

**INDIA TODAY (May 15, 1984)**  
**Photo Feature by : Bhawan Singh**

***Abstract***

When the BMA started 33 years ago, it was as a recreation club, and so its name was appropriate. Today, it is an absolute misnomer-the BMA has grown into a massive organization with an amazing gamut of activities...

Through the years, the BMA has expanded beyond the wildest expectations of its founders (including Jagdishbhai). In 1950 its bank balance was mere Rs. 50 with no assets. Today, the association has fixed deposit of Rs. 20 lakhs (1984) and total assets of Rs. 2.5 crores. Its annual turnover which was just Rs. 10 lakhs in 1977 as now touched Rs. 1 crore.

And yet BMA would have ended up as a social club for the blind had it not been for the vision of one man, Jagdishbhai Patel. Meningitis deprived him of his eyesight when he was eight but he refused to abandon his will to live a normal life. Today, he is the head of the physiotherapy department of the L.G. Hospital at Ahmedabad, and has been the moving spirit behind BMA since its inception. Twenty-eight years ago, Jagdishbhai started a braille library with only 30 books. Today the association has over 10,000 titles as well as another library with 10,000 cassettes on various subjects for the blind. Any blind person, by paying a membership fee of Rs. 5 can barrow these cassettes. By next year, BMA plans to get another 30,000 tapes.

What is so striking about the four acre campus of the Blind Men's of helplessness anywhere. The place hums with activity as the handicapped workers manage the most dexterous jobs with ease, learning for the first time, perhaps, the joys of independence.



# CHAPTER IV

## Tributes to the Visionary

20 August, 1965

**Prof. P. H. Prabhu**  
Gujarat University  
Ahmedabad

Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben seem to be devoting their entire energy and heart to make BMA an ideal institution. Already as it is, I believe, this is developing into a model institution, though it has started so recently. I wish and pray that this institution makes rapid progress so that our manpower resources which go under the name of “*handicapped*” are enabled to make their own contribution to society and social progress.



17 September, 1965

**Mr. Indraprasad B. Desai**  
1448/1 Golwad, Khadia  
Ahmedabad 380 001

Great credit goes to Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben for their painstaking work in building up this institution. I longed to see this institution for a long time. It has excellent building, fine equipment and devoted staff who works with great zeal.



24 June, 1966

**Ms. Dorothy Isabel Hitching**  
Immediate Past President  
Association of Inner Wheel Clubs  
Bowdley, 7 Beech Road,  
Saltiford, Bristol, England

I am heartened by the efforts that are being made to provide a new life for blind people. I congratulate Mrs. Chandrika Shah and Jagdishbhai for doing splendid work and their enthusiasm must inspire others to help in their many projects.

30 November, 1968

**Jagdish R. Sondhi**  
Mombasa, Kenya.

Eastern people are often accused of possessing spiritual faith and demonstrating inability to translate their emotions into practical works of good. After observing various activities of the BMA and meeting Jagdishbhai, I am reminded of a famous poem.

*“God created beauty in the flowers,  
He made us good and evil too;  
the spirit that above us towers  
in those that serve who are so few;  
those that see and those who can’t  
those that do and those who won’t  
And the good need He did plant  
to help those in need and want.”*



24 May, 1969

**Major Ranjeet Singh, M.P.**  
160 South Avenue  
New Delhi -11.

No amount of praise can do justice to the greatness witnessed here; a great institution, a noble aim, devoted directors and equally devoted to pupils. I feel that highest Sadhana is being done here by all those responsible for running this institution, specially Arvindbhai and Jagdishbhai.



4 October, 1969

**Smt. Vidya Vati Rathor**  
Minister for Social Welfare, U.P.

Jagdishbhai and his team are doing valuable services to the institution which is unique in its approach. They know very well how to tackle the problems.

12 November, 1972

**Dr. K. K. Trivedi**

Dist. Governor  
District 304 W2  
Eye Clinic, Dewanpara Road  
Bhavnagar.

Smt. Bhadraben and Lion Jagdishbhai are really putting their best efforts with a missionary zeal and I am sure this institution will rise still to new heights to deliver “goods” to the blind citizens of our country.

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30 November, 1972

**Mrs. F. A. Fazalbhoj**

95-E Oomer Park  
B. Desai Road  
Bombay -400 036.

The organizational structure of the BMA is certainly one of the best I have seen and it is a tribute to the organizational ability of Jagdishbhai. Social work and particularly rehabilitation of the handicap is probably the greatest human service one can do.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

24 April, 1976

**Comdr. Kaiki B. Godrej**

Past Dist. Governor  
Lions International  
Pune

Dr. and Mrs. Jagdishbhai, devoted workers, only they could have achieved what has been achieved in the BMA. I am thrilled to see what wonderful work is being done in this God given place. God’s blessing be on all inmates and all workers of the institution. May light dispel darkness.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

8 May, 1976

**Mr. S. K. Kazerooni**

Director: Lions International  
Khyaban Bahar No. 10  
Teheran - 15 Iran

Jagdishbhai and his wife are most praiseworthy. I am most happy that I have been given the opportunity to see this institute, I am astonished by the excellent work that is being done by the blind. I pray to God to give him more strength to do even more for the deprived people.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

January, 1980

**Mr. Shambhoo Dayal, I.A.S.**

Director, Employment and Training  
D-3-11, Vastrapur Government Colony  
Ahmedabad

I was impressed by the enthusiasm of Jagdishbhai and his sense of devotion to the cause of the blind. I had assumed before I came here that the organization he was running might be run with great difficulty because of the handicaps of the persons getting training here. I was not prepared for the scientifically organized training and job work which is being done under the supervision of highly qualified staff. Credit for all this goes to Jagdishbhai.

**24 October, 1986:** I have been observing the organization grow day by day. It has been performing yeoman service to the physically handicapped. My association with Jagdishbhai is also as old as with the institution and we had many fruitful moments together to bring Gujarat still higher in the world of the physically handicapped.

✉      ✉      ✉      ✉      ✉

24 May, 1984

**Dr. Julius Karunakaran**

Development Officer  
Christoffel Blindenmission  
South Asia Regional Office  
75, Ellai Amman Colony  
Madras 600 086

Tremendously impressed with the highly imaginative organization of the multifaceted activities for the meaningful rehabilitation of the visually and other physically handicapped persons. The dedication and perseverance of Jagdishbhai, his wife Bhadraben and a team of selfless colleagues, especially the young ones, is heart warming, remarkable and striking. It also speaks of the great hope ahead of the handicapped in future. This place stands out as a model to many other institutions seeking to serve the handicapped. My only hope is that the organization would strive to reach those unreached so far, especially those in the rural areas.



12 December, 1985

Hon'ble (Late) Giani Zail Singh  
**President of India**  
Rastrapati Bhawan, New Delhi 110 001

I am glad that the BMA is rendering valuable services to the nation by helping the blind and the handicapped. Service to humanity is service to the God.

Noticing the presence of Jagdishbhai on the dais, Hon'ble President remarked, “ *Do not call them blind who cannot see; they are blind who have turned away from God*”.

Gianiji implored the blind not to think of themselves as being inferior. He said many great men have achieved greatness inspite of their handicap. He gave the example of Surdas and said that the blind persons should adopt Surdas's philosophy which is “ *I do not want to become sighted because in that case I will see the world but lose sight of my Creator*”. Gianiji encouraged blind persons to think positively and work hard and place their trust in God.



July, 1986

**Times of India, Ahmedabad**

Jagdishbhai is an institution by himself. He has waged a one-man battle to set up the BMA. He never bothers about results; he is only keen in his efforts to do something for the fellow handicapped persons.

While dialling the telephone, passing on instructions to his assistants, keeping a watch on the BMA's on-going projects, listening to music and tuning to BBC for the latest news, he seems to be a normal individual.

4 January, 1987

**All India Confederation of the Blind**

Braille Bhawan, Institutional Area  
(Near Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute)  
Sector V, Rohini  
Delhi, 110 085

The Citation of the Centennial Award presented to Jagdishbhai on the occasion of the Centenary of Services to the Blind in India, reads, *“Jagdishbhai has been a pioneer in many ways. He has been responsible for inculcating professionalization in the field of blind welfare. Under his dynamic leadership, the BMA has grown to be a stellar organization. He was probably the first to insist on ensuring viability and accountability of programmes for the blind. The BMA has also been recognized and conferred several awards under his able guidance”.*

**Note: The tributes that follow were sent on the occasion of Jagdishbhai’s 60th Birthday celebrations in 1989 - Authors.**



March, 1989

**Ms. Santok P. Bengali**

Superintendent  
Andh Mahila Vikas Gruh  
Dhebar Road, Rajkot

Jagdishbhai - a name that is known, admired and revered all over Gujarat. His achievements are endless - he has done all the things that rehabilitation practioners cannot even dream about - what others considered impossible - Jagdishbhai has achieved and made it look so easy.

He has impressed everyone by his willingness to learn new concepts and experiment and then selflessly share the fruits with other workers. He champions the cause of the blind dauntlessly and fights the odds of prejudice and small mindedness.

Salute to a true leader!



March, 1989

**Dr. Usha Bhalerao**

Madhya Pradesh

The benevolent activities of Shri Jagdishbhai are not restricted only to men but he pays equal attention to the problems and well being of blind women. He has enkindled light in their lives and made them happy and successful.

He is not only a dominant personality in the field of blind welfare but takes a prominent part in other social welfare activities as well. His services are not limited to India but these cross its borders.

Jagdishbhai is a true lion and his followers - the disabled persons and self-less and dedicated workers - always flock to him when he roars.



March, 1989

**Col. Santosh Chandra**

Managing Director,

Artificial Limb Manufacturing Corporation of India

G. T. Road, Kanpur

It is indeed a matter of great pride that a person of the stature of Shri Jagdishbhai is engaged in the field of rehabilitation of the disabled especially the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Kalyan Singh Chudavat**

Attendant

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

During the initial years of my career, Jagdishbhai looked after me like a local guardian. He always considered me as his family member and stood by my side during thick and thin. I have always enjoy working with him. Whatsoever I have achieved in my life, it is all due to his encouragement and support. His role in my life is that of a benevolent and caring father.



March, 1989

**Fr. R. Cutinha**

President

Divine Light Trust for the Blind

Whitefield, Bangalore

*“Charity is the single greatest obstacle to any meaningful service for disabled persons in the country”* - a recent statement made by one of the commentators during the International Year of Disabled Persons - 1981.

Therefore to dream of *“equality”* and *“opportunity”* to people without sight almost 25 years before this statement was made, and to persevere with that vision and to labour for it till today without wavering, is by any standards a monumental achievement.

The results of that vision, actualizing itself in a package of services to persons without vision and reaching out in ever-widening circles, in spite of all the vicissitudes that are implied in such bold endeavours is there for all to see encapsulated in that acronym: BMA Ahmedabad. Founding of such an organization during the early fifties was itself a pioneering venture in an age when charity was the be - all and end all - of the concern for disabled persons in the country.

Today one is amazed at the battery of services provided by this organization, not only for its breadth and variety but also, and more so, because it points to the commitment and daring of the person who dreamt of such services - Mr. Jagdish K. Patel, the General Secretary of the BMA.

Thought, it is truly said, is the parent of all actions. Only human beings can think and only great persons can make their thoughts a gift to enrichment of many. Therefore, the thought of such great persons is embodied in the various services, developments, innovations and other measures that come into existence that reach out to many persons in need. Jagdishbhai belongs to this genre of human beings who believe that they live only once and want to have the place and the people better and richer because of their presence.

The impact of Jagdishbhai on the BMA will be obvious in the range and variety of services the organization provides today and intends to provide in the coming years. The fine blend of the traditional and the modern services is the product of the thought of Jagdishbhai. This *“product”* and *“blend”* has inspired and will inspire many companions all over India and in other developing countries.

