He has dedicated his life to those who are disabled, enabling them to develop their skills and talents so that they may live with dignity and independence; his influence for good spreads far beyond the boundaries of Gujarat, his devotion and dedication being an example to every one.



March, 1989

**Mr. Sanat Mehta**

Former Finance Minister

Govt. of Gujarat

Unique have been the achievements of Jagdishbhai which are difficult to be described adequately. Not only has he displayed his undaunted courage and capacity to defy the limitations cast upon him by blindness and partial deafness, but he has also contributed to the cause of handicapped persons, parallel of which is difficult to find. Besides welfare activities for the handicapped, he has created an awakening among these people and provided them with confidence to show that they can also compete and even surpass the persons in different productive fields.

Various organizations started by him are examples which speak for themselves. He has instilled the spirit of self-respect among handicapped people. They do not want any pity from society but would like to earn a respectable place by undertaking productive vocations, which could make it possible for them to achieve economic independence also.

6 April, 1991: It was at the instance of Jagdishbhai that the State Government had made statutory provision for employing the physically handicapped in large commercial and industrial concerns.

March, 1989

**Mr. P. G. Michael**

Past Regional Representative  
Christoffel Blindenmission  
South Asia Regional Office  
1, Highway Colony, Tiruchirapalli

Jagdishbhai is at once a classic example of both disability and rehabilitation. Undaunted by the tragedy of blindness in his life, Shri Patel has battled hard to triumph over his disabilities and emerge as a great servant of the disabled bringing them equality and fruitful participation in economic and social activities. By his personality and performance, he has made everyone remember him not as a blind individual but as a leader full of vision, vigour and vitality.

His leadership and contributions to the growth of services to the disabled in general in India and to the visually handicapped in particular will be gratefully remembered by hundreds of disabled and among us scores of social workers like myself. His ability to generate interest and active participation by the local community and his thrust to find sound professional solutions to the problems deserve special mention. He is a man of integrity, frankness and understanding.



March, 1989

**Mrs. Mehboob Nasrullah**

Vice - President  
National Association for the Blind  
11, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road  
Worli Seaface, Bombay, 400 025

Jagdishbhai having overcome his blindness and trained as a physiotherapist, took up early the cause of helping other blind people. He has set up a wide net-work of programmes and services for the blind in Gujarat covering education, rehabilitation, employment and welfare services. He played a pioneering role in promoting rehabilitation of the rural blind people. Over the years, he has been a leading spirit in the development of modern and innovative programmes and services for the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Harish M. Panchal**

Director (Training)

Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Even after completing 60 years of his life, Jagdishbhai is very young in his thoughts. His innovations include initiating on the job training, professional training and economically viable training cum production workshops for all categories of disabled persons.

Day and night, Jagdishbhai keeps thinking about the means and ways of promoting welfare of the disabled. His blindness has never hindered his mission. Of late, he has developed profound deafness as well. In spite of these disabling conditions, Jagdishbhai is always cheerful and deeply engrossed in his work. Many a times, he remarks that to serve the disabled effectively, one must oneself experience disability.

With all that he has achieved, he still feels that this is only a beginning, he has a long way to go. This great traveller on the path of welfare of the disabled deserves full support and encouragement in his mission.



March, 1989

**Mr. Jayantibhai T. Panchal**

Project Coordinator

Urban Community Based Rehabilitation Programme

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Through the efforts of Jagdishbhai, there has been a great deal of awakening among the disabled persons. In every programme started by him, disabled persons themselves have a voice and representation. He regrets that many a times, society is not prepared to take interest in the matters pertaining to the blind and disabled persons.

Jagdishbhai does not want to create feelings of charity and pity regarding disabled persons. Once society accepts its responsibility towards the disabled, the latter would also accept their responsibility towards society. He does not want to encourage a society which considers the disabled merely as objects of charity.

Jagdishbhai does not consider increase in enrollment of students or material prosperity of the organization as a measure of its success. The growth of the organization is reflected in the adoption of fundamental principles of education and training of the disabled which would lead to their complete independence and self-reliance. He is not happy with the existing programmes of education and training which do not accord self respect to the blind and disabled persons. He has been a crusader of promoting equal opportunities for them.



March, 1989

**Dr. B. K. Panchal**

Occupational Therapist

Adult Training Centre School for the Blind

Ahmedabad 380 015

Despite being blind, Jagdishbhai has never suffered from the limitations caused by blindness. It has never been an obstacle to him. One wonders as to how he has picked up skills of understanding difficulties of all categories of disability. He believes in promoting innovations and encourages new approaches which have emerged as demonstrations to others.

After gaining popularity as a successful Physiotherapist, he established the School of Physiotherapy so that other blind persons could pursue this professions. Today, this school is probably the most successful professional course for the educated blind persons in the country.

While residential schools for the blind and disabled were being established all over the country, Jagdishbhai thought of low cost, result oriented and unique approaches on community based rehabilitation and integrated education. To enable the blind and disabled persons to derive benefits from newer scientific innovations, he established professional training courses in computer programming, telephone operating and braille shorthand.

He is always concerned about all the employees of the BMA. Regularly inquires about their health and well being, visits their homes regularly and fulfills all the social obligations. Whenever one gets an opportunity of travelling with him, he is always full of life and everyone enjoys his company. Instead of receiving something from society, he always tries to give something to it.



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March, 1989

**Mr. Niranjan P. Pandya**

Chief Executive Secretary

82, Rasta Peth

Pune Blind Men's Association

Pune

I know Jagdishbhai as a true dedicated social worker - a man of innovative ideas whose aim in life is to achieve his goal regardless of any problems.

His integrity, loyalty and his untiring efforts have no comparison in the field of blind welfare. He is man of iron will, grit and strong determination but simultaneously he is very witty, humorous and full of life. Jagdishbhai is a pillar of strength to his organization. He has been working tirelessly and selflessly, day and night, sacrificing all his time for the uplift of blind persons. In all his humanitarian work, the helping hand and the moving spirit behind him is none other than his wife Bhadraben.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

March, 1989

**Mr. Dilip R. Parikh**

Past Dist. Governor

Lions International Dist. 323 B

& Minister of Industries (Govt. Of Gujarat)

"Reva" Sardar Patel Colony, Navrangpura

Ahmedabad 380 009

Whatever Jagdishbhai thinks, he achieves. The tenacity with which he gets things done is a treat to watch and admire. He has capacity, ability and a temperament to do hard work. Though physically he has no vision, I would like to call him a "visionary". He sees what we with eyesight cannot see. He sees tomorrow. He sees coming events and he knows how to put dreams into practice. The service which he is doing at BMA is unparalleled and he richly deserves our highest compliments.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

March, 1989

**Prof. Nandubhai Parikh**

L. D. Arts College

Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009



I have the greatest admiration for the sterling qualities of Jagdishbhai, particularly, his dedicated work in the field of betterment of the disabled. It has always been his endeavour that society should not isolate the disabled but should accept them in the mainstream of social progress.

The everlasting impression that he has made on everybody he has met, is that he is extraordinarily firm yet polite, reasonable and purposeful and a born leader. With these qualities of head and heart, his approach to each and every problem is practical, pragmatic and without being unprincipled and opportunistic.

Jagdishbhai is capable of intense intimacy with those who are able to win his confidence, at the same time, he does not make himself too familiar with everybody.

A man of creative vision and complete devotion to his work, Jagdishbhai could overcome tremendous odds he faced with his courage, patience and far-sightedness. The secret of his success in every walk of life is formula embodied in a Sanskrit Saloka which stands for, "*May we all inspire good understanding and knowledge by piercing our minds.*"



March, 1989

**Mr. Amulbhai Patel**

Principal

Technical School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

As Louis Braille opened the flood gates of education of the blind the world over, Jagdishbhai opened the doors for education and rehabilitation to the blind and disabled persons in India. He is the living computer in the field of rehabilitation. He carefully evaluates all the programmes, provides guidance, visits the programmes and encourages every body. He advocates that a blind person is a human being first and then visually impaired. A blind person must be imparted education and training; extended employment opportunities; and enabled to live a life of dignity.

Jagdishbhai who possesses divine vision deserves our respect for his untiring efforts for promoting complete rehabilitation of blind persons. He has extended his services to the rural blind not only in Gujarat but all over the country through his innovative approach of community based rehabilitation and integrated education.

Today, under his leadership, BMA has emerged as a national as well as international level organization. He has adopted professional and innovative approach to

initiation and promotion of a variety of innovative and result-oriented services for the blind.

Jagdish is another name of Lord Krishna who gave to the world teachings of *Gita* through *Gitopadesh* whereas Jagdishbhai gave a message of self respect and self confidence to the blind and disabled persons.



March, 1989

**Mr. Nalin K. Patel**

Former Minister of State for Energy, Forest and Environment  
Government of Gujarat  
New Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar

Jagdishbhai has given noteworthy contribution for the welfare of the blind and has devoted his entire life for this noble cause. His achievements would always be a source of inspiration to many others to contribute with zeal to his mission of promoting welfare of the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Vithal Z. Patel**

Manager  
Multicategory Training Centre for the Disabled  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai has developed a team of skilled expert persons for developing welfare services for the disabled. I feel privileged that directly or indirectly I have been associated in his endeavours of promoting such services. I also gratefully acknowledge his contribution in building and shaping my career in this respect. Due to his support and guidance, I have overcome my shortcomings, developed confidence, fulfilled number of my desires and attained confidence of facing challenges.

Jagdishbhai always taught me like a teacher, given me his love and affection like parents and guided me like a guide. His simplicity and capacity to adjust have always impressed me. I shall always remain indebted to him for all he did for me.



March, 1989

**Mr. F. J. Porwal**

Manager: Braille Press

National Association for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai lost eyesight during his childhood. Due to sheer self-confidence, inner strength and hard work, it seems that he has written his own destiny and that of other blind person himself. He has revolutionized the field of blind welfare.

His major hobby is reading braille literature published around the world. Such consistent reading has benefitted him in understanding problems of the blind and finding appropriate solutions for the same. Through this habit, he could analyze situation of blind persons in Gujarat in context of the global situation. He could consistently devote his attention towards finding appropriate solutions of improving situation of blind persons and searching constructive alternatives of improving their social status.

His major contributions towards improving braille reading habits and access to information include establishing of a braille library, a regional braille press and publication of a quarterly news-letter in braille.

