

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*

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.

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

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 *Dahiwadass*. 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!.

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.

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.

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"*.

Under the leadership of Jagdishbhai, BMA used to celebrate Foundation Day during 15-17 August every year. On this occasion, BMA used to invite leading exponents of Indian classical instrumental and vocal music to give performances before the students and invited guests. After 1974, this tradition could not be maintained. The Spic-Macay, a voluntary group entrusted to promotion of Indian classical music organizes a few programme of leading exponents of such music every year. It always includes the BMA in the itinerary of such visiting music maestros.

Praful Vyas, his life long associate, feels that Jagdishbhai can understand and appreciate quality of classical music as well. He had the opportunities of listening and appreciating performances in classical music by leading maestros Pundit Jasraj, Shrimati Laxmishankar, Shrimati Girijadevi, Ustad Bissmillakha etc.

Strong Sensory Perceptions

April, 1983: The National Association for the Blind (India) had assigned the responsibility of evaluating the performance of the PNM NAB Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind to Jagdishbhai, Punani, Nandini and Harishbhai. All of them decided to travel to Mount Abu, a hill station located 220 K. Ms. away from Ahmedabad in Rajasthan. One has to go 20 K. Ms. up the Aravalli hills with the ascent starting from Abu Road station. It is a typical serpentine hilly road.

Mid-way all of a sudden, Jagdishbhai announced that the car had now reached the temple and we had covered half the climb. One wonders as to how Jagdishbhai could tell with such certainty that the car had reached the temple. Next time on a similar journey he announced again with the same precision about the location of the temple. When inquired he revealed that at that spot, the wind changes its direction. Till that time the hills are on the left side of the road. Thus anybody sitting near the left side of the car does not get the blow of the winds. At this juncture, there are no hills on the left hand side, thus one feels a sudden gust. From the gust of the winds, Jagdishbhai could point out location of the temple. From his experience he knows that this location is mid-way from Abu Road to Mount Abu.

(Late) Kanubhai Thaker, life-time companion of Jagdishbhai feels that many times while any seminar, workshop or meeting is in progress, Jagdishbhai would get a nap and virtually snore. If you wake him up, he would start participating in the discussion as if he had heard the proceedings, discussion or presentation completely. Jagdishbhai himself confirms this phenomenon which may be termed as extra-sensory perception. It, however, remains unexplained as to how Jagdishbhai hears clearly while snoring!

P. George of Kerala also noticed this quality of Jagdishbhai when the latter could easily detect deviation of NAB Kerala Branch from the guidelines and violation of norms of the NAB Rural Activities Committee. The Committee Members of the NAB Kerala Branch assured Jagdishbhai never to deviate from the set guidelines and they straightened the records accordingly.

1962: Ramanbhai Patel, himself a blind person and Jagdishbhai's local host during his visit to London was shocked when Jagdishbhai could identify exact location of Trafalgar Square. Ramanbhai who had been living in London for more than 14 years could never keep a track of the distance, turns and landmarks enroute his residence to the Square. Whereas Jagdishbhai could develop his own route map in his mind and spot this landmark very conveniently.

Excellent Memory

A remarkable God-given gift to Jagdishbhai is his unbelievable memory - he is in fact a walkie-talkie history book of blind welfare in India. Recently, he remarked, *"If I am in good mood, and have an English stenographer at my disposal, I can dictate the entire history of blind welfare in India in one go."*

He has an excellent numerical memory, particularly in respect of remembering telephone numbers. He very rarely seeks the help of anybody in locating or dialing a telephone number which he has used earlier. During 1985, Punani accompanied him for presenting a paper in the Bicentennial Celebrations of the First School for the Blind in Paris. When Punani was unable to trace telephone numbers of contact persons in United Kingdom and was perplexed in this respect, there comes Jagdishbhai and starts reciting 10 digit numbers in the sequence of country code, area code and telephone number etc. With great reluctance, Punani dials an overseas number retrieved by Jagdishbhai from his memory, in a second the desired person is answering on the other end.

Even today, Jagdishbhai is the most convenient and probably the fastest mode of retrieving common telephone numbers, names of individuals, calendar of events and such other information.

Ramanbhai Patel, a U. K. based Non-resident Indian had given his tentative address to Jagdishbhai while migrating to U. K. during 1948. When Jagdishbhai visited London during 1962, he could retrieve Ramanbhai's address from his memory and reach the residence on foot from Hotel Victoria crossing the Thames river. Ramanbhai was shocked to see Jagdishbhai knocking at his door as the latter could reach the destination with incomplete address.

Lalitha Muralidharan, Steno-typist of the National Association for the Blind, Rural Activities Committee also noticed this quality of Jagdishbhai and she narrates her experience in this

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”.

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."

Nanalal 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. Ishitiaq 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.*

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).

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".

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 be 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.

Ishitiah 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.

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.

Chitranjan 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 nylon 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. Chittranjan 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 and 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, Anaesthesiologist, 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 Chhapiya, 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. Hareesh Shah, Mr. Hasmukh 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.

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.

Ishitiah 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 Mahotsav 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 Pranlal 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 as 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.

Unique Style of Motivation

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 Datrange 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.

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”.*

Ishitiaq 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!.

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."

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”*.

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.

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.....