It is a matter of great appreciation that Jagdishbhai has taken the cause of the blind in India not only to the national but also to international forums across the continents. Wherever he has gone, he has left his imprints through the papers he presented and recommendations he suggested. The raising of the awareness of national as well as international community, to the needs and aspirations of blind persons in collaboration with similarly committed people all over the world, and the role of Jagdishbhai in this task is for more informed people to judge. It is, however, relevant to state here that Jagdishbhai's message in essence has always been, "*Blind persons refused to be marginalised*".

In the words of Khalil Gibran, the Iranian Poet, Jagdishbhai can say most sincerely: *To All That Has Been - Thank You!* The challenges that lie ahead are greater and more complicated and more urgent. But the past is the matrix of the future and one feels confident the Jagdishbhai will continue to provide the leadership in the future as well. May the same poet inspire him to say: *To All That Will Be - I Say Yes!*

If incidentally one discovers that Jagdishbhai is blind, please do not look at his eyes, but at the person - **Sixty Plus: Not Out!**



March, 1989

**Mrs. Bharati Dalal**

Teacher

Secondary School for the Blind

Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai, Godfather of the blind and the disabled, believes in plain-speaking, and is constantly striving for promoting target-oriented welfare services for the disabled. Appears to be a strong-headed person but in reality he is a kind hearted person.

He is always concerned about the well-being of all the staff members, students and trainees. He encourages all the new entrants, provides them appropriate guidance and maintains close personal relations. The secret of his success is winning confidence of all the people and then getting the work done.



March, 1989

**Mrs. Rehmat Fazelbhoy**

Former Secretary, NAB, India  
Multiple Sclerosis Society of India  
Clematis Gardens, Plot No. 6, Ground Floor  
12, Boat Club Road, Pune 411 001

Resourcefulness and enterprise have been the two qualities by which Jagdish has undertaken and successfully implemented a variety of programmes of which our country can be justly proud of. It is always a pleasure to meet Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben. Over the past three decades their warmth and friendship has never flagged and their hospitality is always lavish. His greeting to me whenever we meet is a standard comment, “*Mother Superior, first give me chocolate and then we will talk*”. I am always careful to ensure that I have some chocolates in my bag when I know that Jagdishbhai is going to be around.

Under his guidance, we have seen small projects in Mount Abu, Phansa and scores of villages throughout Gujarat grow into a vast network of services benefiting blind children and adult blind of Gujarat. His work is known both nationally and internationally through his participation in workshops, seminars and conferences in India and other countries of the world.

Well done Jagdishbhai - keep it up.



March, 1989

**Mr. Purshottam N. Gandhi**

Rashtriya Shala  
Rajkot

Jagdishbhai has made progress in his life through developing his inner sight. Through his hard work, he has developed not only himself but has developed self-respect, courage and patience among the blind youth. He has devoted his whole life for developing self-respect and self-confidence in the blind. He is a classic example of complete devotion to a cause. He is the guiding spirit for anyone who is working for improving the lot of disabled persons. His efforts and achievements are worth appreciating and he is great source of inspiration.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Alan Johns**

Executive Director

Sight Savers International - Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind

P.O. Box 191, Haywards Heath

West Sussex RH16 4YF

United Kingdom

I have worked with Jagdish over the past ten years and wish to offer personal tributes to his breadth of vision and his understanding of the needs of blind people in seeking a highly professional approach to developing resources for their education, rehabilitation, training and employment in the urban as well as rural environments of India.

The Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (now known as Sight Savers International) salute Jagdish for all his efforts and trust that they will continue to multiply and to act as an example throughout South Asia - a process in which we are proud to be associated with and all his colleagues.

*(During his last visit to India when Mr. Alan John was about to relinquish his charge as Executive Director of the Sight Savers International, the first thing he inquired was whether Jagdishbhai was well. He fondly remembered his association of many years with Jagdish and regretted that he would not be able to meet him this time. He mentioned that if he happened to pay a visit to India, he would love to call upon Jagdishbhai).*



March, 1989

**Mr. E. M. Johnson**

Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind

Jail Road, Ludhiana

Jagdishbhai has emerged as a national leader of the blind and disabled. Due to his efforts, scores of blind and disabled have been trained and found a position in the open industry thus leading a dignified and independent life. Jagdishbhai and his wife are really a dedicated couple and both of them along with a team of social workers have started many useful schemes which are assisting our blind and disabled sisters and brothers in becoming self-reliant and acquiring the place of pride for themselves in society. I salute his long and dedicated service to the blind and disabled persons.

March, 1989

**Mr. Harshad U. Joshi**

Former Principal

School for the Blind

Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 390 009

Jagdishbhai always has a keen desire of doing something concrete for the uplift of the blind. He is always of the firm opinion that the economic independence can not be achieved by a blind person unless he is educated and professionally trained, so that he may gain his rightful place in society as per his capacity and capabilities. Jagdishbhai, though sightless himself, has always possessed this foresight. In spite of the psychological opposition and many physical obstructions, he paved his way out and became an ardent propagative leader of the modern trends in the field of education of the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Nanalal M. Kanabar**

General Secretary

Sneh Nirzhar

P. D. Malavia College

Rajkot

What could I say in a tribute to Jagdishbhai? I have a debt of gratitude - for arranging my marriage, for supporting me when my mentally retarded son was born, for taking me on a number of holidays, for loving my family - the list is endless. He gives his friendship unconditionally and with full of loyalty. He has stood by me in my times of distress and shown me a path unerringly. He has succeeded in helping me to initiate a centre for the mentally retarded - that is the most tangible of Jagdishbhai's influences in my life.

A most outstanding human being, Jagdishbhai is the most dependable, trust-worthy and reliable friend - a friend in need.



March, 1989

**Mr. Jagdish Kapoor**

President

National Association for the Blind,

Delhi Branch

Sector V, R. K. Puram, New Delhi

I have always known Jagdishbhai as a man with great dedication and innovative ideas towards the cause of the blind and the disabled. He has a number of projects to his credit which he has initiated and completed aimed at promoting comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind and the disabled. In spite of being a handicapped person himself, he has never lagged behind in enthusiasm. Due to his bent of mind, he always adopts a policy of “do or die” for accomplishing any programme or project on rehabilitation of the blind and the disabled. With the successful implementation of every project which might have seemed impossible to begin with, his enthusiasm has grown manifold.



March, 1989

**Mr. Jasubhai B. Kavi**

Principal

Secondary & Higher Secondary School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Consistent hard work is the firm resolve of Jagdishbhai. He faces all the situations with courage. He appears strongest in the face of adverse situations. His indomitable courage has enabled the organization to face rough weathers squarely. Winning over odds is his forte!

He analyses each opportunity threadbare and takes action appropriately forgetting the happenings in the past. His ability to build on past experience and fuse it with the present needs is appreciable.

He has a tremendous capacity for understanding people immediately. He develops close relations with any person after a few moments of interaction, evaluates the person in the right perspective and gets his work done tactfully.

The life-time contribution of Jagdishbhai lies in the establishment, nurturing, developing and administering such a large and well established organization, popularly known as BMA.

March, 1989

**Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai**

President: BMA

Arvind Mills Ltd.

Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009

Jagdishbhai is a man whose career I have followed closely over the past three decades with immense satisfaction and interest. The one thing which never ceases to surprise me is the ease with which one forgets, in his presence, the fact that Jagdishbhai had lost his sight at the age of eight. He is so much alive, creative and determined than most sighted persons, that it seems to me that the loss of eyesight was for him only another constraint or challenge to be overcome. Even as he stood before me during my first encounter during 1962 at the Ashoka Mills, he had already a physiotherapy practice of almost one decade behind him, through his own clinic, Medico Massage. He was the most well known and successful Physiotherapist of Ahmedabad at that time.

I see in Jagdishbhai a man with tremendous potential still waiting to unfold itself - a man who has achieved considerable success in his field but is not willing to rest on his laurels and is facing the future with confidence and hope.



March, 1989

**Mr. Tarak K. Luhar**

Development Officer

National Association for the Blind

Gujarat Branch, Ahmedabad 380 015

A man lost in a desert for days, thirsty, weary and hapless, suddenly finds a stranger who leads him to an oasis.... only the thirsty man knows the greatness of this stranger. Such has been Jagdishbhai's impact on many lives. He has been responsible for remaking of many broken lives and the uplift of broken spirits. Even more creditable is that he has inspired the public at large to work for the blind and disabled. His magnetic personality has enabled many workers to emerge as leaders in the field.

His greatest gift to posterity is the fact that he has created leaders in every nook and corner of Gujarat. I think, he is the most outstanding institution builder in the field of blind welfare.

His most outstanding quality is encouraging other blind and disabled persons to adopt welfare of other disabled persons as mission of their life. Jagdishbhai has successfully developed a cadre of such devoted workers. He is a great source of inspiration for these

workers. If we balance all his achievement vis-a-vis his being a source of inspiration to other workers, his latter quality would easily outweigh all his achievements. It is desirable that more and more workers should join his mission to keep the spirit of devotion and service before self alive for ever. Jagdishbhai deserves full credit for this achievement.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Harshvadan Makim**

Entrepreneur (Trustee, BMA)

Radhe Shyam Kunj

Near Manek Baug Hall

Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai and I have been tied in the friendship knot since 1954. I am a businessman, he a dynamic thinker and worker of the blind - so different and yet so close in our mission of helping the blind - I was drawn to him by his love for the blind, his untiring efforts, his impatience and sometimes restless nature which urged him to keep planning.

Jagdishbhai is sometimes curt but his thoughts are so clear and his arguments so convincing that the listener absolves him of his curtness. I sometimes feel that we are drawn in an indivisible bond - that transcends life and death.



March, 1989

**Mr. Prakash J. Mankodi**

Principal

Anhjan Vividhlakshi Talim Kendra

Aerodrome Road, Jamnagar - 6

Blindness is a physical disability which affects the life of an individual in every respect. As it restricts development, his whole life is shattered. But there are individuals like bright stars in the sky who provide a ray of hope and encouragement to such disheartened people so that they may also progress in life. Jagdishbhai is one such shining star who has given a new hope, a new lease of life to thousands of blind persons through his untiring efforts. Through his progressive and modern outlook, Jagdishbhai has opened innumerable new vistas for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind through introduction of physiotherapy, computer training and electronics.

March, 1989

**Mr. John Mayo**  
Director General  
Help the Aged  
St. James's Walk  
London U. K.

I first met Jagdishbhai in 1985, and since that time it has been my privilege to be associated with him in his great work with the BMA.

He has dedicated his life to those who are disabled, enabling them to develop their skills and talents so that they may live with dignity and independence; his influence for good spreads far beyond the boundaries of Gujarat, his devotion and dedication being an example to every one.



March, 1989

**Mr. Sanat Mehta**  
Former Finance Minister  
Govt. of Gujarat

Unique have been the achievements of Jagdishbhai which are difficult to be described adequately. Not only has he displayed his undaunted courage and capacity to defy the limitations cast upon him by blindness and partial deafness, but he has also contributed to the cause of handicapped persons, parallel of which is difficult to find. Besides welfare activities for the handicapped, he has created an awakening among these people and provided them with confidence to show that they can also compete and even surpass the persons in different productive fields.

Various organizations started by him are examples which speak for themselves. He has instilled the spirit of self-respect among handicapped people. They do not want any pity from society but would like to earn a respectable place by undertaking productive vocations, which could make it possible for them to achieve economic independence also.

6 April, 1991: It was at the instance of Jagdishbhai that the State Government had made statutory provision for employing the physically handicapped in large commercial and industrial concerns.

March, 1989

**Mr. P. G. Michael**

Past Regional Representative  
Christoffel Blindenmission  
South Asia Regional Office  
1, Highway Colony, Tiruchirapalli

Jagdishbhai is at once a classic example of both disability and rehabilitation. Undaunted by the tragedy of blindness in his life, Shri Patel has battled hard to triumph over his disabilities and emerge as a great servant of the disabled bringing them equality and fruitful participation in economic and social activities. By his personality and performance, he has made everyone remember him not as a blind individual but as a leader full of vision, vigour and vitality.