While the preference of the blind for braille material is on the decline, true admirer of braille literature and ideal braille reader Jagdishbhai is definitely a source of inspiration for the promotion of braille as medium of written communication for the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. N. E. S. Raghavachari**

I. C. S. (Retd.)

A very large number of institutions which Mr. Patel has built are a testimony to his untiring efforts to serve the cause of the blind and other disabled persons. Watching him at work one would not feel that he is a physically handicapped person himself. The amount of work that he has put in for the cause is much more than an average person with all faculties at his command would be able to.



March, 1989

**Mrs. Ratna Atmaram Rao**

President

National Association for the Blind

C. A. Site-4, Jeevanbimanagar

Bangalore 560 075

I admire Shri Patel's capacity in innovating and developing new projects to upgrade skills of the visually impaired and I have great regards for his advice and guidance.



March, 1989

**(Late) Shri Bhikhabhai Shah**

Executive Secretary

Andhjan Vividhlakshi Talim Kendra

Aerodrome Road, Jamnagar

Jagdishbhai who created appropriate opportunities from education, training, open employment to the computer training of the blind can easily be designated as the most outstanding worker of the age. He has travelled the world over for promoting welfare of the blind persons and has emerged as the pride of the people of Gujarat.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Indravadan Pranlal Shah**

Past District Governor

Lions International District 323-B

& Former President, Adult Training Centre for the Blind

Inspite of blindness and partial deafness, Jagdishbhai has ceaselessly tried to bridge the gap between education and employment for the blind. He initiated training centres which are run on the professional lines of quality, job effectiveness and social accountability. He is a dedicated and dynamic champion of the blind and had been working hard for achieving comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind by infusing new ideas. He has proved to be a torch-bearer of the hundreds and thousands of blind and disabled persons in the country.

March, 1989

**Mr. Kanti Shah and Mr. Shanti Shah**

National Association for the Blind  
11 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road,  
Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

If you go to Ahmedabad and if you don't visit BMA at Vastrapur, you will be missing something. Jagdishbhai started his work with a small organization called "Maganbhai Kendra" which gradually emerged into this complex with multifarious activities.

The ideas of Jagdishbhai generally look funny in the beginning but the same turn out to be fantastic in the long run and ultimately prove to be substantial and very important. His way of dealing and working with people is remarkable. Words are inadequate for us to describe the important role played by Jagdishbhai in the welfare work for the blind not only in Gujarat but all over the country.



March, 1989

**Mr. Manubhai D. Shah**

Managing Trustee  
Consumer Education and Research Centre  
Suraksha Sankool  
Thaltej, Ahmedabad 380 054

It has always been a heartening phenomenon to notice that the disability of Jagdishbhai has not deterred him from normal activities of sighted persons. In fact his disability has motivated him greater to seek compensation and satisfaction by undertaking other philanthropic activities. I have found in Jagdishbhai a quick grasp, indomitable courage, tenacious pursuit and pragmatic wisdom in promoting and expanding activities as well as problem solving.

He always has an open mind willing to listen and change. He is equally frank and forthright in expression of his views and he does not hold back his views and always encourages free discussion.



March, 1989

**Prof. Anant Shastri**

Past President

Lions Club of Vastrapur

3, Manglayam Society

Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai is a symbol of devotion towards duty (*Kartavyapranta*). His understanding of the problems and promptness of finding appropriate solution is worth appreciating. One learns from him the art of devoting oneself completely to the attainment of set objectives.

His optimism and courage in the face of hazards is remarkable. His physical limitations have not deterred him - he says "*body is bound by the laws of nature, the mind and soul are yours - you can control the world*". In face of whatsoever hardships, he stands like an invincible warrior and sets his goal of achieving his objectives undeterred by any obstacles and never prepared to accept defeat, he always emerges victorious.

His sense of duty and determination are the consistent source of inspiration to the youth today.



March, 1989

**Mr. Wolfgang Arthur Stein**

Immediate Past President

International Council for Education of Persons with Visual Impairment (formerly ICEVH)

7, Neuhofstrasse, 64625, Bensheim

Germany

Jagdish - that's the name I have known for many years, "*Jagdish*" so strange to a German ear. Yet - a name not to be forgotten: Associated with a man of real kindness, soft and gentle talk but with an inner fire of determination and zeal. I will always remember him, my dear friend. He has shown me and others the virtues and potentials of a blind person. To him, rehabilitation was not a concept of shelter and protection, but a process that brought liberation from a handicap. His work has inspired me and many others.

6 November, 1990 (*On the occasion of his 39th Visit to India*):

Visiting BMA and meeting Jagdishbhai has become a routine. Two days of hard work ... But it is always enjoyable - in an atmosphere of productivity, genuine concern and friendship.



March, 1989

**Lion Homi S. Tarapore**

Past Dist. Governor

Lions Club International District, 323-B

Mithakali, Ahmedabad 380 006

Men with guts and a strong will to prove the impossible have always intrigued me, and one such person is our friend Jagdishbhai. Deprived at a very young age of the gift of sight, he did not despair or concede, as many others in his place would have done.

It is amply evident from his accomplishments in life that the word impossible does not exist for him. Unless you know this wonderful person, always beaming with a smile, ever ready and keen to respond to any task allotted to him, his enthusiasm would make one believe that his capacity of "*vision*" far exceeds most of us. To be honest, his zeal to live and help the disabled to earn their livelihood will put many able-bodied young men to shame.

It does us proud to know that BMA was started and later developed under his guidance and direction. This marvellous institution will always be a standing tribute to this gallant individual.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Kanubhai A. Thaker**

Director

Education and Support Services

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai with his sagacity, formative will, determined devotion and dynamic power of administration has himself become a "*mission*" for the expedition on the untrodden path to reach the ultimate goal of shaping the destiny of a blind person as a complete person.

The voyage of the sightless towards the sight through education, rehabilitation, employment and comprehensive resettlement has yet not been undertaken by any other individual. Jagdishbhai is determined to promote training of the blind in physiotherapy, stenography, computer programming and operation and integrated education.

His journey on the untrodden path shall never cease and shall elicit the radiant light as a "New beacon of the blind".



March, 1989

**Mr. Mahesh Thaker**

Principal

Adult Training Centre School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Emerging of a Banyan tree from a small seed is a continuous natural process. When a seed, in this case a seed of thinking, is sown, nurtured with devotion, provided manure of patience and determination, in due course of time, it sprouts, due to consistent hard work it grows into a Banyan tree, it yields sweet fruits, provides flowers as a symbol of love and encouragement, the fragrance of such flowers spreads every where - this is the greatness, pride, recognition and popularity of that Banyan tree. Jagdishbhai has sown such a seed of thinking which is a symbol of analytical scientific and psychological process of this material world. This is a heritage of complete growth and development of disabled persons and that is BMA.

Jagdishbhai maintains, "*A blind or a disabled person is not a scourge or burden on the family but he is a part of the mainstream of social life and deserves equal respect like any other citizen. First he is human being and then a disabled person.*" To achieve this goal, the organization which is his creation attempts to restore human dignity and self respect of every disabled person.

It is a firm resolve of Jagdishbhai that the ultimate objective of BMA should be extending appropriate employment opportunities to the beneficiaries on completion of education and training. He desires blind persons to live a life of self-respect, dignity and honour. He has strived throughout his whole life to achieve this goal.

His hard work, devotion and dedication have been appropriately recognized in the form of national as well as international awards. The officials of the BMA are being regularly invited as Members of Advisory Committees of the Ministry of Welfare - this is symbol of progress of the organization.



March, 1989

**Mr. Hasmukh M. Thakkar**

Legal Advisor

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

My association of one decade with Jagdishbhai has succeeded in clearing all the earlier misconceptions that I had regarding the potentials of the blind. In him, I have seen many talents, skills, business acumen, and extra-sensory perception which is not present in many sighted persons.

He has vision inspite of being physically blind and has thus been able to build an institution which is contemporary, modern and which will live as a model for posterity. His emphasis on modern techniques of management and professionalism have enabled BMA to sore high in the field of rehabilitation.



March, 1989

**Mr. Burjor D. Thanawala**

Director

Finance and Administration

Sight Savers International

A-3, Shivdham, Malad (W)

Bombay 400 064

I am very impressed by the dynamic qualities of Jagdishbhai which have made the BMA and the Gujarat Branch of the National Association for the Blind as number one branch. He had evolved novel ideas more than two decades ago which are still to be absorbed by other organizations working for the welfare of the blind in the country.

I cannot fail to notice the tremendous success of integrated education under his leadership. Realizing that majority of blind persons reside in the rural areas, he initiated a community based rehabilitation project in Dholka block on a pilot basis, which is now finding favour with not only with other agencies working in the field of welfare of the blind, but also with various national as well as international funding agencies including the Government of India.

I am sure that Jagdishbhai has a large number of admirers who would not sit idly on his laurels but will continue the work started by Jagdishbhai. He is a totally devoted, reliable and trusted partner in the field of prevention and cure of blindness and rehabilitation of the blind.

March, 1989

**Hon'ble R. K. Trivedi**  
Governor of Gujarat  
Raj Bhawan, Gandhinagar

Inspite of the fact that Jagdishbhai has been unfortunately deprived of his eye-sight, the physical handicap has never impaired his resolve to pursue not only a bright academic career but also to stand up as a forceful example to other blind members to become useful members of society.

**6 April, 1989:** Jagdishbhai is the architect of BMA and many other voluntary organizations whose work has been recognized at the national level. He has dedicated more than 40 years of his life for the rehabilitation of the physically handicapped.

He is one of the perhaps very few who had the privilege of having such a long career of dedicated service to the voluntary organizations and in doing so he has weathered many a storms with indomitable courage.



March, 1989

**Mr. G. J. Vachhani**  
Andh Kalyan Mandal  
Opposite Kanta Vikas Gruh  
Rajkot

Onslaught of blindness on Jagdishbhai at a young age turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Had he not become blind, it is doubtful whether services for the blind would have been developed to the present level in Gujarat. It is a universal truth that by promoting a variety of innovative activities for the blind, Jagdishbhai has carved his place in Gujarat as well as in the country as a person with multifaceted qualities.

God sends every human being on this earth with a definite purpose. But very few of them are able to achieve their goal. Jagdishbhai can be counted among those few "Karmath" persons who could achieve the set objectives.

Starting with a mere recreation club, Jagdishbhai has guided the blind persons to the world of computers. The sphere of his activities is not limited only Gujarat or India but the whole sub-continent.