His leadership and contributions to the growth of services to the disabled in general in India and to the visually handicapped in particular will be gratefully remembered by hundreds of disabled and among us scores of social workers like myself. His ability to generate interest and active participation by the local community and his thrust to find sound professional solutions to the problems deserve special mention. He is a man of integrity, frankness and understanding.



March, 1989

**Mrs. Mehboob Nasrullah**

Vice - President  
National Association for the Blind  
11, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road  
Worli Seaface, Bombay, 400 025

Jagdishbhai having overcome his blindness and trained as a physiotherapist, took up early the cause of helping other blind people. He has set up a wide net-work of programmes and services for the blind in Gujarat covering education, rehabilitation, employment and welfare services. He played a pioneering role in promoting rehabilitation of the rural blind people. Over the years, he has been a leading spirit in the development of modern and innovative programmes and services for the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Harish M. Panchal**

Director (Training)

Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Even after completing 60 years of his life, Jagdishbhai is very young in his thoughts. His innovations include initiating on the job training, professional training and economically viable training cum production workshops for all categories of disabled persons.

Day and night, Jagdishbhai keeps thinking about the means and ways of promoting welfare of the disabled. His blindness has never hindered his mission. Of late, he has developed profound deafness as well. In spite of these disabling conditions, Jagdishbhai is always cheerful and deeply engrossed in his work. Many a times, he remarks that to serve the disabled effectively, one must oneself experience disability.

With all that he has achieved, he still feels that this is only a beginning, he has a long way to go. This great traveller on the path of welfare of the disabled deserves full support and encouragement in his mission.



March, 1989

**Mr. Jayantibhai T. Panchal**

Project Coordinator

Urban Community Based Rehabilitation Programme

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Through the efforts of Jagdishbhai, there has been a great deal of awakening among the disabled persons. In every programme started by him, disabled persons themselves have a voice and representation. He regrets that many a times, society is not prepared to take interest in the matters pertaining to the blind and disabled persons.

Jagdishbhai does not want to create feelings of charity and pity regarding disabled persons. Once society accepts its responsibility towards the disabled, the latter would also accept their responsibility towards society. He does not want to encourage a society which considers the disabled merely as objects of charity.

Jagdishbhai does not consider increase in enrollment of students or material prosperity of the organization as a measure of its success. The growth of the organization is reflected in the adoption of fundamental principles of education and training of the disabled which would lead to their complete independence and self-reliance. He is not happy with the existing programmes of education and training which do not accord self respect to the blind and disabled persons. He has been a crusader of promoting equal opportunities for them.



March, 1989

**Dr. B. K. Panchal**

Occupational Therapist

Adult Training Centre School for the Blind

Ahmedabad 380 015

Despite being blind, Jagdishbhai has never suffered from the limitations caused by blindness. It has never been an obstacle to him. One wonders as to how he has picked up skills of understanding difficulties of all categories of disability. He believes in promoting innovations and encourages new approaches which have emerged as demonstrations to others.

After gaining popularity as a successful Physiotherapist, he established the School of Physiotherapy so that other blind persons could pursue this professions. Today, this school is probably the most successful professional course for the educated blind persons in the country.

While residential schools for the blind and disabled were being established all over the country, Jagdishbhai thought of low cost, result oriented and unique approaches on community based rehabilitation and integrated education. To enable the blind and disabled persons to derive benefits from newer scientific innovations, he established professional training courses in computer programming, telephone operating and braille shorthand.

He is always concerned about all the employees of the BMA. Regularly inquires about their health and well being, visits their homes regularly and fulfills all the social obligations. Whenever one gets an opportunity of travelling with him, he is always full of life and everyone enjoys his company. Instead of receiving something from society, he always tries to give something to it.



March, 1989

**Mr. Niranjan P. Pandya**

Chief Executive Secretary  
82, Rasta Peth  
Pune Blind Men's Association  
Pune

I know Jagdishbhai as a true dedicated social worker - a man of innovative ideas whose aim in life is to achieve his goal regardless of any problems.

His integrity, loyalty and his untiring efforts have no comparison in the field of blind welfare. He is man of iron will, grit and strong determination but simultaneously he is very witty, humorous and full of life. Jagdishbhai is a pillar of strength to his organization. He has been working tirelessly and selflessly, day and night, sacrificing all his time for the uplift of blind persons. In all his humanitarian work, the helping hand and the moving spirit behind him is none other than his wife Bhadraben.



March, 1989

**Mr. Dilip R. Parikh**

Past Dist. Governor  
Lions International Dist. 323 B  
& Minister of Industries (Govt. Of Gujarat)  
“Reva” Sardar Patel Colony, Navrangpura  
Ahmedabad 380 009

Whatever Jagdishbhai thinks, he achieves. The tenacity with which he gets things done is a treat to watch and admire. He has capacity, ability and a temperament to do hard work. Though physically he has no vision, I would like to call him a “visionary”. He sees what we with eyesight cannot see. He sees tomorrow. He sees coming events and he knows how to put dreams into practice. The service which he is doing at BMA is unparalleled and he richly deserves our highest compliments.



March, 1989

**Prof. Nandubhai Parikh**

L. D. Arts College  
Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009

I have the greatest admiration for the sterling qualities of Jagdishbhai, particularly, his dedicated work in the field of betterment of the disabled. It has always been his endeavour that society should not isolate the disabled but should accept them in the mainstream of social progress.

The everlasting impression that he has made on everybody he has met, is that he is extraordinarily firm yet polite, reasonable and purposeful and a born leader. With these qualities of head and heart, his approach to each and every problem is practical, pragmatic and without being unprincipled and opportunistic.

Jagdishbhai is capable of intense intimacy with those who are able to win his confidence, at the same time, he does not make himself too familiar with everybody.

A man of creative vision and complete devotion to his work, Jagdishbhai could overcome tremendous odds he faced with his courage, patience and far-sightedness. The secret of his success in every walk of life is formula embodied in a Sanskrit Saloka which stands for, "*May we all inspire good understanding and knowledge by piercing our minds.*"



March, 1989

**Mr. Amulbhai Patel**

Principal

Technical School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

As Louis Braille opened the flood gates of education of the blind the world over, Jagdishbhai opened the doors for education and rehabilitation to the blind and disabled persons in India. He is the living computer in the field of rehabilitation. He carefully evaluates all the programmes, provides guidance, visits the programmes and encourages every body. He advocates that a blind person is a human being first and then visually impaired. A blind person must be imparted education and training; extended employment opportunities; and enabled to live a life of dignity.

Jagdishbhai who possesses divine vision deserves our respect for his untiring efforts for promoting complete rehabilitation of blind persons. He has extended his services to the rural blind not only in Gujarat but all over the country through his innovative approach of community based rehabilitation and integrated education.

Today, under his leadership, BMA has emerged as a national as well as international level organization. He has adopted professional and innovative approach to

initiation and promotion of a variety of innovative and result-oriented services for the blind.

Jagdish is another name of Lord Krishna who gave to the world teachings of *Gita* through *Gitopadesh* whereas Jagdishbhai gave a message of self respect and self confidence to the blind and disabled persons.



March, 1989

**Mr. Nalin K. Patel**

Former Minister of State for Energy, Forest and Environment

Government of Gujarat

New Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar

Jagdishbhai has given noteworthy contribution for the welfare of the blind and has devoted his entire life for this noble cause. His achievements would always be a source of inspiration to many others to contribute with zeal to his mission of promoting welfare of the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. Vithal Z. Patel**

Manager

Multicategory Training Centre for the Disabled

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai has developed a team of skilled expert persons for developing welfare services for the disabled. I feel privileged that directly or indirectly I have been associated in his endeavours of promoting such services. I also gratefully acknowledge his contribution in building and shaping my career in this respect. Due to his support and guidance, I have overcome my shortcomings, developed confidence, fulfilled number of my desires and attained confidence of facing challenges.

Jagdishbhai always taught me like a teacher, given me his love and affection like parents and guided me like a guide. His simplicity and capacity to adjust have always impressed me. I shall always remain indebted to him for all he did for me.



March, 1989

**Mr. F. J. Porwal**

Manager: Braille Press  
National Association for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai lost eyesight during his childhood. Due to sheer self-confidence, inner strength and hard work, it seems that he has written his own destiny and that of other blind person himself. He has revolutionized the field of blind welfare.

His major hobby is reading braille literature published around the world. Such consistent reading has benefitted him in understanding problems of the blind and finding appropriate solutions for the same. Through this habit, he could analyze situation of blind persons in Gujarat in context of the global situation. He could consistently devote his attention towards finding appropriate solutions of improving situation of blind persons and searching constructive alternatives of improving their social status.

His major contributions towards improving braille reading habits and access to information include establishing of a braille library, a regional braille press and publication of a quarterly news-letter in braille.

While the preference of the blind for braille material is on the decline, true admirer of braille literature and ideal braille reader Jagdishbhai is definitely a source of inspiration for the promotion of braille as medium of written communication for the blind.



March, 1989

**Mr. N. E. S. Raghavachari**

I. C. S. (Retd.)

A very large number of institutions which Mr. Patel has built are a testimony to his untiring efforts to serve the cause of the blind and other disabled persons. Watching him at work one would not feel that he is a physically handicapped person himself. The amount of work that he has put in for the cause is much more than an average person with all faculties at his command would be able to.



March, 1989

**Mrs. Ratna Atmaram Rao**

President  
National Association for the Blind  
C. A. Site-4, Jeevanbimanagar  
Bangalore 560 075

I admire Shri Patel's capacity in innovating and developing new projects to upgrade skills of the visually impaired and I have great regards for his advice and guidance.



March, 1989

**(Late) Shri Bhikhabhai Shah**

Executive Secretary  
Andhjan Vividhlakshi Talim Kendra  
Aerodrome Road, Jamnagar

Jagdishbhai who created appropriate opportunities from education, training, open employment to the computer training of the blind can easily be designated as the most outstanding worker of the age. He has travelled the world over for promoting welfare of the blind persons and has emerged as the pride of the people of Gujarat.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Indravadan Pranal Shah**

Past District Governor  
Lions International District 323-B  
& Former President, Adult Training Centre for the Blind

Inspite of blindness and partial deafness, Jagdishbhai has ceaselessly tried to bridge the gap between education and employment for the blind. He initiated training centres which are run on the professional lines of quality, job effectiveness and social accountability. He is a dedicated and dynamic champion of the blind and had been working hard for achieving comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind by infusing new ideas. He has proved to be a torch-bearer of the hundreds and thousands of blind and disabled persons in the country.

March, 1989

**Mr. Kanti Shah and Mr. Shanti Shah**

National Association for the Blind  
11 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road,  
Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

If you go to Ahmedabad and if you don't visit BMA at Vastrapur, you will be missing something. Jagdishbhai started his work with a small organization called "Maganbhai Kendra" which gradually emerged into this complex with multifarious activities.

The ideas of Jagdishbhai generally look funny in the beginning but the same turn out to be fantastic in the long run and ultimately prove to be substantial and very important. His way of dealing and working with people is remarkable. Words are inadequate for us to describe the important role played by Jagdishbhai in the welfare work for the blind not only in Gujarat but all over the country.



March, 1989

**Mr. Manubhai D. Shah**

Managing Trustee  
Consumer Education and Research Centre  
Suraksha Sankool  
Thaltej, Ahmedabad 380 054

It has always been a heartening phenomenon to notice that the disability of Jagdishbhai has not deterred him from normal activities of sighted persons. In fact his disability has motivated him greater to seek compensation and satisfaction by undertaking other philanthropic activities. I have found in Jagdishbhai a quick grasp, indomitable courage, tenacious pursuit and pragmatic wisdom in promoting and expanding activities as well as problem solving.