As he has established beyond doubt that a visually impaired person can probably do

everything on this earth done by a sighted person, we expect this man with multifaceted activities and with magnanimous personality to explore the suitable avenues for the blind in the sphere of the satellite.



March, 1989

**Mr. Praful N. Vyas**

Music Teacher

Light House for the Blind Girls

Memnagar, Ahmedabad 380 054

There is a famous saying that "*Mountains look beautiful from a distance, as you come nearer, these look horrifying*". But there is one mountain which looks beautiful from far as well as near, and that is none other but Jagdishbhai.

I have observed Jagdishbhai from very close quarters in many roles: sometimes as a loving father and skilled elder brother, sometimes as devoted worker and professional administrator, sometimes an outstanding politician and a close personal friend, and many a times a well wisher of the disabled and an excellent orator.

In the matters pertaining to social customs and matrimony, he plays the role of an ideal father. Whenever anyone seeks his advice in respect of social traditions, he gives the most appropriate advice which is always unanimously accepted. His devotion to his mission of promoting services for the blind is worth appreciating. He is constantly thinking about the newer means and ways of promoting acceptance of the disabled in society.

He has tremendous up-to-date knowledge about recent political issues. His extent of knowledge about political happenings would give a shock to any seasoned politician. I have experienced him as a close friend on number of occasions. He is well aware as to when to seek assistance from friends and when to extend them support. Thus Jagdishbhai has varied interests and a number of qualities. The sum total of all these qualities - that is Jagdishbhai.

3 March, 1996

With all these qualities, Jagdishbhai is a short-tempered and a very proud person. Many a times, he is very harsh and uses rough language. People, however, tolerate and accept him because of his knowledge and his devotion to the cause. He has a bad tongue but a soft heart.

March, 1989

**Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas**

Hon. Secretary General

National Association for the Blind

11 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road

Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

The zeal, the enthusiasm, the ability to put in hard work, and above all, a keen desire to improve the plight of the visually handicapped, led Jagdish to develop many an innovative programmes for the rehabilitation of the blind.

In fact, it can be said without an iota of exaggeration that perhaps no other organization in India has developed so many successful programmes in the field of rehabilitation of the blind as has been done by BMA and the National Association for the Blind, Gujarat State Branch under the leadership of Jagdishbhai. Very few indeed have the idea of the immense work and unique contribution which Jagdish has made in promoting the cause of the blind.

Without the fear of contradiction or exaggeration one can say that the complex of blind welfare activities developed under the banner of the BMA, Ahmedabad, and under the stewardship of Jagdish, is unparalleled in the history of work for the blind in the country, both in public and voluntary sectors. His zest and deep attachment to the cause of the blind has resulted in the development of institutional and non-institutional services both in urban and rural sectors.

What began as a recreation centre, and then the adult training centre for the blind, in an old-styled 100 year old building in a narrow lane of Ahmedabad, under the auspices of the BMA and under the leadership of Jagdish, has grown into a thick banyan tree, spreading its branches covering all aspects of blind welfare, prevention and cure of blindness, residential as well as integrated education, transitory as well as open employment in the urban as well as rural areas, a large braille lending library, well equipped talking book library, a braille press, and now the latest to join an ever growing family - an electronic workshop.

Although Jagdish has no children of his own, these are his children whom he helped to conceive, nurture and nourish, the benefits of which are for all of us to see. I wish we had a few more Jagdish in this country who would give a fillip to the work for the blind in India.

Several other organizations like Lions Club and Jaycees have also received the benefit of the services of Jagdish. Although outspoken and even abrasive, typifying the characteristics

of 'Patels', Jagdish means well, and has delved deeply into his personal resources to help the needy fellow-sufferers.

Undaunted by his dual handicaps of blindness and partial deafness, Jagdish continues vigorously to participate on various governmental and non-governmental bodies connected with work for the blind. Undoubtedly his endeavours have received continual support and encouragement from his wife Bhadraben who has been his eyes, and of late his ears, as Jagdish is developing severe deafness. His efforts have received unparalleled backing from Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, as also devoted loyalty and unstinted cooperation from his colleagues, which made his dreams come true.



March, 1989

**Mr. Duncan Watson**

President: World Blind Union

C/O Royal National Institute for the Blind

224 Great Portland Street

London WIN 6AA U. K.

Ever since founding the BMA in 1950, Jagdish has been the foremost amongst pioneer workers with blind people on the Indian sub-continent. His Centre at Ahmedabad is a model of service provision and supports many imaginative programmes, rural and urban, over a wide area. As a result of this work, many thousands of blind people lead happier, more satisfying lives and they are all grateful to him for his tireless efforts on their behalf.



10 May, 1989

**Mr. B. V. Shinkre**

Zonal Manager

Bank Of India, Ahmedabad

I am very pleased by the excellent work of the Association under the leadership of Jagdishbhai and feel happy that our Bank has played a role in helping the Association.



9 June, 1989

**Faculty Members**

Department of Rehabilitation Science  
Holy Cross College  
Tiruchirapalli 620 002

We congratulate Jagdishbhai and his team for their committed and dedicated service for the rehabilitation of the handicapped. Visit to BMA is the most enriching experience.



16 June, 1990

**Late Mr. S. S. Nadkarni**

Managing Director  
Industrial Development Bank Of India  
Nariman Point, Bombay

I was greatly impressed to visit this "*Human Laboratory*" - a creation of Jagdishbhai - where handicapped persons are transformed into viable contributors to the society. Suffice it to say, that this is really a "*great work*". IDBI is happy and proud too, to be associated - albeit in a small way with this experiment. Let me wish the BMA all the success and all the best in life and happiness to all those associated with it, whichever way.



6 April and  
2 February, 1991

**Times of India**

Ahmedabad Edition  
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009

Jagdishbhai has always set his sight on one and only one goal: the welfare of the blind.... His dedication should encourage other budding social workers to put their heart and soul in working for the welfare of the blind.

Under his leadership, the BMA has emerged the largest institution now in the country, working for the welfare and rehabilitation of the blind.



10 February, 1991

April, 1991

## Gujarat

## Blind Welfare

Jagdishbhai is known all over the country for initiating innovative and multi-farious activities for the blind and the disabled. His major motivations include a school of physiotherapy, computer training for the blind and disabled, stenography and touch typing for the blind. He has also promoted and co-ordinated a unique concept of community based rehabilitation of the blind across the country.



11 December, 1991

## India Abroad

62 years old, a voluntary worker, Jagdishbhai was among eight elderly people, selected among 850 nominations, who were honoured at a ceremony in London attended by top British entertainment personalities on November 4 in recognition of their efforts in providing outstanding service to the care and well-being of elderly people world-wide.

The Princess of Wales, patron of the British Charity 'Help the Aged', presented the award to Jagdishbhai for his tireless community work among the handicapped in Gujarat.

Jagdishbhai has been working to improve lives of blind people in India for many years.



28 March, 1992

## Dr. Salma Maqbool

Chairperson

Committee on the Status of Blind Women

World Blind Union

Adamji Compound

Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Our visit to BMA, meeting with Jagdishbhai and his highly efficient team was an experience which has enlightened us and broadened our vision about the work for people with all kinds of disabilities. We wish greater success, wisdom and strength to the management and staff of BMA. In our opinion the example of BMA should be emulated in other parts of India and SAARC region.

December, 1992

**Mr. Subba Rao**

Blind Welfare

National Association for the Blind

11 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road

Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

Recognizing a need, formulating a concrete plan of action, and putting the right man on the right job - that is Jagdishbhai's formula for success.



27 April, 1993

**Mrs. Ilaben Jani**

Chairman

Gujarat Social Welfare Advisory Board

21 Ashok Nagar, Bhatta

Paldi, Ahmedabad 380 007

The organization being managed under the dynamic leadership is a pride of Gujarat. I specially appreciate adoption of modern technology for imparting appropriate training to the disabled persons.



30 June, 1995

**Mr. Ashok Khandelwal**

22, Heritage Way

Tornton/Cleveleys

Lancs. FY5 3BD U.K.

He is a man with clear mission and a vision to see beyond the capacity of an average human being. He has the enthusiasm and dynamism to achieve the best for his fellow human beings. Once committed to a cause, he will leave no stone unturned. His achievements in respect of establishing the Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped and the School of Physiotherapy for the Blind are remarkable.

He possesses a remarkable endurance to carry on the tasks of selfless devotion to the cause, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. It is grace of God and indeed privilege that I have received a great deal of love and affection from Shri Jagdishbhai.



17 July, 1995

**Mr. Suresh C. Ahuja**

President

Action of Disability and Development India

11, Oval View, Bombay 400 020

From small beginnings, BMA under his leadership has gained national and international fame. We are all proud of Jagdishbhai and his achievements. He has shown great foresight in professionalizing the organization. He has also shown enormous tenacity of spirit in facing all obstacles including physical ailments. I wish him continued success in his work.



6 October, 1995

**Mr. P. John Ebenezer**

Principal

High School for the Blind

Palayamkottai 627 002

Tamil Nadu

Jagdishbhai is an illustrious son of India and a man of great courage and determination and indomitable will and has overcome all his barriers and has become a great leader and inspiration to every disabled person and every worker in the field of welfare of the disabled. His contribution to the field of welfare of the blind in India and the world will be written in golden letters of history.



21 October, 1995

**Mr. K. Kempaiah**

Zonal Officer (South)

National Association for the Blind

C. A. Site-4, Jeevanbimanagar

Bangalore 560 075

Each time I meet Jagdishbhai, I derive great inspiration from his speech, ideas and charismatic personality. He has played a key role in developing practical, innovative and result oriented programmes and services for the welfare of the handicapped.

A man of extra-ordinary vision, he is a true champion of the cause of the welfare of the visually handicapped. He can easily influence others through his humble yet an egalitarian approach which makes others agree with him.

He fully deserves our heartiest felicitations and wish him many more years of health, peace and fruitful activity.



21 October, 1995

**Mr. R. T. Deshmukh**

Secretary

National Association for the Welfare of the Physically Handicapped  
Near Amravati University, Gate No. 3, Mardi Road  
Amravati Camp, Amravati 444 602

This publication highlighting the life-sketch and achievements of Jagdishbhai will create a tremendous awareness in society about the abilities of the visually impaired. His abilities and personality would always inspire and impress anyone he meets. He taught me a valuable lesson - an organizer must always be alert in every respect.



21 November, 1995

**Mr. Suresh Amin**

5, Hedingham Close  
Horley, Surrey, U. K.

Jagdishbhai is my ideal and he is totally devoted to service to other fellow beings. The secret of his life is not to do what one likes but try to like what one has to do for others. He warms many hearts and dries tears of many others. He always consults others in every work which he has to do. When he is cautioned that that task is difficult, he says, "*It is perhaps difficult, let us try at least*". Because of his good work and a number of achievements to his credit, everyone trusts his initiatives and actions.

I know Jagdishbhai as a cheerful person, and I hope and I am sure he will keep up this for ever.



13 January, 1996

**Mr. R. Natarajan**

Computer Consultant  
25\240 Nidhi Apartments  
Shastri Nagar, Ahmedabad 380 013

Inspite of being blind, his self confidence, similar to that of Helen Keller, is the backbone or foundation for an institution which is a monolith, the BMA. He has in turn instilled his self-confidence into other persons (*both blind and normal*).

I am, humbly maturing to the fact all these years, that "Handicapped or otherwise is only superficial, and inner vision is the only requisite in determining whether one person is really handicapped or fully facultied" thanks to Shri Jagdishbhai.



21 February, 1996

**Mrs. Hansa B. Punani**

Advocate: High Court of Gujarat  
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009

I always admire Jagdishbhai for his very sharp sixth sense and his ability to foresee the events. His evaluation of the persons who come in his contact is so perfect and accurate that he can easily see through the people. His memory of people and voices is worth appreciating.

Apart from his personal strengths he has tremendous administrative capacity. He knows very well how to handle people and situations. At times he could be the most loving and caring fatherly figure, at other moments, he could be completely ruthless and a strong-headed person.

In Jagdishbhai, one can easily see the best expression of human values of courage, determination, integrity, sense of purpose and a ruthless tenacity to overcome every obstacle in life. That is why Jagdishbhai's life can appropriately be described as a "*Saga of Success.*"

Single-handedly, he has created BMA as the largest non-governmental organization of its kind in the country. A man of foresight and clear objectives, Jagdishbhai is the most outstanding performer, achiever and administrator in true sense.



23 February, 1996

**Mr. Pankaj S. Dalal**

Accountant

Rajesh Mehta Technical School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

What Jagdishbhai has attained in the field of promoting services for the blind is unparalleled. He is the fountainhead of inspiration for all the blind persons and other service minded persons. His major achievements include promoting education, self employment, open competitive employment for the blind as well as disabled. He has given a new hope to the millions of blind and disabled persons in the developing world.

By introducing a variety of innovative, realistic and result oriented programmes for the comprehensive rehabilitation of blind persons, he achieved national as well as international level reputation for the BMA.



29 February, 1996

**Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw**

Secretary

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Nature was unkind in inflicting disability upon Jagdishbhai at a tender age. He, however, had spirit, strong will and unimaginable courage to win over his disability. Despite his lose of vision, he had the courage and ability of developing the organization to the present stature. He reflected his excellent skills during his formative years but justifying BMA as a scientific research organization and thus availed cent per cent tax exemption on all donations. His capacity to hold BMA together as an anchor is exemplary. A man of strong will power Jagdishbhai always gives top priority to blind welfare. He always supports welfare of the blind from the core of his heart.

It is always a great pleasure working with him. Whenever any colleague has difference with him, he may be stubborn in his approach, may press his point very hard, he, however, always maintains respect for his co-workers - that maintains the team spirit.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. M. K. Choudhary**

Director: Education  
National Association for the Blind  
124 Rustom Alpaiwala Complex  
Cotton Green, Cotton Depot  
Bombay

Jagdishbhai, a dynamic and most dedicated leader is responsible for creating right environment for the excellent growth of the National Association for the Blind, Gujarat Branch. One should learn from him as to how to manage people and to develop a cohesive team. He has outstanding ability to provide guidance and inspiration to people around him. He can be easily accorded a very high ranking among the most leading workers of the blind in India.

He should be one in a million who always has innovative ideas up the sleeve and rolls them out at the spur of moment. He can always pin point new dimensions pertaining to any gamut of services for the blind.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. Subhash Datrangle**

Executive Director  
National Association for the Blind  
11, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road  
Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

Jagdishbhai is a person with a great business acumen. He always has a practical approach to everything. He is known for his determination and strong will power. Very forthright and astute Jagdishbhai always puts his foot down and brooks no nonsense. At times he can be very firm and determined. Due to this nature he has won friends as well as created enemies who have credited as well as discredited him with many things.

Academically he may not be flamboyant and his articles may always not be professional but his thoughts are always practical and based on his experience. As a person he appears quite ordinary, yet he has a towering personality He always encourages young professionals. In spite of his multiple handicaps, he has the abilities of a Phoenix - a bird that rises from ashes. With his triple disability what he has achieved during his life time - to do that needs a miracle.

2 March, 1996

**Mr. Somchand Gosrani**

President

NAB Jamnagar District Branch

Jamnagar

Jagdishbhai has been playing a vital role in initiating, developing and strengthening need based services for the blind. His efforts and achievements have rightly recognized by conferring the *Padma Shri* by the President of India.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. Lallubhai Prajapati**

Principal

Smt. M. K. Mehta School for the Blind

Palanpur

Jagdishbhai is a friend, philosopher and guide to a large number of workers of the blind in our country. He has always been a source of inspiration and encouragement to them. His contribution to the society and the nation despite his blindness is most outstanding.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. Ishtiaq Haider**

Past Principal: Ahmedi High School for the Blind

Aligarh Muslim University

Aligarh

Jagdishbhai is one of the few persons who never think about themselves but always think about the cause. Despite his physical problems, he is determined to serve the cause of blind welfare till the last moment.

If there were at least five persons like Jagdishbhai in different parts of the country, our task of promoting blind welfare would become easier and speedier.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. P. George**

Secretary: National Association for the Blind  
Kerala Branch  
Tiruchirapalli

I was very impressed with his dedication and commitment towards the welfare of the blind. He has a great concern for the upliftment of the visually impaired. Despite his age and illness, he has been so actively involved in the day to day affairs of the Ahmedabad office. He always has time to spare whenever he wants to meet and discuss various matters.

Jagdishbhai is a person of par-excellence, a God-like man, God has specially sent him to this world to serve less fortunate people.



2 March, 1996

**Mrs. Gool Ghadiali**

Honorary Secretary  
Education, Rehabilitation, Training & Fund Raising  
National Association for the Blind  
Worli Seaface, Bombay

Jagdishbhai is a man completely dedicated to the welfare of the blind. He has poured his heart, soul and blood for this cause. With all his disabilities, Jagdishbhai is a man of extremely strong will, determination honesty and sacrifice.

A man under his problematic conditions would normally fade away in turmoil and depression. But his great enthusiasm, will to live and let others live and his energies are poured totally into the work for the blind. One feels that he is a source of inspiration to many. Whatsoever BMA has achieved so far, it is all due to his efforts. He has poured his blood to make BMA what it is today with all its multi-farious departments, with all his innovative ideas. I am sure Jagdishbhai has played an important part.



2 April, 1996

**Dr. Iqbal Mohammadi**

Past President

Rotary Club of Mahu Gate (3040)

Indore

Jagdishbhai is the most devoted person. I am fully satisfied with his thinking and philosophy. His achievement: Whatsoever project he initiated was always successful. His style of thinking and working is unique.

His voice and nature are most impressive for everyone he meets. Everyone considers him a role model and wishes to achieve what Jagdishbhai has achieved so far.

His achievements are most outstanding in the field of vocational training, on the job training, self employment, door to door services, community based rehabilitation and economic rehabilitation.



4 April, 1996

**Mr. Ramanbhai M. Patel**

Navipore Haveli

Kakarkhad

Nadiad

Jagdishbhai is a wonderful person. From his childhood, he always impressed everyone he met. His achievements are unparalleled in the field of blind welfare. A skillful, extra-ordinarily intelligent Jagdishbhai is always full of confidence. It is always a pleasure meeting him and learning about newest achievements.



4 April, 1996

**Mr. Naresh B. Rathod**

Placement Officer

Employment & Placement Services

BMA, Ahmedabad 38 0 015

Whatsoever Jagdishbhai desires, he gets it done from others. He is excellent in extracting work from others. He is, however, easily accessible to all blind and disabled persons.



He is ever willing to listen, understand and solve all sort of problems, even the personal ones. He extends fullest cooperation to all the staff members.

His major goal is promotion of equal opportunities for all the blind and disabled persons and achieving their complete social integration. He always wants that the BMA must progress at a fast pace and emerge to be the most leading organization in the field of disabled welfare.

My respect for Jagdishbhai increased manifold when I learnt about his receiving the Padma Shree Award. I felt honoured that I work for an organization which has been established and developed by such an outstanding person.



23 April, 1996

**Mr. Natwar Patel**

Physiotherapist

Gunatit Nagar

Memnagar, Ahmedabad

Whatsoever proficiency I have achieved in my profession as a blind physiotherapist, it is mainly because of his support, guidance and encouragement. For this, I would always remain indebted to him.

I am confident that one day Jagdishbhai would be considered one of the top ten most successful blind persons in the world. His achievements would be equated with that of Louis Braille and Helen Keller. In fact, these two legends worked only for the blind persons, whereas Jagdishbhai devoted himself for the progress of all categories of disabled persons.



2 June, 1996

**Mr. Rajni Chauhan**

House Master

Adult Training Centre for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai is the most capable and the most outstanding persons in the field of blind welfare. He has developed the feelings of “one family - one mission” among all the staff members and the workers of the organization.

Jagdishbhai is a very honest and an efficient person. Despite his blindness, he is far ahead of even the sighted people. He develops very intimate relations with every staff member. He has devoted his whole life to the cause of the blind. His blindness has never hampered his enthusiasm and his level of motivation.

It is almost impossible for a blind person to achieve his level of confidence, knowledge and administrative skills. He is a shining example of victory over blindness.



5 July, 1996

**Mrs. Lalitha Muralidharan**

National Association for the Blind  
Rural Activities Committee  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad -15

At the first instance, Jagdishbhai may express his inability to extend any assistance. If one pursues the matter, there is a every chance that he would relent and be helpful. I am proud that Jagdishbhai is Chairman of the Rural Activities Committee for which I work. I always enjoy working for him and follow his advice in the right earnest. Under his dynamic leadership, the NAB RAC has emerged to be the most leading, functional and result-oriented activity of the NAB. It is due to his vision, efforts and guidance that the presence of the NAB RAC is felt across the whole country. I am truly proud of him.