He always has an open mind willing to listen and change. He is equally frank and forthright in expression of his views and he does not hold back his views and always encourages free discussion.



March, 1989

**Prof. Anant Shastri**

Past President

Lions Club of Vastrapur

3, Manglayam Society

Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai is a symbol of devotion towards duty (*Kartavyapranta*). His understanding of the problems and promptness of finding appropriate solution is worth appreciating. One learns from him the art of devoting oneself completely to the attainment of set objectives.

His optimism and courage in the face of hazards is remarkable. His physical limitations have not deterred him - he says “*body is bound by the laws of nature, the mind and soul are yours - you can control the world*”. In face of whatsoever hardships, he stands like an invincible warrior and sets his goal of achieving his objectives undeterred by any obstacles and never prepared to accept defeat, he always emerges victorious.

His sense of duty and determination are the consistent source of inspiration to the youth today.



March, 1989

**Mr. Wolfgang Arthur Stein**

Immediate Past President

International Council for Education of Persons with Visual Impairment (formerly ICEVH)

7, Neuhofstrasse, 64625, Bensheim

Germany

Jagdish - that's the name I have known for many years, “*Jagdish*” so strange to a German ear. Yet - a name not to be forgotten: Associated with a man of real kindness, soft and gentle talk but with an inner fire of determination and zeal. I will always remember him, my dear friend. He has shown me and others the virtues and potentials of a blind person. To him, rehabilitation was not a concept of shelter and protection, but a process that brought liberation from a handicap. His work has inspired me and many others.

6 November, 1990 (*On the occasion of his 39th Visit to India*):

Visiting BMA and meeting Jagdishbhai has become a routine. Two days of hard work ... But it is always enjoyable - in an atmosphere of productivity, genuine concern and friendship.



March, 1989

**Lion Homi S. Tarapore**

Past Dist. Governor

Lions Club International District, 323-B

Mithakali, Ahmedabad 380 006

Men with guts and a strong will to prove the impossible have always intrigued me, and one such person is our friend Jagdishbhai. Deprived at a very young age of the gift of sight, he did not despair or concede, as many others in his place would have done.

It is amply evident from his accomplishments in life that the word impossible does not exist for him. Unless you know this wonderful person, always beaming with a smile, ever ready and keen to respond to any task allotted to him, his enthusiasm would make one believe that his capacity of “*vision*” far exceeds most of us. To be honest, his zeal to live and help the disabled to earn their livelihood will put many able-bodied young men to shame.

It does us proud to know that BMA was started and later developed under his guidance and direction. This marvellous institution will always be a standing tribute to this gallant individual.



March, 1989

**(Late) Mr. Kanubhai A. Thaker**

Director

Education and Support Services

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai with his sagacity, formative will, determined devotion and dynamic power of administration has himself become a “*mission*” for the expedition on the untrodden path to reach the ultimate goal of shaping the destiny of a blind person as a complete person.

The voyage of the sightless towards the sight through education, rehabilitation, employment and comprehensive resettlement has yet not been undertaken by any other individual. Jagdishbhai is determined to promote training of the blind in physiotherapy, stenography, computer programming and operation and integrated education.

His journey on the untrodden path shall never cease and shall elicit the radiant light as a “New beacon of the blind”.



March, 1989

**Mr. Mahesh Thaker**

Principal

Adult Training Centre School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Emerging of a Banyan tree from a small seed is a continuous natural process. When a seed, in this case a seed of thinking, is sown, nurtured with devotion, provided manure of patience and determination, in due course of time, it sprouts, due to consistent hard work it grows into a Banyan tree, it yields sweet fruits, provides flowers as a symbol of love and encouragement, the fragrance of such flowers spreads every where - this is the greatness, pride, recognition and popularity of that Banyan tree. Jagdishbhai has sown such a seed of thinking which is a symbol of analytical scientific and psychological process of this material world. This is a heritage of complete growth and development of disabled persons and that is BMA.

Jagdishbhai maintains, “*A blind or a disabled person is not a scourge or burden on the family but he is a part of the mainstream of social life and deserves equal respect like any other citizen. First he is human being and then a disabled person.*” To achieve this goal, the organization which is his creation attempts to restore human dignity and self respect of every disabled person.

It is a firm resolve of Jagdishbhai that the ultimate objective of BMA should be extending appropriate employment opportunities to the beneficiaries on completion of education and training. He desires blind persons to live a life of self-respect, dignity and honour. He has strived throughout his whole life to achieve this goal.

His hard work, devotion and dedication have been appropriately recognized in the form of national as well as international awards. The officials of the BMA are being regularly invited as Members of Advisory Committees of the Ministry of Welfare - this is symbol of progress of the organization.

March, 1989

**Mr. Hasmukh M. Thakkar**

Legal Advisor

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

My association of one decade with Jagdishbhai has succeeded in clearing all the earlier misconceptions that I had regarding the potentials of the blind. In him, I have seen many talents, skills, business acumen, and extra-sensory perception which is not present in many sighted persons.

He has vision inspite of being physically blind and has thus been able to build an institution which is contemporary, modern and which will live as a model for posterity. His emphasis on modern techniques of management and professionalism have enabled BMA to sore high in the field of rehabilitation.



March, 1989

**Mr. Burjor D. Thanawala**

Director

Finance and Administration

Sight Savers International

A-3, Shivdham, Malad (W)

Bombay 400 064

I am very impressed by the dynamic qualities of Jagdishbhai which have made the BMA and the Gujarat Branch of the National Association for the Blind as number one branch. He had evolved novel ideas more than two decades ago which are still to be absorbed by other organizations working for the welfare of the blind in the country.

I cannot fail to notice the tremendous success of integrated education under his leadership. Realizing that majority of blind persons reside in the rural areas, he initiated a community based rehabilitation project in Dholka block on a pilot basis, which is now finding favour with not only with other agencies working in the field of welfare of the blind, but also with various national as well as international funding agencies including the Government of India.

I am sure that Jagdishbhai has a large number of admirers who would not sit idly on his laurels but will continue the work started by Jagdishbhai. He is a totally devoted, reliable and trusted partner in the field of prevention and cure of blindness and rehabilitation of the blind.

March, 1989

**Hon'ble R. K. Trivedi**  
Governor of Gujarat  
Raj Bhawan, Gandhinagar

Inspite of the fact that Jagdishbhai has been unfortunately deprived of his eye-sight, the physical handicap has never impaired his resolve to pursue not only a bright academic career but also to stand up as a forceful example to other blind members to become useful members of society.

**6 April, 1989:** Jagdishbhai is the architect of BMA and many other voluntary organizations whose work has been recognized at the national level. He has dedicated more than 40 years of his life for the rehabilitation of the physically handicapped.

He is one of the perhaps very few who had the privilege of having such a long career of dedicated service to the voluntary organizations and in doing so he has weathered many a storms with indomitable courage.



March, 1989

**Mr. G. J. Vachhani**  
Andh Kalyan Mandal  
Opposite Kanta Vikas Gruh  
Rajkot

Onslaught of blindness on Jagdishbhai at a young age turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Had he not become blind, it is doubtful whether services for the blind would have been developed to the present level in Gujarat. It is a universal truth that by promoting a variety of innovative activities for the blind, Jagdishbhai has carved his place in Gujarat as well as in the country as a person with multifaceted qualities.

God sends every human being on this earth with a definite purpose. But very few of them are able to achieve their goal. Jagdishbhai can be counted among those few “*Karmath*” persons who could achieve the set objectives.

Starting with a mere recreation club, Jagdishbhai has guided the blind persons to the world of computers. The sphere of his activities is not limited only Gujarat or India but the whole sub-continent.

As he has established beyond doubt that a visually impaired person can probably do

everything on this earth done by a sighted person, we expect this man with multifaceted activities and with magnanimous personality to explore the suitable avenues for the blind in the sphere of the satellite.



March, 1989

**Mr. Praful N. Vyas**

Music Teacher

Light House for the Blind Girls

Memnagar, Ahmedabad 380 054

There is a famous saying that “*Mountains look beautiful from a distance, as you come nearer, these look horrifying*”. But there is one mountain which looks beautiful from far as well as near, and that is none other but Jagdishbhai.

I have observed Jagdishbhai from very close quarters in many roles: sometimes as a loving father and skilled elder brother, sometimes as devoted worker and professional administrator, sometimes an outstanding politician and a close personal friend, and many a times a well wisher of the disabled and an excellent orator.

In the matters pertaining to social customs and matrimony, he plays the role of an ideal father. Whenever anyone seeks his advice in respect of social traditions, he gives the most appropriate advice which is always unanimously accepted. His devotion to his mission of promoting services for the blind is worth appreciating. He is constantly thinking about the newer means and ways of promoting acceptance of the disabled in society.

He has tremendous up-to-date knowledge about recent political issues. His extent of knowledge about political happenings would give a shock to any seasoned politician. I have experienced him as a close friend on number of occasions. He is well aware as to when to seek assistance from friends and when to extend them support. Thus Jagdishbhai has varied interests and a number of qualities. The sum total of all these qualities - that is Jagdishbhai.

3 March, 1996

With all these qualities, Jagdishbhai is a short-tempered and a very proud person. Many a times, he is very harsh and uses rough language. People, however, tolerate and accept him because of his knowledge and his devotion to the cause. He has a bad tongue but a soft heart.

March, 1989

**Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas**

Hon. Secretary General

National Association for the Blind

11 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road

Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

The zeal, the enthusiasm, the ability to put in hard work, and above all, a keen desire to improve the plight of the visually handicapped, led Jagdish to develop many an innovative programmes for the rehabilitation of the blind.

In fact, it can be said without an iota of exaggeration that perhaps no other organization in India has developed so many successful programmes in the field of rehabilitation of the blind as has been done by BMA and the National Association for the Blind, Gujarat State Branch under the leadership of Jagdishbhai. Very few indeed have the idea of the immense work and unique contribution which Jagdish has made in promoting the cause of the blind.

Without the fear of contradiction or exaggeration one can say that the complex of blind welfare activities developed under the banner of the BMA, Ahmedabad, and under the stewardship of Jagdish, is unparalleled in the history of work for the blind in the country, both in public and voluntary sectors. His zest and deep attachment to the cause of the blind has resulted in the development of institutional and non-institutional services both in urban and rural sectors.

What began as a recreation centre, and then the adult training centre for the blind, in an old-styled 100 year old building in a narrow lane of Ahmedabad, under the auspices of the BMA and under the leadership of Jagdish, has grown into a thick banyan tree, spreading its branches covering all aspects of blind welfare, prevention and cure of blindness, residential as well as integrated education, transitory as well as open employment in the urban as well as rural areas, a large braille lending library, well equipped talking book library, a braille press, and now the latest to join an ever growing family - an electronic workshop.

Although Jagdish has no children of his own, these are his children whom he helped to conceive, nurture and nourish, the benefits of which are for all of us to see. I wish we had a few more Jagdish in this country who would give a fillip to the work for the blind in India.

Several other organizations like Lions Club and Jaycees have also received the benefit of the services of Jagdish. Although outspoken and even abrasive, typifying the characteristics

of `Patels', Jagdish means well, and has delved deeply into his personal resources to help the needy fellow-sufferers.

Undaunted by his dual handicaps of blindness and partial deafness, Jagdish continues vigorously to participate on various governmental and non-governmental bodies connected with work for the blind. Undoubtedly his endeavours have received continual support and encouragement from his wife Bhadraben who has been his eyes, and of late his ears, as Jagdish is developing severe deafness. His efforts have received unparalleled backing from Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai, as also devoted loyalty and unstinted cooperation from his colleagues, which made his dreams come true.



March, 1989

**Mr. Duncan Watson**

President: World Blind Union  
C/O Royal National Institute for the Blind  
224 Great Portland Street  
London WIN 6AA U. K.