4 December, 1996

**Mr. Damji Tank**

Supervisor: Printing Department  
BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai is incarnation of Lord Jagdish for visually impaired persons. He has devoted his whole life for the cause and has achieved a great deal for them. He is a jolly good guy, always full of life. I shall always remain indebted to him for all that he has done for me.



4 December, 1996

**Mrs. Vimal Thawani**

Psychiatric Social Worker

BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

Jagdishbhai, on the face of it, is a person with multiple disabilities. On closer acquaintance, he is a person in full command and his sharp intellect and perceptiveness are qualities which remain uppermost in mind.

Despite his severe disabilities, Jagdishbhai is a very dynamic, innovative and a stickler for performance from his staff. He is very committed to the cause, result-oriented and resourceful. The rapid strides made by the institution are mainly due to his guidance and support. He appreciates and encourages new ideas, new concepts and innovative approaches. I am impressed by his confidence, and to put it candidly, sometimes afraid of his over confidence.

In his present condition, his will to live and excel, is what makes him tick.



5 December, 1996

**Mr. Rohit C. Dave**

Cashier

BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

Jagdishbhai to us is a respected and revered elder, and the head of a large and closely knit family. He established the BMA not only for the blind but for all possible categories of disabled persons by pouring in his blood and efforts in its founding and later on by nurturing it with great care. Today, the BMA is the “*Kaba and Kashi*” in the field of welfare and any visitor to India has to come here. As a visit to India without visiting the Gandhi Ashram and without a dip in the holy Ganges is incomplete, so is a welfare visitor’s pilgrimage incomplete unless he sees BMA.



5 December, 1996

**Mr. Ambalal N. Patel**

Attendant: ATC Workshop

BMA Ahmedabad - 15

During last 25 years, he has created the country’s largest institute for the blind and

the disabled. Even today, despite his severe disability, he is putting his best efforts of promoting the services further. His major contribution is promoting vocational and professional training for the blind persons. The introduction of talking computer is fascinating, approaching the rural disabled through community based rehabilitation is commendable. Through the Mental Hygiene Clinic and the project for the persons with multiple disabilities, a large number of severally children have benefited. Another major contribution is introduction of speech therapy and audiometry for the children.

I offer my heartiest congratulation to Hon'ble Jagdishbhai for devoting his life to the cause of the blind and the disabled. I pray for his long life of great dedication.

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5 December, 1996

**Mrs. Mayaben Patel**

Accountant

ATC for the Blind

BMA Ahmedabad - 15

Lord Krishna was the spirit behind the Pandavas in the Mahabharata and in today's age who is the messiah of the blind and the disabled? If this question was put to the blind and disabled persons, they would all reply in unison - Jagdishbhai.

He has dedicated his life for the welfare and uplift of the blind and disabled. Even today, when his health is frail, the uppermost question in his mind is what can he do for the blind and the disabled. Because of his perseverance, the BMA today is known internationally. I pray to God for Jagdishbhai's good health and long life.

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5 December, 1996

**Mr. Nainesh Purohit**

Computer Instructor

Industrial Training Institute

BMA, Ahmedabad -15

His outstanding contribution in the field of comprehensive development of the blind and disabled persons would always be remembered. His inspiration to such persons has enabled them to attain complete development and integration. At one time, such persons hardly had any place in the society. They were considered outcast and had hardly any scope for their integration.

Because of his efforts and vision, these persons availed appropriate training and opportunity of attaining self respect and acceptance in the society. I hope his great work would always be remembered and others would get inspiration to continue the tradition of good work.



5 December, 1996

**Mr. Rambhai Jadav**  
Project Supervisor  
Community Based Rehabilitation  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

I feel that the rural blind persons of India owe a debt of gratitude to Jagdishbhai. It is because of single-handed efforts of this one individual that the rural blind have got access to rehabilitative services. I think the greatness of this man lies in this aspect that though he is an urbanite, his heart and mind are one with the rural populace. Had he not initiated CBR programmes, I shudder to think what could have happened to thousands of rural blind persons. I salute his vision and his love for the rural poor.



5 December, 1996

**Mrs. Mira Y. Shah**  
Fund Raising Officer  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

If a person has only heard Jagdishbhai's voice and not seen him, it would be difficult to convince this listener that the speaker is blind. All of us believe that when the Almighty takes away one faculty, He amply compensates this loss with amplified strength in the others. Jagdishbhai is extremely gifted in his intelligence, his perception and his understanding. I feel that if this man had not been blind, he would have been in the corridors of power in New Delhi!



5 December, 1996

**Mrs. Leelamma Thomas**  
Executive Assistant  
Adult Training Centre for the Blind  
BMA, Ahmedabad -15

My 15 years of working with my honourable big boss are the years of inspiration and personal development. His vast experience and knowledge in the field of blind welfare has helped BMA in emerging as a pioneering Institute in the country and in achieving many personal as well as institutional Awards.

The organization has risen to its present stature by the unceasing, dauntless and enterprising work done by its Founder Secretary - Dr. Jagdish K. Patel. In short, he is the main source behind the success of the organization. Truly he deserves the title "Big Boss".

I wish him a long and happy life and never to retire from his humanitarian work for the blind.

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6 December, 1996

**Mrs. Brahada Shanker**  
Project Coordinator  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

I met Jagdishbhai, for the first time, in his wheel chair on his way to the physiotherapy room. My first impression, on seeing him, was that he was a totally dependent person. But later on, I came to know that he was an outstanding visionary leader, whose zest for life has not been dampened. His determination to help all those who suffer from similar fate or the drop of kindness which is within him is a steady stream of care for others has inspired and motivated us to help in the same way. His untiring effort will always be carried on by us to make this cause a noble task for all the needy people.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

11 December, 1996

**Mr. Ramchanadra M. Thakkar**  
Retd. Sr. Clerk  
BMA, Ahmedabad-15.

My association as Jagdishbhai's right hand man is now 34 years old. I have been his personal assistant, his reader, his writer during these years. Even after I retired in 1988, he has asked me to stay on. We relate so well and our tuning is so good that I instinctively know his needs and he knows that I understand. I know when he is in a good mood and when he wants to be left alone.

It has been my great pleasure to work with him and that I could be with him for such a long time. I am impressed by his great punctuality and diligence in attending office. He is never late and never too tired to work. Work is his relaxation and the motive of his existence.

During my work with him, I found in him a profound zeal to uplift, educate, train and rehabilitate the blind and the disabled who are the unwanted segments of the society and for whom there prevailed a strong social stigma and deep-rooted prejudice.

His quest was always to improve the status of the blind and he worked day and night for this. Today, I find that the organization has the most well established programmes, projects and activities. It is well known not only in the State of Gujarat but at the national as well as at the international levels also. My humble association with him gives me a great pleasure and pride. Jagdishbhai, with his dynamism and assiduity, could convert the social stigma into a philanthropic participation of the society. He succeeded in creating a great awareness about the potentials of the blind and the disabled and their capacity to serve the society through their gainful and productive participation.

Jagdishbhai is not only the General Secretary to me but a man with human feelings, who could understand every staff member and their family needs. His memory is phenomenal as is his insistence on perfection. I always pray to God that such a dynamic soul shall remain and live long for the betterment of his fellow beings. I shall remember him not only as a employer but also a perfect human being for ever. Long live Jagdishbhai.



12 December, 1996

**Mr. Dilip H. Shah**

Phsyotherapist

NRG School of Physiotherapy

BMA Ahmedabad - 380 015

Jagdishbhai has created a mammoth organization. His creation of School of Physiotherapy is commendable. Himself being a Physiotherapist, he was always keen to establish this school. As he knew the field himself very well, he could create a very functional school.

I admire his art of motivating other blind persons to pursue career in phyiotherapy. He always has positive approach to life. He always tries to experiment innovations aimed at complete development of blind persons.

Inspite of his blindness, he could guide thousands of disabled persons. His life is a source of motivation for a large number of disabled persons. He encourages disabled persons to help other disabled persons.



12 December, 1996

**Mr. Bharat A. Dhuri**

Clerk cum Assistant Accountant

Braille Press

National Association for the Blind

Ahmedabad - 15

Jagdishbhai is a symbol of sacrifice. He has provided effective leadership in the field of blind welfare. He is a role model for most blind and disabled persons. He has lived the life as a saint and is a great person. Almighty God give him long life!



9 January, 1997

**Ms. Shirin M. Kanga**

Principal

Smt. Radhaba Home Science

Shri C.U. Shah Commerce Polytechnic

Sanskar Kendra Marg

Near Ellisbridge Post Office

Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad.6.

Coming to know about and meeting people like Shri Jagdishbhai Patel - the founder & father figure of BMA, Kanubhai, the then Principal & present treasurer, watching the blind manage themselves and their affairs efficiently, and easily, doubled the esteem in which I held the visually handicapped.

Moreover, being in the field of education, for decade and being aware of the vast chasm that often exists between '*what should be*' and '*what actually is*', it always attracts one to look for a satisfying experience. In a world of selfish people, corrupt bureaucrats, misguiding leaders and unscrupulous educators- what a joy to find an Oasis in a desert. BMA promised to be that - an organization which relentlessly works on for the betterment & development of the blind. No wonder then that the



choice of my field work was immediately and unhesitatingly made to get a chance to closely look at the “various aspects of the School for the Blind” run by the Blind Men’s Association at Vastrapur.



25 January, 1997

**Mr. Chaturbhai Patel**

Music Teacher

Music School for the Blind

BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

Very few persons know that Jagdishbhai knows music also. He has completed his Sangit Visharad. During his young days, he used to play *Dilruba* and other musical instruments. As he devoted himself completely to promotion of a variety of services for the blind, his interest and skills in music got camouflaged. But his life and achievements manifest his interest in music. Music stands for logic, oratory, dialogue, devotion, a mix of sharp and soft, and for sweetness - Jagdishbhai has imbibed all these qualities and has reflected the same in his pursuit of promoting services for the blind. The achievements of Jagdishbhai establish that anyone managing a large organization must know and understand music.

During my association of four decades, I have never seen Jagdishbhai a disenchanting person. He always remains a jolly person even during the moments of crisis. His other distinguishing quality is concern for everyone and everyone’s easy accessibility to him.

His life is a source of inspiration to many.



12 March, 1997

**Mr. Bipin R. Mehta**

Itinerant Teacher

National Association for the Blind

Ahmedabad - 380 015

Who does not know Jagdishbhai - the *Massiah* of the blind people who led them from darkness to light. He is well known in this continent for his outstanding achievement in the field of comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind.

He is known for his skills of developing positive attitude about the blind and disabled persons. He has devoted himself completely for the promotion of education and social integration of such persons.

I met Jagdishbhai for the first time during July, 1991. I had the opportunity of meeting him regularly and learning the art of dealing with blind persons. He is a man of perfection and speed. He is keen on adopting innovative approach to rehabilitation. His land-mark achievement is promoting community based rehabilitation of the rural disabled. He could actively involve the parents and the community in taking services to the door-steps of disabled people.

He deserves my compliments for initiating, for the first time, in the country, the parent-teacher programme. Similarly his contribution to the promotion of integrated education in Gujarat is commendable.

The special teachers were compelled to go to other states for one year to complete a recognized teacher training course. To enable such teachers to pursue such training in Gujarat itself, Jagdishbhai succeeded in starting such a course at BMA which is now a blessing for Itinerant Teachers like myself. All the teachers who have completed this course, all the children enrolled under integrated education and the parent teachers would always remain indebted to Jagdishbhai.

My family joins me in wishing a very long life to Jagdishbhai....!



17 April, 1997

**Fr. George Kunnath**

Director

Kutch Vikas Trust

Raidhanpar, Kutch

When I met Jagdishbhai for the first time during 1984, he provided me valuable guidance and encouraged me to start services for the rehabilitation and education of the blind. I was impressed with his knowledge, dedication and clarity of thoughts. Subsequently, he visited the Kutch Vikas Trust twice. Everyone at the centre found him a devoted, a good person and a saviour. God bless him with many more years of service to fellow beings!



17 April, 1997

**Dr. P. L. Desai**

Eye Surgeon

Federation of Ophthalmic Research and Education Centre

Dr. Madhuriben P. Desai

14 B, Hindu Colony

Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009

We believe it is our good luck to be associated with Jagdishbhai who is such a sincere and capable person. He has devoted his life for the uplift of the sightless. No words can do justice to his life-time excellent work.

The Almighty God wanted someone to appreciate the difficulties of sightless persons and to help them in every respect. He created Jagdishbhai to fulfill this task. He bestowed upon him an unusual understanding of the problems faced by fellow sightless persons. He has also been blessed with the enthusiasm and ability to help them.

Besides, Jagdishbhai has an uncanny knack of being able to find and work with a band of faithful and sincere workers. Without the support of his wife, Bhadraben and his mentor and President of BMA, Shri Arvind Narottam, the BMA would not have been the most premier institution of its kind in the country. All this has been possible because of Jagdishbhai being its central figure. That is why we call him a "*Favoured Son of the Gods*".



1 May, 1997

**Mr. Jayantibhai Shah**

Shri Manav Kalyan Trust

2nd Floor, Swapna Complex

Jawahar Chowk Char Rasta

Maninagar, Ahmedabad 380 008

A very devoted person, Jagdishbhai is always keen on promoting services for the blind and the disabled. His physical limitations and ill-health have not dampened his spirit. He always receives people with great warmth. He has an excellent art of mobilizing resources. Being at the helm of affairs, his administration of the organization is very satisfactory.

Jagdishbhai Patel - the name means a modern, mobile, master computer. He is ceaselessly occupied day and night in worrying about and planning the social, economic and comprehensive rehabilitation of disabled persons. He has sacrificed his life towards kindling light in dark lives of blind persons.



9 May, 1997

**Mr. Mahesh Thaker**

Principal

Adult Training Centre School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

His dreams for the blind reach out to putting them on the moon, he wants to provide them every latest invention and every modern equipment. To keep himself abreast of the happenings in the world, he always listens to the BBC Radio. He cannot sleep well if he does not hear the news on the BBC, the last thing which he does at night. His axiom is "*The blind are first human beings, they just happen to be blind*".

Today, inspite of his blindness, deafness and a stroke, Jagdishbhai is still as involved in the running of the BMA. He does not feel ashamed about his limitations, he says that it is a part of life.

He has always been a strong administrator - independent, undeterred by opinion, never afraid of putting forth his thoughts bluntly and forcefully in any gathering - national or international. His speech is direct, brief, natural and brash, at times. He hates vacillation and indecisiveness.

In my meetings with him, he always told me that the "Power" must be grabbed, one must know as to how and when to grab it. An administrator cannot be tender hearted! A look at his face reveals his adherence to frankness and boldness. There is, however, a tender heart underneath the granite-like exterior, though he prefers to hide the tenderness.

Most sighted persons depend upon diaries and digital note-books for numbers - Jagdishbhai draws them from memory. He has an unbelievable memory, remembering persons from decades ago. He believes firmly that he will remain healthy only if he keeps on working. A person who defies his poor health and fights for a cause, this is Jagdishbhai - **An inspiration to lesser mortals like us.**



21 May, 1997

**Dr. Ramesh K. Patel**

(Younger brother of Jagdishbhai)

Consulting Surgeon: Navjivan Surgical Hospital

Secretary: Indian Red Cross Society, District Branch

Advisory Committee Member: State Branch

Godhra, Panchmahal

*Tribute to a Father Figure*

When I was born, my elder brother Jagdishbhai was 4 years old. We grew up together. Our parents from the beginning taught me to be caring, loving and gentle to him.

My father, Dr. Kashibhai Patel was the only Gujarati doctor in Calcutta those days. He was popular with the elite class, particularly the rich Gujaratis. I have vivid memories of our very happy days in Calcutta - with plenty of attendants, cars etc.

I remember Jagdishbhai as a sighted child and I have very happy memories of our life in Calcutta. My father was particularly fond of Jagdishbhai and used to bring lot of toys for him. He would play with those toys for a few days and then pass the same to me for taking care of these. Once when we were playing together, a glass bottle that was in my hand slipped and fell on his foot giving him a deep cut. Seeing him hurt, as I started crying uncontrollably, no body punished me. That childhood incident left a perennial impression on my subconscious mind that I never ever should hurt him again.

After my father's demise, he performed the role of father in advancement of my professional career and personal life. In my college days, I used to accompany him for his professional visits in the mornings as his driver and guide.

Jagdishbhai has always been fond of good clothes, perfumes and cars. In spite of his handicap, he recognizes the quality of clothes and defects in the cars immediately. He is very fond of classical Indian music. We used to go to concerts in the Town Hall and stay there till early hours of morning to enjoy the renderings of the great masters like Fayyaz Khan etc. He taught me the finer points of Indian classical music. His memory is phenomenal and he always identifies people correctly even after many years of his meeting them merely from their voice. His mind is like a present day computer.

I particularly have fond memories of his daily visits to **Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai** and the exchange of ideas, thoughts and wisdom between the two of them. Such discussions also formed the foundation for my personality growth and character building. The memories of our visits to RETREAT, the residence of **Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai** are still fresh in my

mind as the same were so beautiful. His visits to Sarabhai family inspired them to provide a building to him to establish the first office of the Blind Men's Association at Kameshwar-ni-Pole in Raipur area.

I adore Jagdishbhai for his achievements in the field of comprehensive development of blind persons. Himself blind since the age of 8 years, he lives for the blind alone. Whatever he initiates, he always completes with a great success. Born to lead and to succeed, he has always been my role model. My father, Dr. Kashibhai Patel had great faith in Jagdishbhai's capacity to achieve success in the field of welfare for the blind. I wish my father were alive to witness achievements of his great son.

And as they say, "*Behind every great man, there is a woman*". The woman in this case is Bhadraben, who herself is very well known in the realm of welfare of the blind. She is in true sense and "*Ardhangini*" - always with him, guiding him and looking after him so well.

It is only God's blessings that is keeping Jagdishbhai alive inspite of such serious illnesses like repeated heart attacks, progressive deafness, severe diabetes and paralysis. May be He wants him to serve the blind a little longer. On behalf of my wife, Shubhlata (*who is also very fond of him*), my sons, Mangesh and Dr. Suchet and family members (*now in USA*) and myself pray to Almighty that Jagdishbhai has all the strength to carry out His wishes.



9 June, 1997

**Prof. Piyush Sanghani**

Head: English Department

Prataprai Arts & Kamani Science College

Amreli 365 601

It is a matter of pleasure to say a few words about Jagdishbhai who is a dynamic and lively personality. I studied in the Secondary School for the Blind run under the auspices of the Blind Men's Association from 1966 to 1969. During those days, I imbibed Jagdishbhai's many qualities. His sense of humour has taught me that one can be cheerful even if one is in a tight corner if one keeps a cool head. Jagdishbhai devoted much of his time to the activities of blind students. After 9.30 p. m., he usually sat in the lawn of the school premises and his *Durbar* was held in which many of us participated. Jagdishbhai talked to us on any topic under the sky.

Once Jagdishbhai told us in a surprising manner that what if the assets of the institution were distributed among the blind brethren, it would be much of a help to them to earn their livelihood out of the amount acquired from the sale of the assets. For a while, we

also thought that if millions of rupees accrued out of it, that was the best plan. But to our surprise, Jagdishbhai explained to us that that amount would not last for ever and the activities would come to a grinding halt. We found quite important and appropriate the second argument made by him that without developing intellectual horizons of the blind, just to think of only their livelihood was not a correct idea.

Jagdishbhai is a man of insight. He has always been a thinking machine. He used to tell us, "If you have any idea regarding the education of the blind, you just express and try to convince those who can put it into practice." In this way, Jagdishbhai always wished to be convinced. If you can convince him in any thing, he would never say "nay".

In short, I would like to say that the field of the blind will have to wait for generations for his replica.



10 May, 1997

**Prof. Bhaskar Y. Mehta**

Secretary, National Association for the Blind

Sabarkanta District Branch

"Yogendra Krupa"

7, Anand Nagar Co-operative Society

Behind Dhaneswar Society

Idar 383 430 Gujarat

### ***Unique Gem amongst the Blind***

Jagdishbhai is truly a unique gem amongst the blind persons. In spite of having lost his sight so early in childhood, he has succeeded in struggling against all odds in life. His struggle has never been for self gain but for the comprehensive interest of blind persons at large. I have always been impressed by his innovativeness and his dynamism in adapting to changing times. Though he is a product of special school, he has learnt to walk with both the systems of education, namely integrated and residential education.

He can be given the definite credit of creating the largest number of leaders amongst the visually impaired. Thanks to him, there is at least one leader in every district of Gujarat. He always changes his thinking with the changing times. Sometimes rough in his speech that offends people, he always speaks for the good of the people. His speech is that of a typical "Patel", rough but true. He has won a number of awards but I think that the highest award that he has is the unique place that he has carved in the hearts of blind persons.