Ever since founding the BMA in 1950, Jagdish has been the foremost amongst pioneer workers with blind people on the Indian sub-continent. His Centre at Ahmedabad is a model of service provision and supports many imaginative programmes, rural and urban, over a wide area. As a result of this work, many thousands of blind people lead happier, more satisfying lives and they are all grateful to him for his tireless efforts on their behalf.



10 May, 1989

**Mr. B. V. Shinkre**

Zonal Manager  
Bank Of India, Ahmedabad

I am very pleased by the excellent work of the Association under the leadership of Jagdishbhai and feel happy that our Bank has played a role in helping the Association.



9 June, 1989

**Faculty Members**

Department of Rehabilitation Science  
Holy Cross College  
Tiruchirapalli 620 002

We congratulate Jagdishbhai and his team for their committed and dedicated service for the rehabilitation of the handicapped. Visit to BMA is the most enriching experience.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

16 June, 1990

**Late Mr. S. S. Nadkarni**

Managing Director  
Industrial Development Bank Of India  
Nariman Point, Bombay

I was greatly impressed to visit this “*Human Laboratory*” - a creation of Jagdishbhai - where handicapped persons are transformed into viable contributors to the society. Suffice it to say, that this is really a “*great work*”. IDBI is happy and proud too, to be associated - albeit in a small way with this experiment. Let me wish the BMA all the success and all the best in life and happiness to all those associated with it, whichever way.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

6 April and  
2 February, 1991

**Times of India**

Ahmedabad Edition  
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009

Jagdishbhai has always set his sight on one and only one goal: the welfare of the blind.... His dedication should encourage other budding social workers to put their heart and soul in working for the welfare of the blind.

Under his leadership, the BMA has emerged the largest institution now in the country, working for the welfare and rehabilitation of the blind.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

10 February, 1991

April, 1991

**Gujarat**

**Blind Welfare**

Jagdishbhai is known all over the country for initiating innovative and multi-farious activities for the blind and the disabled. His major motivations include a school of physiotherapy, computer training for the blind and disabled, stenography and touch typing for the blind. He has also promoted and co-ordinated a unique concept of community based rehabilitation of the blind across the country.



11 December, 1991

**India Abroad**

62 years old, a voluntary worker, Jagdishbhai was among eight elderly people, selected among 850 nominations, who were honoured at a ceremony in London attended by top British entertainment personalities on November 4 in recognition of their efforts in providing outstanding service to the care and well-being of elderly people world-wide.

The Princess of Wales, patron of the British Charity 'Help the Aged', presented the award to Jagdishbhai for his tireless community work among the handicapped in Gujarat.

Jagdishbhai has been working to improve lives of blind people in India for many years.



28 March, 1992

**Dr. Salma Maqbool**

Chairperson

Committee on the Status of Blind Women

World Blind Union

Adamji Compound

Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Our visit to BMA, meeting with Jagdishbhai and his highly efficient team was an experience which has enlightened us and broadened our vision about the work for people with all kinds of disabilities. We wish greater success, wisdom and strength to the management and staff of BMA. In our opinion the example of BMA should be emulated in other parts of India and SAARC region.

December, 1992

**Mr. Subba Rao**

Blind Welfare  
National Association for the Blind  
11 Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road  
Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

Recognizing a need, formulating a concrete plan of action, and putting the right man on the right job - that is Jagdishbhai's formula for success.



27 April, 1993

**Mrs. Ilaben Jani**

Chairman  
Gujarat Social Welfare Advisory Board  
21 Ashok Nagar, Bhatta  
Paldi, Ahmedabad 380 007

The organization being managed under the dynamic leadership is a pride of Gujarat. I specially appreciate adoption of modern technology for imparting appropriate training to the disabled persons.



30 June, 1995

**Mr. Ashok Khandelwal**

22, Heritage Way  
Tornton/Cleveleys  
Lancs. FY5 3BD U.K.

He is a man with clear mission and a vision to see beyond the capacity of an average human being. He has the enthusiasm and dynamism to achieve the best for his fellow human beings. Once committed to a cause, he will leave no stone unturned. His achievements in respect of establishing the Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped and the School of Physiotherapy for the Blind are remarkable.

He possesses a remarkable endurance to carry on the tasks of selfless devotion to the cause, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. It is grace of God and indeed privilege that I have received a great deal of love and affection from Shri Jagdishbhai.

17 July, 1995

**Mr. Suresh C. Ahuja**

President

Action of Disability and Development India

11, Oval View, Bombay 400 020

From small beginnings, BMA under his leadership has gained national and international fame. We are all proud of Jagdishbhai and his achievements. He has shown great foresight in professionalizing the organization. He has also shown enormous tenacity of spirit in facing all obstacles including physical ailments. I wish him continued success in his work.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

6 October, 1995

**Mr. P. John Ebenezer**

Principal

High School for the Blind

Palayamkottai 627 002

Tamil Nadu

Jagdishbhai is an illustrious son of India and a man of great courage and determination and indomitable will and has overcome all his barriers and has become a great leader and inspiration to every disabled person and every worker in the field of welfare of the disabled. His contribution to the field of welfare of the blind in India and the world will be written in golden letters of history.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

21 October, 1995

**Mr. K. Kempaiah**

Zonal Officer (South)

National Association for the Blind

C. A. Site-4, Jeevanbimanagar

Bangalore 560 075

Each time I meet Jagdishbhai, I derive great inspiration from his speech, ideas and charismatic personality. He has played a key role in developing practical, innovative and result oriented programmes and services for the welfare of the handicapped.

A man of extra-ordinary vision, he is a true champion of the cause of the welfare of the visually handicapped. He can easily influence others through his humble yet an egalitarian approach which makes others agree with him.

He fully deserves our heartiest felicitations and wish him many more years of health, peace and fruitful activity.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

21 October, 1995

**Mr. R. T. Deshmukh**

Secretary

National Association for the Welfare of the Physically Handicapped

Near Amravati University, Gate No. 3, Mardi Road

Amravati Camp, Amravati 444 602

This publication highlighting the life-sketch and achievements of Jagdishbhai will create a tremendous awareness in society about the abilities of the visually impaired. His abilities and personality would always inspire and impress anyone he meets. He taught me a valuable lesson - an organizer must always be alert in every respect.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

21 November, 1995

**Mr. Suresh Amin**

5, Hedingham Close

Horley, Surrey, U. K.

Jagdishbhai is my ideal and he is totally devoted to service to other fellow beings. The secret of his life is not to do what one likes but try to like what one has to do for others. He warms many hearts and dries tears of many others. He always consults others in every work which he has to do. When he is cautioned that that task is difficult, he says, "*It is perhaps difficult, let us try at least*". Because of his good work and a number of achievements to his credit, everyone trusts his initiatives and actions.

I know Jagdishbhai as a cheerful person, and I hope and I am sure he will keep up this for ever.

✉ ✉ ✉ ✉ ✉

13 January, 1996

**Mr. R. Natarajan**

Computer Consultant  
25\240 Nidhi Apartments  
Shastri Nagar, Ahmedabad 380 013

Inspite of being blind, his self confidence, similar to that of Helen Keller, is the backbone or foundation for an institution which is a monolith, the BMA. He has in turn instilled his self-confidence into other persons (*both blind and normal*).

I am, humbly maturing to the fact all these years, that “Handicapped or otherwise is only superficial, and inner vision is the only requisite in determining whether one person is really handicapped or fully facultied” thanks to Shri Jagdishbhai.

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21 February, 1996

**Mrs. Hansa B. Punani**

Advocate: High Court of Gujarat  
Ashram Road, Ahmedabad 380 009

I always admire Jagdishbhai for his very sharp sixth sense and his ability to foresee the events. His evaluation of the persons who come in his contact is so perfect and accurate that he can easily see through the people. His memory of people and voices is worth appreciating.

Apart from his personal strengths he has tremendous administrative capacity. He knows very well how to handle people and situations. At times he could be the most loving and caring fatherly figure, at other moments, he could be completely ruthless and a strong-headed person.

In Jagdishbhai, one can easily see the best expression of human values of courage, determination, integrity, sense of purpose and a ruthless tenacity to overcome every obstacle in life. That is why Jagdishbhai’s life can appropriately be described as a “*Saga of Success.*”

Single-handedly, he has created BMA as the largest non-governmental organization of its kind in the country. A man of foresight and clear objectives, Jagdishbhai is the most outstanding performer, achiever and administrator in true sense.

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23 February, 1996

**Mr. Pankaj S. Dalal**

Accountant

Rajesh Mehta Technical School for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

What Jagdishbhai has attained in the field of promoting services for the blind is unparalleled. He is the fountainhead of inspiration for all the blind persons and other service minded persons. His major achievements include promoting education, self employment, open competitive employment for the blind as well as disabled. He has given a new hope to the millions of blind and disabled persons in the developing world.

By introducing a variety of innovative, realistic and result oriented programmes for the comprehensive rehabilitation of blind persons, he achieved national as well as international level reputation for the BMA.



29 February, 1996

**Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw**

Secretary

BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Nature was unkind in inflicting disability upon Jagdishbhai at a tender age. He, however, had spirit, strong will and unimaginable courage to win over his disability. Despite his lose of vision, he had the courage and ability of developing the organization to the present stature. He reflected his excellent skills during his formative years but justifying BMA as a scientific research organization and thus availed cent per cent tax exemption on all donations. His capacity to hold BMA together as an anchor is exemplary. A man of strong will power Jagdishbhai always gives top priority to blind welfare. He always supports welfare of the blind from the core of his heart.

It is always a great pleasure working with him. Whenever any colleague has difference with him, he may be stubborn in his approach, may press his point very hard, he, however, always maintains respect for his co-workers - that maintains the team spirit.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. M. K. Choudhary**

Director: Education  
National Association for the Blind  
124 Rustom Alpaiwala Complex  
Cotton Green, Cotton Depot  
Bombay

Jagdishbhai, a dynamic and most dedicated leader is responsible for creating right environment for the excellent growth of the National Association for the Blind, Gujarat Branch. One should learn from him as to how to manage people and to develop a cohesive team. He has outstanding ability to provide guidance and inspiration to people around him. He can be easily accorded a very high ranking among the most leading workers of the blind in India.

He should be one in a million who always has innovative ideas up the sleeve and rolls them out at the spur of moment. He can always pin point new dimensions pertaining to any gamut of services for the blind.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. Subhash Datranga**

Executive Director  
National Association for the Blind  
11, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road  
Worli Seaface, Bombay 400 025

Jagdishbhai is a person with a great business acumen. He always has a practical approach to everything. He is known for his determination and strong will power. Very forthright and astute Jagdishbhai always puts his foot down and brooks no nonsense. At times he can be very firm and determined. Due to this nature he has won friends as well as created enemies who have credited as well as discredited him with many things.

Academically he may not be flamboyant and his articles may always not be professional but his thoughts are always practical and based on his experience. As a person he appears quite ordinary, yet he has a towering personality He always encourages young professionals. In spite of his multiple handicaps, he has the abilities of a Phoenix - a bird that rises from ashes. With his triple disability what he has achieved during his life time - to do that needs a miracle.

2 March, 1996

**Mr. Somchand Gosrani**

President  
NAB Jamnagar District Branch  
Jamnagar

Jagdishbhai has been playing a vital role in initiating, developing and strengthening need based services for the blind. His efforts and achievements have rightly recognized by conferring the *Padma Shri* by the President of India.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. Lallubhai Prajapati**

Principal  
Smt. M. K. Mehta School for the Blind  
Palanpur

Jagdishbhai is a friend, philosopher and guide to a large number of workers of the blind in our country. He has always been a source of inspiration and encouragement to them. His contribution to the society and the nation despite his blindness is most outstanding.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. Ishtiaq Haider**

Past Principal: Ahmedi High School for the Blind  
Aligarh Muslim University  
Aligarh

Jagdishbhai is one of the few persons who never think about themselves but always think about the cause. Despite his physical problems, he is determined to serve the cause of blind welfare till the last moment.