12 June, 1997

**Mr. Atul N. Patel**

Adult Training Centre for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai has revolutionized the field of blind welfare by establishing such a large and comprehensive organization for the blind and disabled. He has left a large memorial for posterity.

His nature is very jovial and he has the knack of carrying people along with him due to his care and concern. He has carved a name for himself not only in India but at the international level by creating the BMA. He has been conferred a number of Awards for his meritorious services. I wish him the best of good health and strength to carry on the good work and I pledge my support to him.



**Mr. Paritosh Dave**

House Master  
Adult Training Centre (Hostel) for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

*A Living Legend*

Jagdishbhai is known for his discipline in life and his punctuality which he expects others also to maintain. He puts his best efforts in gathering the latest information about the recent developments and strives to put the same into practice. He has the knack of judging the people and their motives accurately.

I had an opportunity of meeting him almost everyday for one month during 1991 when the hostel was facing student agitation. My close interaction with him taught me how to understand the psychology of a blind student, appreciate his problems, and to deal with the situation patiently and sympathetically.

He has the art of going deep into a problem to understand the same in the right perspective before taking any decision. He is known for his aggressive behaviour, decisiveness and his dominating nature - which probably are the outstanding qualities of a successful administrator. As he has strong will-power, he will accomplish any task he takes up - anyhow, at any cost. He is never disheartened, never concedes defeat and always emerges victorious.

Jagdishbhai, to my mind, is a living legend - Bhishma Pitamaha in the field of blind welfare.



17 June, 1997

**Mr. Prabhudas T. Yadav**

Radio Engineer & Incharge

A. N. Kinariwala Talking Book Library

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai very quickly evaluates nature and level of intelligence of any individual and talks with the person accordingly. In this way, he gets the work done as per his desire. He strongly believes that if we have a strong determination, it would always be possible to achieve our goals. His advice that one should always try to learn good things from others has impressed me the most. If he likes any person, he would go to any extent to help that person. Similarly, if he sets a goal, he would achieve the same at any cost.

I owe Jagdishbhai a lot for whatsoever success I have achieved in my life.



21 June, 1997

**Shri Manubhai Virchand Shah**

A-1 New Tapasvi Apartments

Near Post Office

Memnagar

Ahmedabad -380 026.

Full credit for my success as Motor Rewinder goes to Jagdishbhai. After I acquired blindness due to retina detachment, I referred to the Blind Men's Association. When I joined the Adult Training Centre for the Blind during November, 1966, I was assigned the task of making door mats. The moment Jagdishbhai learnt that a person with Diploma in Civil Engineering has been assigned this task, he summoned me and advised me to join the Motor Rewinding Course. He mentioned that he had observed blind persons in the erstwhile USSR and the U.S.A. working on the manufacturing of electric goods. As I had completed Diploma in Civil Engineering prior to onslaught of blindness, he desired me to opt for training in a skilled activity. As per his advice, I joined as one of four trainees of the first batch of Motor Rewinding Course which I completed during 1969.

Immediately on completion of the course, Jagdishbhai helped me to get a job as Motor Rewinder in the Monogram Mill. This was for the first time that a textile mill at Ahmedabad appointed a blind person for this skilled job. Due to my engineering back-ground and the skills of motor rewinding which I was taught at the Adult Training Centre for the Blind,

\*I could work as Motor Rewinder to the great satisfaction of my superiors till my retirement during 1995.

At present, I own a house, my children are well educated and well settled and I am in a position to help other blind persons. But for Jagdishbhai's advice and encouragement, I would have probably remained idle and unemployed my whole life. I owe my gratitude and sincere appreciation to the openness and innovativeness of Jagdishbhai. Today, I met Jagdishbhai after so many years. I was thrilled when he recognized me from my voice and recalled our first meeting during 1966.

I appreciate the sense of strong determination in Jagdishbhai. He advocates that every blind person can lead an independent life provided he decides to do so. I shall always remained indebted to him for everything he did for me.



22 June, 1997

**Mr. Kirk Horton**

Regional Representative  
Hilton/Perkins International Program  
420, Rajavithi Road  
BANGKOK. 104 00  
Thailand.

I first remember meeting Jagdishbhai at the 1981 ICEVI Third Asian Conference held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Although I had heard of him and the Blind Men's Association before that time, I was not very clear of the scope of the Association's Activities and the role Jagdishbhai had played in developing them. Over the next few years I would meet Jagdishbhai at a number of other regional and international conferences. Gradually through these meetings I began to learn more about the activities of the Blind Men's Association. I remember telling myself that this was an organization I needed to visit. if and ever I went to India.

It was not until 1992, that I finally made it to India through my work with the Hilton Perkin's Program of the Perkins School for the Blind. Dr. Alana Zambone and I came to India to identify programs that might be interested in developing educational services of visually impaired children with additional disabilities. On the top of our list of agencies and people, to meet was Dr. Patel.

We arrived in Ahmedabad and through our initial visit we were both impressed at the variety of activities BMA conducted through both its centre and community based programs.

Almost all aspects of education and rehabilitation of the blind including educational teacher training, integrated education, vocational training, braille production and cassette recording and community based rehabilitation were being implemented. Not only were we impressed with the variety of programs but also, both the quality and innovative aspects of the programs. We found the staff in all sections to be extremely committed and competent. We then began to realize Jagdishbhai's genius not only as an innovator but also as an extremely capable Administrator. Not only had he encouraged the development of such a wide range of activities through one agency but he had found the financial resources from both Government and the Private Sector to keep those activities running. He had also staffed these programs with very capable staff. All of whom shared Jagdishbhai's desire to develop the best programs possible and more importantly to share these programs (both the strengths and weaknesses) with others in India and abroad. We found Jagdishbhai and the BMA to be fully dedicated to collaboration.

For any organization to grow and to show this type of maturity can only happen through strong leadership.

Since that first visit it has been my pleasure to work with Jagdishbhai on developing a component in BMA to deliver services to v.i. children with multiple disabilities. Through correspondence and visits I continue to be amazed at Jagdishbhai's desire to provide services to all people who have severe vision problems. His vision has provided the opportunity for the pre-school age blind, school age blind, adult blind, elderly blind and blind people with multiple handicapped to receive the appropriate services in order they can be fully integrated into society. Even now when most of us would be content to retire, Jagdishbhai continues to provide strong leadership and direction to BMA and continues to challenge his staff to strengthen existing programs. He is now encouraging his staff to once again to expand their programs to include visually impaired children who are deaf/blind.

I feel it is great honour to know and work with Jagdishbhai. I not only deeply respect him as a professional but also a friend. It is rare to find a single individual that has the number of strengths as Jagdishbhai.



27 June, 1997

**Mr. Jaswant K. Purohit**

Welfare Officer

Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad -380 015

It is due to hard work and efforts of Jagdishbhai that thousands of disabled persons have received education, vocational training and professional training. He played an instrumental

role in promoting employment of such persons in physiotherapy, typing, computer operations and such other professions.

He took a bold initiative in promoting comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind persons through innovative approaches, popularly known as Community Based Rehabilitation and Integrated Education. These approaches aim at extending equal opportunities and restoring human dignity of disabled persons.

The institution at Vastrapur which was established by him as his dream has evolved as the largest organization of its kind in the field of comprehensive rehabilitation of all categories of disabled persons. The Multicategory Training centre for the Handicapped, National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute, Research and Documentation Centre are the distinctive testimony to his vision.

May God bless him with excellent health so that he can continue doing most creative work in the field of rehabilitation. He is a fountain-head of inspiration, motivation and guidance to many disabled persons.



27 June, 1997

**Mr. Dipak Joshi**

Accountant

Adult Training Centre (School) for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

As Lord Shiva is known as the God of the Gods, in today's world, Jagdishbhai could be given this title. I feel, he deserves this, because in today's age of strife when human beings kill their fellow brothers and do not want to help anybody and are very selfish, Jagdishbhai emerges very distinct. In spite of having lost his sight, he is working diligently day and night for the

uplift of his blind and disabled brothers. Such a great act of sacrifice and devotion deserves that he be aptly called the God of the Gods. I wish him the very best and I pray to God to bless him with a long and happy life. I bow my head in respect to him.



**Mr. G. M. Singhvi**

Honorary Director

Jay Bharat Sarva Kalyan Nyas

108, Nehru Park, Jodhpur

Jagdishbhai who has not only dedicated himself to the cause of the blind but has sacrificed his whole life and excellence for the emancipation of the disabled and the down trodden. I first met Jagdishbhai probably in 1988 when he came with Mr. Punani, Nandini and his wife at Jodhpur in connection with the CBR Project. It was hear that I discovered that Jagdishbhai lost his eyes at the age of 8 years and the idea of dedicating his life for the welfare of blind came in his mind. In spite of his being visually handicapped, Bhadraben decided to marry him and both joined hands to carry the cart of blind welfare to its end. Since than I had the opportunity of meeting Jagdishbhai numerous times at Ahmedabad, Mt. Abu and other places. I had the privilege to work with him as Co-Vice President (Both of us were Vice President) of the NAB Pheroz Naushir Merwanji Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, Mount Abu. Always in his deliberation with me, there was no other subject but the welfare and emancipation of the blind, their education and rehabilitation. I have been working in this field for the last 8 years and I still have to come across a man like him who has dedicated his whole life for the cause of blind welfare.

I wish and pray to the Almighty that Jagdishbhai may live for another hundred years to work for blind and inspire all of us to work for this nobel cause.



15 July, 1997

**Mrs. Dakshaben Manmadbhai Patel**

(Sister of Jagdishbhai)

355, S. Y. Road

202, Lila Apartment

Opposite Golden Tobacco

Vile Parle (West)

Mumbai 400 056

What can I possibly write about my beloved elder brother? I get so emotional just thinking about him, that already my throat is getting choked. His influence in my life is all pervasive, benevolent, tender and caring. I see in him my father - he has been my father figure — indulging my whims and fancies, fondly agreeing to all my demands,

reasonable and otherwise. My children, Mandeep and Minoti adore him, they call him "Dada" (Grandfather), they love meeting him, pulling pranks, laughing with him. They are very protective about him and always want to help him in his mobility and take the utmost care to see that he is happy. My husband Manmad is his fan and looks up to Jagdishbhai for advice on family and business matters.

I remember that when I was young, I used to stay with Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben on the BMA campus. I used to run around and be friendly with the blind student boarders. Jagdishbhai used to encourage me to talk to them and treat them with dignity and respect. My bond with Jagdishbhai remained strong and grew in strength over the years. My marriage and my shifting to Bombay did not cause any cooling in our concern. In fact my husband encouraged me to keep in close touch with my family. When my son got admission in the Pharmacy course in Ahmedabad, I was overjoyed. He was going from our house to Jagdishbhai's and Bhadraben's home. What could be better? In the years that Mandeep stayed there, he was loved and given the best of care. I am grateful to my brother for this concern. I cannot adequately describe or quantify Jagdishbhai's impact on my life.

He has been instrumental in moulding my life and making me happy. I owe a debt of gratitude to this great man who has made me a captive in this net of love and concern.

Mr. Harish Kakwani, Assistant Director, Ahmedabad Doordarshan and Mr. Jasubhai Kavi, Principal, Cama Secondary and Higher Secondary School for the Blind produced a T. V. Programme on Jagdishbhai for Ahmedabad Doordarshan. Jasubhai Kavi conducted a series of interviews of Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben. He had detailed discussion with Jagdishbhai and his other close associates. He also studied the "Tributes to the Visionary" and "Thoughts of the Visionary". The T. V. programme was telecast on 9 May, 1997 at 4.30 p.m. from the Ahmedabad Door Darshan.

*Jasubhai volunteered to prepare a summary of "Tributes to the Visionary" which is presented below:*

# A MAN OF TOMORROW

*Jasubhai Kavi*

Jagdishbhai - a man with such an awe-inspiring personality, whose personality traits cannot be adequately encompassed by any one author! A person gazing out at the crests and foams at the top of the unceasing waves, may describe or write about the invisible potency or beauty of the waves, in the manner that he perceives these waves. His assumptions may be honest and near the truth but they are not the truth... The bed of hard rock underneath the waves remains a mystery. A poet, a marine specialist, a scientist, a nature lover, a pearl diver, a philosopher may epitomize the ocean in their own unique ways, they might see a myriad intangible qualities and if all these attributes are brought together, may be a reader may glean some comprehensive information about the immense masses of ice and rock and beauty gathered by the ocean in its innermost recesses.

Jagdishbhai and his unfathomable personality are to me, a reflection of those hidden boulders of ice and stone hidden under the sea. I am tempted to give this simile because even after decades of association with him, I am yet unable to arrive at all the specialities, gifts and drawbacks in his make-up! Trying very hard will only result in my abandoning the project in sheer fatigue.

What then is the solution to this vexing problem? There are a number of alternatives, the simplest being, asking people who know him what they think of him? How do they perceive his behaviour? Taking all these reactions and opinions and putting them together may give the reader an idea of the vastness of his personality. As was the case with the sea, it was felt that putting together of information given by various people from various spheres of life, may give an idea of Jagdishbhai's personality and achievements. This Book is to act as a bridge or a chain and convey this vital information to readers. This according to me would be a fitting tribute to Jagdishbhai's life and work.

A motley of people from various walks of life have commended, spoken and written about Jagdishbhai and his personality like the Late Shri Giani Zail Singh, Former President of India, Blind Welfare Titans like Lal Advani and Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas; Late Alan Johns, Former Director, Sight Savers International; Arvind Lalbhai, President, Blind Men's Association; John Mayo, Director, Help the Aged UK; Nalin Patel, Former Minister, Government of Gujarat; Former District Governor Lion Homi Tarapore; Late Kanubhai Thakar, Founding Father of BMA; Kalyansinh Chudavat, Attendant, BMA to name a few.

I have been working directly with Jagdishbhai for the past 22 years and have had an opportunity of observing him at close quarters. I am putting together a collection of thoughts as told to me by a number of people, whose names of course I will not be able to write and to these thoughts, I am adding my own.

Jagdishbhai has channelized all his energies and poured them into the field of blind welfare. I sometimes feel that Jagdishbhai is oblivious to everything else. In every cell and tissue of his body the field of blind welfare seems to permeate. In fact after many years of association, I feel that the only subject on which you can converse with Jagdishbhai is on blind related aspects. Talking about anything else would be blasphemy. Persons who have accompanied him on holidays and other personal outings, have opined that he continues to think about and analyze happenings in blind welfare. It is as if he has pledged his every living moment to this field.

Another speciality of his personality as pointed out to me by a number of people is his unflinching self confidence and courage. He never loses both these important qualities in any circumstances. In fact, the more the dilemma, the greater the risk, the more does his courage emerge stronger. When he is at peace and relaxed, he advises people around him to never lose hope.



His confidence is unbounded and yet does not cross the limits into rash over confidence. He does not hesitate to ask about issues which he has no knowledge about. He believes that by asking questions one emerges stronger. Another important aspect of his personality which is appreciated by one and all is his dynamism and openness to change. He does not adhere to stereotypes or typical run-of-the-mill thinking. In fact he does not encourage the company of such orthodox thinkers. He believes that sticking to old ways in the name of tradition blinds a person to change and where change stops, life stops. If a person, an institution, a society or a country does not keep pace with changing times and does not adapt to newer ideas, it will get lost in the ever fast changing quagmire of time.

This is obvious in the contemporary programmes viz. professional training, community based rehabilitation, integrated approach and human resource development initiated in the institutions under his care. He can be rightly called as the "*Man of Tomorrow*". He uses yesterday only to draw from its experience, he despises the habit of discussing and brooding over yesterday and sacrificing today in the process. In people of advanced years, one sees the habit of reminiscing and inactivity and a very expected tendency of insecurity and fear of change. In Jagdishbhai, I see a man, who is restless for tomorrow and this and only this, is the reason for the lively spirit in his not-so-active body.

A lot of people have eulogized about his uncanny memory, how much and how far he can remember. I find it difficult to even remember how much he can remember! In the narrative, it is mentioned earlier that Jagdishbhai is the quickest and most efficient method for data retrieval regarding telephone numbers. He is also a living and walking anthology of the history of blind welfare. He wants to dictate the saga of blind welfare but needs a writer. He is like Ved Vyas who was willing to dictate the Mahabharata but wanted a scribe who could keep pace with him!

Jagdishbhai has a great capacity to joke and more importantly to be a butt of the jokes. His sense of humour is so subtle that it takes time for the listener to understand! Some people after many years are still trying to understand his jokes. When the joke is aimed at him, the smile on his face is a delight to watch!

According to the peons and attendants of the BMA, he has always been one of them. Jagdishbhai has the ability to move with kings and crowds alike. He blends in well with any group.

Many other people have appreciated his insistence on brevity. He admires people who can convey the message in brief. He gets irritated with people who beat around the bush and do not get to the point. He himself economizes on words and yet manages to convey exactly what you want. He does not like ornamental language and finds it a hindrance to communication. If a speaker at a function speaks at unnecessary length, Jagdishbhai in his winding up speech highlights the significant points given by the speaker. This enables people to remember the important issues and discard the rest.

In spite of such a detailed analysis of Jagdishbhai's personality in my own thought processes and my meanderings with other persons, I come to the conclusion that even today I cannot say with the utmost confidence that I truly know Jagdishbhai. He is still an enigma to me and I cannot find the necessary words to describe the many qualities that are part of his latent and overt personality. He is too big a figurehead to be confined in words. Many people in this book have tried to hold a mirror to Jagdishbhai and they may have succeeded towards a certain extent but I still feel the complexity and intricacy of jagdishbhai's personality cannot be analyzed and gauged by any one person in isolation. One still feels the slight dis-satisfaction of doing a job imperfectly. As I said in the beginning, the sea cannot be confined in the imagery gleaned by a one onlooker, so is Jagdishbhai an enigma who still defies total comprehension.

### **BLIND MEN'S ASSOCIATION**

President	Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai
Vice Presidents	Mr. Jehangir Cama Mr. N.P. Kinariwala
General Secretary	Mr. Jagdish K. Patel
Secretaries	Mrs. Bhadra Satia Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw
Treasurer	Mr. Praful N. Vyas

### **ADULT TRAINING CENTRE(TRUST) FOR THE BLIND**

President	Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai
Vice President	Mr. Jehangir Cama
Secretaries	Mr. Jagdish K. Patel Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw
Treasurer	Mrs. Bhadra Satia

### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND (Guj.Branch)**

President	Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai
Vice Presidents	Mr. Jehangir Cama Mr. Natwarlal P. Kinariwala Mrs. Vimala Siddharthbhai
General Secretary	Mr. Jagdish K. Patel
Secretaries	Mrs. Bhadra Satia Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw
Treasurer	Dr. Bhushan Punani

### **SADDBHAWANA RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

President	Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw
Vice Presidents	Mrs. Bhadra Satia Mr. Harish M. Panchal
Secretary General	Mr. Jagdish K. Patel
Secretaries	Mrs. Nandini Rawal Mrs. Vimal B. Thawani
Treasurer	Mr. Futarmal J. Porwal

**1. EDUCATION**

- K. N. Desai Adult Training Centre for the Blind
- Secondary School for the Blind
- Minnie Cama Higher Secondary School for the Blind
- Nandini Ramesh Gandhi School of Physiotherapy
- Rajesh Mehta Technical School for the Blind
- Shakriben Mangaldas Music School for the Blind

**2. TRAINING**

- Adult Training Centre for the Blind
- S.L. Multicategory Training Centre for the Disabled
- Priti Jagmohan Bhogilal National Rehabilitation Engg. Institute
- Cama Computer Training Centre for the Blind & Disabled
- BMA-IDBI Electronics Training Centre for the Blind & Disabled
- Dahiben School of Stenography for the Blind & Disabled

**3. REHABILITATION**

- Chandrika Natwarlal Kinariwala Mental Hygiene Clinic
- Shree Rangavdhoot Employment and Placement Cell
- Temple of Hope Scheme
- Urban Community Based Rehab. Project for Aged & Disabled
- Multiple Sclerosis Unit
- Community Based Rehabilitation of the Rural Blind

**4. SUPPORT**

- Prevention of Blindness and Disability
- Handika Marketing Outlet
- A.N. Kinariwala Talking Book Library
- C.N. Braille Circulation Library
- Harshvadan N. Makim Braille Press
- Braille Children's Library
- Lioness Karnavati R. D. Gardhi Research Division
- BMA Newsletter
- Fund Raising Unit
- BMA Central Office
- Lioness Karnavati Hostel for Blind Women
- Ratanlal Lallubhai Centre for Multi-handicapped Children