If there were at least five persons like Jagdishbhai in different parts of the country, our task of promoting blind welfare would become easier and speedier.



2 March, 1996

**Mr. P. George**

Secretary: National Association for the Blind  
Kerala Branch  
Tiruchirapalli

I was very impressed with his dedication and commitment towards the welfare of the blind. He has a great concern for the upliftment of the visually impaired. Despite his age and illness, he has been so actively involved in the day to day affairs of the Ahmedabad office. He always has time to spare whenever he wants to meet and discuss various matters.

Jagdishbhai is a person of par-excellence, a God-like man, God has specially sent him to this world to serve less fortunate people.



2 March, 1996

**Mrs. Gool Ghadiali**

Honorary Secretary  
Education, Rehabilitation, Training & Fund Raising  
National Association for the Blind  
Worli Seaface, Bombay

Jagdishbhai is a man completely dedicated to the welfare of the blind. He has poured his heart, soul and blood for this cause. With all his disabilities, Jagdishbhai is a man of extremely strong will, determination honesty and sacrifice.

A man under his problematic conditions would normally fade away in turmoil and depression. But his great enthusiasm, will to live and let others live and his energies are poured totally into the work for the blind. One feels that he is a source of inspiration to many. Whatsoever BMA has achieved so far, it is all due to his efforts. He has poured his blood to make BMA what it is today with all its multi-farious departments, with all his innovative ideas. I am sure Jagdishbhai has played an important part.



2 April, 1996

**Dr. Iqbal Mohammadi**

Past President

Rotary Club of Mahu Gate (3040)

Indore

Jagdishbhai is the most devoted person. I am fully satisfied with his thinking and philosophy. His achievement: Whatsoever project he initiated was always successful. His style of thinking and working is unique.

His voice and nature are most impressive for everyone he meets. Everyone considers him a role model and wishes to achieve what Jagdishbhai has achieved so far.

His achievements are most outstanding in the field of vocational training, on the job training, self employment, door to door services, community based rehabilitation and economic rehabilitation.



4 April, 1996

**Mr. Ramanbhai M. Patel**

Navipore Haveli

Kakarkhad

Nadiad

Jagdishbhai is a wonderful person. From his childhood, he always impressed everyone he met. His achievements are unparalleled in the field of blind welfare. A skillful, extra-ordinarily intelligent Jagdishbhai is always full of confidence. It is always a pleasure meeting him and learning about newest achievements.



4 April, 1996

**Mr. Naresh B. Rathod**

Placement Officer

Employment & Placement Services

BMA, Ahmedabad 38 0 015

Whatsoever Jagdishbhai desires, he gets it done from others. He is excellent in extracting work from others. He is, however, easily accessible to all blind and disabled persons.

He is ever willing to listen, understand and solve all sort of problems, even the personal ones. He extends fullest cooperation to all the staff members.

His major goal is promotion of equal opportunities for all the blind and disabled persons and achieving their complete social integration. He always wants that the BMA must progress at a fast pace and emerge to be the most leading organization in the field of disabled welfare.

My respect for Jagdishbhai increased manifold when I learnt about his receiving the Padma Shree Award. I felt honoured that I work for an organization which has been established and developed by such an outstanding person.



23 April, 1996

**Mr. Natwar Patel**

Physiotherapist

Gunatit Nagar

Memnagar, Ahmedabad

Whatsoever proficiency I have achieved in my profession as a blind physiotherapist, it is mainly because of his support, guidance and encouragement. For this, I would always remain indebted to him.

I am confident that one day Jagdishbhai would be considered one of the top ten most successful blind persons in the world. His achievements would be equated with that of Louis Braille and Helen Keller. In fact, these two legends worked only for the blind persons, whereas Jagdishbhai devoted himself for the progress of all categories of disabled persons.



2 June, 1996

**Mr. Rajni Chauhan**

House Master

Adult Training Centre for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai is the most capable and the most outstanding persons in the field of blind welfare. He has developed the feelings of “*one family - one mission*” among all the staff members and the workers of the organization.

Jagdishbhai is a very honest and an efficient person. Despite his blindness, he is far ahead of even the sighted people. He develops very intimate relations with every staff member. He has devoted his whole life to the cause of the blind. His blindness has never hampered his enthusiasm and his level of motivation.

It is almost impossible for a blind person to achieve his level of confidence, knowledge and administrative skills. He is a shining example of victory over blindness.

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5 July, 1996

**Mrs. Lalitha Muralidharan**

National Association for the Blind  
Rural Activities Committee  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad -15

At the first instance, Jagdishbhai may express his inability to extend any assistance. If one pursues the matter, there is a every chance that he would relent and be helpful. I am proud that Jagdishbhai is Chairman of the Rural Activities Committee for which I work. I always enjoy working for him and follow his advice in the right earnest. Under his dynamic leadership, the NAB RAC has emerged to be the most leading, functional and result-oriented activity of the NAB. It is due to his vision, efforts and guidance that the presence of the NAB RAC is felt across the whole country. I am truly proud of him.

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4 December, 1996

**Mr. Damji Tank**

Supervisor: Printing Department  
BMA, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai is incarnation of Lord Jagdish for visually impaired persons. He has devoted his whole life for the cause and has achieved a great deal for them. He is a jolly good guy, always full of life. I shall always remain indebted to him for all that he has done for me.

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4 December, 1996

**Mrs. Vimal Thawani**

Psychiatric Social Worker  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

Jagdishbhai, on the face of it, is a person with multiple disabilities. On closer acquaintance, he is a person in full command and his sharp intellect and perceptiveness are qualities which remain uppermost in mind.

Despite his severe disabilities, Jagdishbhai is a very dynamic, innovative and a stickler for performance from his staff. He is very committed to the cause, result-oriented and resourceful. The rapid strides made by the institution are mainly due to his guidance and support. He appreciates and encourages new ideas, new concepts and innovative approaches. I am impressed by his confidence, and to put it candidly, sometimes afraid of his over confidence.

In his present condition, his will to live and excel, is what makes him tick.



5 December, 1996

**Mr. Rohit C. Dave**

Cashier  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

Jagdishbhai to us is a respected and revered elder, and the head of a large and closely knit family. He established the BMA not only for the blind but for all possible categories of disabled persons by pouring in his blood and efforts in its founding and later on by nurturing it with great care. Today, the BMA is the “*Kaba and Kashi*” in the field of welfare and any visitor to India has to come here. As a visit to India without visiting the Gandhi Ashram and without a dip in the holy Ganges is incomplete, so is a welfare visitor’s pilgrimage incomplete unless he sees BMA.



5 December, 1996

**Mr. Ambalal N. Patel**

Attendant: ATC Workshop  
BMA Ahmedabad - 15

During last 25 years, he has created the country’s largest institute for the blind and

the disabled. Even today, despite his severe disability, he is putting his best efforts of promoting the services further. His major contribution is promoting vocational and professional training for the blind persons. The introduction of talking computer is fascinating, approaching the rural disabled through community based rehabilitation is commendable. Through the Mental Hygiene Clinic and the project for the persons with multiple disabilities, a large number of severally children have benefited. Another major contribution is introduction of speech therapy and audiometry for the children.

I offer my heartiest congratulation to Hon'ble Jagdishbhai for devoting his life to the cause of the blind and the disabled. I pray for his long life of great dedication.

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5 December, 1996

**Mrs. Mayaben Patel**

Accountant

ATC for the Blind

BMA Ahmedabad - 15

Lord Krishna was the spirit behind the Pandavas in the Mahabharata and in today's age who is the messiah of the blind and the disabled? If this question was put to the blind and disabled persons, they would all reply in unison - Jagdishbhai.

He has dedicated his life for the welfare and uplift of the blind and disabled. Even today, when his health is frail, the uppermost question in his mind is what can he do for the blind and the disabled. Because of his perseverance, the BMA today is known internationally. I pray to God for Jagdishbhai's good health and long life.

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5 December, 1996

**Mr. Nainesh Purohit**

Computer Instructor

Industrial Training Institute

BMA, Ahmedabad -15

His outstanding contribution in the field of comprehensive development of the blind and disabled persons would always be remembered. His inspiration to such persons has enabled them to attain complete development and integration. At one time, such persons hardly had any place in the society. They were considered outcast and had hardly any scope for their integration.

Because of his efforts and vision, these persons availed appropriate training and opportunity of attaining self respect and acceptance in the society. I hope his great work would always be remembered and others would get inspiration to continue the tradition of good work.



5 December, 1996

**Mr. Rambhai Jadav**  
Project Supervisor  
Community Based Rehabilitation  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

I feel that the rural blind persons of India owe a debt of gratitude to Jagdishbhai. It is because of single-handed efforts of this one individual that the rural blind have got access to rehabilitative services. I think the greatness of this man lies in this aspect that though he is an urbanite, his heart and mind are one with the rural populace. Had he not initiated CBR programmes, I shudder to think what could have happened to thousands of rural blind persons. I salute his vision and his love for the rural poor.



5 December, 1996

**Mrs. Mira Y. Shah**  
Fund Raising Officer  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

If a person has only heard Jagdishbhai's voice and not seen him, it would be difficult to convince this listener that the speaker is blind. All of us believe that when the Almighty takes away one faculty, He amply compensates this loss with amplified strength in the others. Jagdishbhai is extremely gifted in his intelligence, his perception and his understanding. I feel that if this man had not been blind, he would have been in the corridors of power in New Delhi!



5 December, 1996

**Mrs. Leelamma Thomas**  
Executive Assistant  
Adult Training Centre for the Blind  
BMA, Ahmedabad -15

My 15 years of working with my honourable big boss are the years of inspiration and personal development. His vast experience and knowledge in the field of blind welfare has helped BMA in emerging as a pioneering Institute in the country and in achieving many personal as well as institutional Awards.

The organization has risen to its present stature by the unceasing, dauntless and enterprising work done by its Founder Secretary - Dr. Jagdish K. Patel. In short, he is the main source behind the success of the organization. Truly he deserves the title “Big Boss”.

I wish him a long and happy life and never to retire from his humanitarian work for the blind.

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6 December, 1996

**Mrs. Brahada Shanker**

Project Coordinator

BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

I met Jagdishbhai, for the first time, in his wheel chair on his way to the physiotherapy room. My first impression, on seeing him, was that he was a totally dependent person. But later on, I came to know that he was an outstanding visionary leader, whose zest for life has not been dampened. His determination to help all those who suffer from similar fate or the drop of kindness which is within him is a steady stream of care for others has inspired and motivated us to help in the same way. His untiring effort will always be carried on by us to make this cause a noble task for all the needy people.

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11 December, 1996

**Mr. Ramchanadra M. Thakkar**

Retd. Sr. Clerk

BMA, Ahmedabad-15.

My association as Jagdishbhai’s right hand man is now 34 years old. I have been his personal assistant, his reader, his writer during these years. Even after I retired in 1988, he has asked me to stay on. We relate so well and our tuning is so good that I instinctively know his needs and he knows that I understand. I know when he is in a good mood and when he wants to be left alone.

It has been my great pleasure to work with him and that I could be with him for such a long time. I am impressed by his great punctuality and diligence in attending office. He is never late and never too tired to work. Work is his relaxation and the motive of his existence.

During my work with him, I found in him a profound zeal to uplift, educate, train and rehabilitate the blind and the disabled who are the unwanted segments of the society and for whom there prevailed a strong social stigma and deep-rooted prejudice.

His quest was always to improve the status of the blind and he worked day and night for this. Today, I find that the organization has the most well established programmes, projects and activities. It is well known not only in the State of Gujarat but at the national as well as at the international levels also. My humble association with him gives me a great pleasure and pride. Jagdishbhai, with his dynamism and assiduity, could convert the social stigma into a philanthropic participation of the society. He succeeded in creating a great awareness about the potentials of the blind and the disabled and their capacity to serve the society through their gainful and productive participation.

Jagdishbhai is not only the General Secretary to me but a man with human feelings, who could understand every staff member and their family needs. His memory is phenomenal as is his insistence on perfection. I always pray to God that such a dynamic soul shall remain and live long for the betterment of his fellow beings. I shall remember him not only as an employer but also a perfect human being for ever. Long live Jagdishbhai.



12 December, 1996

**Mr. Dilip H. Shah**

Physiotherapist

NRG School of Physiotherapy

BMA Ahmedabad - 380 015

Jagdishbhai has created a mammoth organization. His creation of School of Physiotherapy is commendable. Himself being a Physiotherapist, he was always keen to establish this school. As he knew the field himself very well, he could create a very functional school.

I admire his art of motivating other blind persons to pursue career in physiotherapy. He always has positive approach to life. He always tries to experiment innovations aimed at complete development of blind persons.

Inspite of his blindness, he could guide thousands of disabled persons. His life is a source of motivation for a large number of disabled persons. He encourages disabled persons to help other disabled persons.



12 December, 1996

**Mr. Bharat A. Dhuri**

Clerk cum Assistant Accountant  
Braille Press  
National Association for the Blind  
Ahmedabad - 15

Jagdishbhai is a symbol of sacrifice. He has provided effective leadership in the field of blind welfare. He is a role model for most blind and disabled persons. He has lived the life as a saint and is a great person. Almighty God give him long life!



9 January, 1997

**Ms. Shirin M. Kanga**

Principal  
Smt. Radhaba Home Science  
Shri C.U. Shah Commerce Polytechnic  
Sanskar Kendra Marg  
Near Ellisbridge Post Office  
Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad.6.

Coming to know about and meeting people like Shri Jagdishbhai Patel - the founder & father figure of BMA, Kanubhai, the then Principal & present treasurer, watching the blind manage themselves and their affairs efficiently, and easily, doubled the esteem in which I held the visually handicapped.

Moreover, being in the field of education, for decade and being aware of the vast chasm that often exists between '*what should be*' and '*what actually is*', it always attracts one to look for a satisfying experience. In a world of selfish people, corrupt bureaucrats, misguiding leaders and unscrupulous educators- what a joy to find an Oasis in a desert. BMA promised to be that - an organization which relentlessly works on for the betterment & development of the blind. No wonder then that the

choice of my field work was immediately and unhesitatingly made to get a chance to closely look at the “various aspects of the School for the Blind” run by the Blind Men’s Association at Vastrapur.



25 January, 1997

**Mr. Chaturbhai Patel**

Music Teacher  
Music School for the Blind  
BMA, Ahmedabad - 15

Very few persons know that Jagdishbhai knows music also. He has completed his Sangit Visharad. During his young days, he used to play *Dilruba* and other musical instruments. As he devoted himself completely to promotion of a variety of services for the blind, his interest and skills in music got camouflaged. But his life and achievements manifest his interest in music. Music stands for logic, oratory, dialogue, devotion, a mix of sharp and soft, and for sweetness - Jagdishbhai has imbibed all these qualities and has reflected the same in his pursuit of promoting services for the blind. The achievements of Jagdishbhai establish that anyone managing a large organization must know and understand music.

During my association of four decades, I have never seen Jagdishbhai a disenchanted person. He always remains a jolly person even during the moments of crisis. His other distinguishing quality is concern for everyone and everyone’s easy accessibility to him.

His life is a source of inspiration to many.



12 March, 1997

**Mr. Bipin R. Mehta**

Itinerant Teacher  
National Association for the Blind  
Ahmedabad - 380 015

Who does not know Jagdishbhai - the *Massiah* of the blind people who led them from darkness to light. He is well known in this continent for his outstanding achievement in the field of comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind.

He is known for his skills of developing positive attitude about the blind and disabled persons. He has devoted himself completely for the promotion of education and social integration of such persons.

I met Jagdishbhai for the first time during July, 1991. I had the opportunity of meeting him regularly and learning the art of dealing with blind persons. He is a man of perfection and speed. He is keen on adopting innovative approach to rehabilitation. His land-mark achievement is promoting community based rehabilitation of the rural disabled. He could actively involve the parents and the community in taking services to the door-steps of disabled people.

He deserves my compliments for initiating, for the first time, in the country, the parent-teacher programme. Similarly his contribution to the promotion of integrated education in Gujarat is commendable.

The special teachers were compelled to go to other states for one year to complete a recognized teacher training course. To enable such teachers to pursue such training in Gujarat itself, Jagdishbhai succeeded in starting such a course at BMA which is now a blessing for Itinerant Teachers like myself. All the teachers who have completed this course, all the children enrolled under integrated education and the parent teachers would always remain indebted to Jagdishbhai.

My family joins me in wishing a very long life to Jagdishbhai....!



17 April, 1997

**Fr. George Kunnath**

Director  
Kutch Vikas Trust  
Raidhanpar, Kutch

When I met Jagdishbhai for the first time during 1984, he provided me valuable guidance and encouraged me to start services for the rehabilitation and education of the blind. I was impressed with his knowledge, dedication and clarity of thoughts. Subsequently, he visited the Kutch Vikas Trust twice. Everyone at the centre found him a devoted, a good person and a saviour. God bless him with many more years of service to fellow beings!



17 April, 1997

**Dr. P. L. Desai**

Eye Surgeon

Federation of Ophthalmic Research and Education Centre

Dr. Madhuriben P. Desai

14 B, Hindu Colony

Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009

We believe it is our good luck to be associated with Jagdishbhai who is such a sincere and capable person. He has devoted his life for the uplift of the sightless. No words can do justice to his life-time excellent work.

The Almighty God wanted someone to appreciate the difficulties of sightless persons and to help them in every respect. He created Jagdishbhai to fulfill this task. He bestowed upon him an unusual understanding of the problems faced by fellow sightless persons. He has also been blessed with the enthusiasm and ability to help them.

Besides, Jagdishbhai has an uncanny knack of being able to find and work with a band of faithful and sincere workers. Without the support of his wife, Bhadraben and his mentor and President of BMA, Shri Arvind Narottam, the BMA would not have been the most premier institution of its kind in the country. All this has been possible because of Jagdishbhai being its central figure. That is why we call him a “*Favoured Son of the Gods*”.



1 May, 1997

**Mr. Jayantibhai Shah**

Shri Manav Kalyan Trust

2nd Floor, Swapna Complex

Jawahar Chowk Char Rasta

Maninagar, Ahmedabad 380 008

A very devoted person, Jagdishbhai is always keen on promoting services for the blind and the disabled. His physical limitations and ill-health have not dampened his spirit. He always receives people with great warmth. He has an excellent art of mobilizing resources. Being at the helm of affairs, his administration of the organization is very satisfactory.

Jagdishbhai Patel - the name means a modern, mobile, master computer. He is ceaselessly occupied day and night in worrying about and planning the social, economic and comprehensive rehabilitation of disabled persons. He has sacrificed his life towards kindling light in dark lives of blind persons.



9 May, 1997

**Mr. Mahesh Thaker**

Principal

Adult Training Centre School for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

His dreams for the blind reach out to putting them on the moon, he wants to provide them every latest invention and every modern equipment. To keep himself abreast of the happenings in the world, he always listens to the BBC Radio. He cannot sleep well if he does not hear the news on the BBC, the last thing which he does at night. His axiom is *“The blind are first human beings, they just happen to be blind”*.

Today, inspite of his blindness, deafness and a stroke, Jagdishbhai is still as involved in the running of the BMA. He does not feel ashamed about his limitations, he says that it is a part of life.

He has always been a strong administrator - independent, undeterred by opinion, never afraid of putting forth his thoughts bluntly and forcefully in any gathering - national or international. His speech is direct, brief, natural and brash, at times. He hates vacillation and indecisiveness.

In my meetings with him, he always told me that the “Power” must be grabbed, one must know as to how and when to grab it. An administrator cannot be tender hearted! A look at his face reveals his adherence to frankness and boldness. There is, however, a tender heart underneath the granite-like exterior, though he prefers to hide the tenderness.

Most sighted persons depend upon diaries and digital note-books for numbers - Jagdishbhai draws them from memory. He has an unbelievable memory, remembering persons from decades ago. He believes firmly that he will remain healthy only if he keeps on working. A person who defies his poor health and fights for a cause, this is Jagdishbhai - **An inspiration to lesser mortals like us.**



21 May, 1997

**Dr. Ramesh K. Patel**

(Younger brother of Jagdishbhai)

Consulting Surgeon: Navjivan Surgical Hospital

Secretary: Indian Red Cross Society, District Branch

Advisory Committee Member: State Branch

Godhra, Panchmahal

***Tribute to a Father Figure***

When I was born, my elder brother Jagdishbhai was 4 years old. We grew up together. Our parents from the beginning taught me to be caring, loving and gentle to him.

My father, Dr. Kashibhai Patel was the only Gujarati doctor in Calcutta those days. He was popular with the elite class, particularly the rich Gujaratis. I have vivid memories of our very happy days in Calcutta - with plenty of attendants, cars etc.

I remember Jagdishbhai as a sighted child and I have very happy memories of our life in Calcutta. My father was particularly fond of Jagdishbhai and used to bring lot of toys for him. He would play with those toys for a few days and then pass the same to me for taking care of these. Once when we were playing together, a glass bottle that was in my hand slipped and fell on his foot giving him a deep cut. Seeing him hurt, as I started crying uncontrollably, no body punished me. That childhood incident left a perennial impression on my subconscious mind that I never ever should hurt him again.

After my father's demise, he performed the role of father in advancement of my professional career and personal life. In my college days, I used to accompany him for his professional visits in the mornings as his driver and guide.

Jagdishbhai has always been fond of good clothes, perfumes and cars. In spite of his handicap, he recognizes the quality of clothes and defects in the cars immediately. He is very fond of classical Indian music. We used to go to concerts in the Town Hall and stay there till early hours of morning to enjoy the renderings of the great masters like Fayyaz Khan etc. He taught me the finer points of Indian classical music. His memory is phenomenal and he always identifies people correctly even after many years of his meeting them merely from their voice. His mind is like a present day computer.

I particularly have fond memories of his daily visits to **Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai** and the exchange of ideas, thoughts and wisdom between the two of them. Such discussions also formed the foundation for my personality growth and character building. The memories of our visits to RETREAT, the residence of **Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai** are still fresh in my

mind as the same were so beautiful. His visits to Sarabhai family inspired them to provide a building to him to establish the first office of the Blind Men's Association at Kameshwar-ni-Pole in Raipur area.

I adore Jagdishbhai for his achievements in the field of comprehensive development of blind persons. Himself blind since the age of 8 years, he lives for the blind alone. Whatever he initiates, he always completes with a great success. Born to lead and to succeed, he has always been my role model. My father, Dr. Kashibhai Patel had great faith in Jagdishbhai's capacity to achieve success in the field of welfare for the blind. I wish my father were alive to witness achievements of his great son.

And as they say, "*Behind every great man, there is a woman*". The woman in this case is Bhadraben, who herself is very well known in the realm of welfare of the blind. She is in true sense and "*Ardhangini*" - always with him, guiding him and looking after him so well.

It is only God's blessings that is keeping Jagdishbhai alive inspite of such serious illnesses like repeated heart attacks, progressive deafness, severe diabetes and paralysis. May be He wants him to serve the blind a little longer. On behalf of my wife, Shubhlata (*who is also very fond of him*), my sons, Mangesh and Dr. Suchet and family members (*now in USA*) and myself pray to Almighty that Jagdishbhai has all the strength to carry out His wishes.



9 June, 1997

**Prof. Piyush Sanghani**

Head: English Department

Prataprai Arts & Kamani Science College

Amreli 365 601

It is a matter of pleasure to say a few words about Jagdishbhai who is a dynamic and lively personality. I studied in the Secondary School for the Blind run under the auspices of the Blind Men's Association from 1966 to 1969. During those days, I imbibed Jagdishbhai's many qualities. His sense of humour has taught me that one can be cheerful even if one is in a tight corner if one keeps a cool head. Jagdishbhai devoted much of his time to the activities of blind students. After 9.30 p. m., he usually sat in the lawn of the school premises and his *Durbar* was held in which many of us participated. Jagdishbhai talked to us on any topic under the sky.

Once Jagdishbhai told us in a surprising manner that what if the assets of the institution were distributed among the blind brethren, it would be much of a help to them to earn their livelihood out of the amount acquired from the sale of the assets. For a while, we

also thought that if millions of rupees accrued out of it, that was the best plan. But to our surprise, Jagdishbhai explained to us that that amount would not last for ever and the activities would come to a grinding halt. We found quite important and appropriate the second argument made by him that without developing intellectual horizons of the blind, just to think of only their livelihood was not a correct idea.

Jagdishbhai is a man of insight. He has always been a thinking machine. He used to tell us, “*If you have any idea regarding the education of the blind, you just express and try to convince those who can put it into practice.*” In this way, Jagdishbhai always wished to be convinced. If you can convince him in any thing, he would never say “nay”.

In short, I would like to say that the field of the blind will have to wait for generations for his replica.



10 May, 1997

**Prof. Bhaskar Y. Mehta**

Secretary, National Association for the Blind  
Sabarkanta District Branch  
“Yogendra Krupa”  
7, Anand Nagar Co-operative Society  
Behind Dhaneswar Society  
Idar 383 430 Gujarat

***Unique Gem amongst the Blind***

Jagdishbhai is truly a unique gem amongst the blind persons. In spite of having lost his sight so early in childhood, he has succeeded in struggling against all odds in life. His struggle has never been for self gain but for the comprehensive interest of blind persons at large. I have always been impressed by his innovativeness and his dynamism in adapting to changing times. Though he is a product of special school, he has learnt to walk with both the systems of education, namely integrated and residential education.

He can be given the definite credit of creating the largest number of leaders amongst the visually impaired. Thanks to him, there is atleast one leader in every district of Gujarat. He always changes his thinking with the changing times. Sometimes rough in his speech that offends people, he always speaks for the good of the people. His speech is that of a typical “*Patel*”, rough but true. He has won a number of awards but I think that the highest award that he has is the unique place that he has carved in the hearts of blind persons.

12 June, 1997

**Mr. Atul N. Patel**

Adult Training Centre for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai has revolutionized the field of blind welfare by establishing such a large and comprehensive organization for the blind and disabled. He has left a large memorial for posterity.

His nature is very jovial and he has the knack of carrying people along with him due to his care and concern. He has carved a name for himself not only in India but at the international level by creating the BMA. He has been conferred a number of Awards for his meritorious services. I wish him the best of good health and strength to carry on the good work and I pledge my support to him.



**Mr. Paritosh Dave**

House Master  
Adult Training Centre (Hostel) for the Blind  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

***A Living Legend***

Jagdishbhai is known for his discipline in life and his punctuality which he expects others also to maintain. He puts his best efforts in gathering the latest information about the recent developments and strives to put the same into practice. He has the knack of judging the people and their motives accurately.

I had an opportunity of meeting him almost everyday for one month during 1991 when the hostel was facing student agitation. My close interaction with him taught me how to understand the psychology of a blind student, appreciate his problems, and to deal with the situation patiently and sympathetically.

He has the art of going deep into a problem to understand the same in the right perspective before taking any decision. He is known for his aggressive behaviour, decisiveness and his dominating nature - which probably are the outstanding qualities of a successful administrator. As he has strong will-power, he will accomplish any task he takes up - anyhow, at any cost. He is never dis-heartened, never concedes defeat and always emerges victorious.

Jagdishbhai, to my mind, is a living legend - Bhisma Pitamaha in the field of blind welfare.

17 June, 1997

**Mr. Prabhudas T. Yadav**

Radio Engineer & Incharge  
A. N. Kinariwala Talking Book Library  
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

Jagdishbhai very quickly evaluates nature and level of intelligence of any individual and talks with the person accordingly. In this way, he gets the work done as per his desire. He strongly believes that if we have a strong determination, it would always be possible to achieve our goals. His advice that one should always try to learn good things from others has impressed me the most. If he likes any person, he would go to any extent to help that person. Similarly, if he sets a goal, he would achieve the same at any cost.

I owe Jagdishbhai a lot for whatsoever success I have achieved in my life.



21 June, 1997

**Shri Manubhai Virchand Shah**

A-1 New Tapasvi Apartments  
Near Post Office  
Memnagar  
Ahmedabad -380 026.

Full credit for my success as Motor Rewinder goes to Jagdishbhai. After I acquired blindness due to retina detachment, I referred to the Blind Men's Association. When I joined the Adult Training Centre for the Blind during November, 1966, I was assigned the task of making door mats. The moment Jagdishbhai learnt that a person with Diploma in Civil Engineering has been assigned this task, he summoned me and advised me to join the Motor Rewinding Course. He mentioned that he had observed blind persons in the erstwhile USSR and the U.S.A. working on the manufacturing of electric goods. As I had completed Diploma in Civil Engineering prior to onslaught of blindness, he desired me to opt for training in a skilled activity. As per his advice, I joined as one of four trainees of the first batch of Motor Rewinding Course which I completed during 1969.

Immediately on completion of the course, Jagdishbhai helped me to get a job as Motor Rewinder in the Monogram Mill. This was for the first time that a textile mill at Ahmedabad appointed a blind person for this skilled job. Due to my engineering back-ground and the skills of motor rewinding which I was taught at the Adult Training Centre for the Blind,

I could work as Motor Rewinder to the great satisfaction of my superiors till my retirement during 1995.

At present, I own a house, my children are well educated and well settled and I am in a position to help other blind persons. But for Jagdishbhai's advice and encouragement, I would have probably remained idle and unemployed my whole life. I owe my gratitude and sincere appreciation to the openness and innovativeness of Jagdishbhai. Today, I met Jagdishbhai after so many years. I was thrilled when he recognized me from my voice and recalled our first meeting during 1966.

I appreciate the sense of strong determination in Jagdishbhai. He advocates that every blind person can lead an independent life provided he decides to do so. I shall always remained indebted to him for everything he did for me.

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22 June, 1997

**Mr. Kirk Horton**

Regional Representative  
Hilton/Perkins International Program  
420, Rajavithi Road  
BANGKOK. 104 00  
Thailand.

I first remember meeting Jagdishbhai at the 1981 ICEVI Third Asian Conference held in Jakarta, Indonesia. Although I had heard of him and the Blind Men's Association before that time, I was not very clear of the scope of the Association's Activities and the role Jagdishbhai had played in developing them. Over the next few years I would meet Jagdishbhai at a number of other regional and international conferences. Gradually through these meetings I began to learn more about the activities of the Blind Men's Association. I remember telling myself that this was an organization I needed to visit. if and ever I went to India.

It was not until 1992, that I finally made it to India through my work with the Hilton Perkin's Program of the Perkins School for the Blind. Dr. Alana Zambone and I came to India to identify programs that might be interested in developing educational services of visually impaired children with additional disabilities. On the top of our list of agencies and people, to meet was Dr. Patel.

We arrived in Ahmedabad and through our initial visit we were both impressed at the variety of activities BMA conducted through both its centre and community based programs.

Almost all aspects of education and rehabilitation of the blind including educational teacher training, integrated education, vocational training, braille production and cassette recording and community based rehabilitation were being implemented. Not only were we impressed with the variety of programs but also, both the quality and innovative aspects of the programs. We found the staff in all sections to be extremely committed and competent. We then began to realize Jagdishbhai's genius not only as an innovator but also as an extremely capable Administrator. Not only had he encouraged the development of such a wide range of activities through one agency but he had found the financial resources from both Government and the Private Sector to keep those activities running. He had also staffed these programs with very capable staff. All of whom shared Jagdishbhai's desire to develop the best programs possible and more importantly to share these programs (both the strengths and weaknesses) with others in India and abroad. We found Jagdishbhai and the BMA to be fully dedicated to collaboration.

For any organization to grow and to show this type of maturity can only happen through strong leadership.

Since that first visit it has been my pleasure to work with Jagdishbhai on developing a component in BMA to deliver services to v.i. children with multiple disabilities. Through correspondence and visits I continue to be amazed at Jagdishbhai's desire to provide services to all people who have severe vision problems. His vision has provided the opportunity for the pre-school age blind, school age blind, adult blind, elderly blind and blind people with multiple handicapped to receive the appropriate services in order they can be fully integrated into society. Even now when most of us would be content to retire, Jagdishbhai continues to provide strong leadership and direction to BMA and continues to challenge his staff to strengthen existing programs. He is now encouraging his staff to once again to expand their programs to include visually impaired children who are deaf/blind.

I feel it is great honour to know and work with Jagdishbhai. I not only deeply respect him as a professional but also a friend. It is rare to find a single individual that has the number of strengths as Jagdishbhai.

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27 June, 1997

**Mr. Jaswant K. Purohit**

Welfare Officer

Multicategory Workshop for the Handicapped

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad -380 015

It is due to hard work and efforts of Jagdishbhai that thousands of disabled persons have received education, vocational training and professional training. He played an instrumental

role in promoting employment of such persons in physiotherapy, typing, computer operations and such other professions.

He took a bold initiative in promoting comprehensive rehabilitation of the blind persons through innovative approaches, popularly known as Community Based Rehabilitation and Integrated Education. These approaches aim at extending equal opportunities and restoring human dignity of disabled persons.

The institution at Vastrapur which was established by him as his dream has evolved as the largest organization of its kind in the field of comprehensive rehabilitation of all categories of disabled persons. The Multicategory Training centre for the Handicapped, National Rehabilitation Engineering Institute, Research and Documentation Centre are the distinctive testimony to his vision.

May God bless him with excellent health so that he can continue doing most creative work in the field of rehabilitation. He is a fountain-head of inspiration, motivation and guidance to many disabled persons.



27 June, 1997

**Mr. Dipak Joshi**

Accountant

Adult Training Centre (School) for the Blind

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad 380 015

As Lord Shiva is known as the God of the Gods, in today's world, Jagdishbhai could be given this title. I feel, he deserves this, because in today's age of strife when human beings kill their fellow brothers and do not want to help anybody and are very selfish, Jagdishbhai emerges very distinct. In spite of having lost his sight, he is working diligently day and night for the

uplift of his blind and disabled brothers. Such a great act of sacrifice and devotion deserves that he be aptly called the God of the Gods. I wish him the very best and I pray to God to bless him with a long and happy life. I bow my head in respect to him.



**Mr. G. M. Singhvi**  
Honorary Director  
Jay Bharat Sarva Kalyan Nyas  
108, Nehru Park, Jodhpur

Jagdishbhai who has not only dedicated himself to the cause of the blind but has sacrificed his whole life and excellence for the emancipation of the disabled and the down trodden. I first met Jagdishbhai probably in 1988 when he came with Mr. Punani, Nandini and his wife at Jodhpur in connection with the CBR Project. It was hear that I discovered that Jagdishbhai lost his eyes at the age of 8 years and the idea of dedicating his life for the welfare of blind came in his mind. In spite of his being visually handicapped, Bhadraben decided to marry him and both joined hands to carry the cart of blind welfare to its end. Since than I had the opportunity of meeting Jagdishbhai numerous times at Ahmedabad, Mt. Abu and other places. I had the privilege to work with him as Co-Vice President (Both of us were Vice President) of the NAB Pheroz Naushir Merwanji Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, Mount Abu. Always in his deliberation with me, there was no other subject but the welfare and emancipation of the blind, their education and rehabilitation. I have been working in this field for the last 8 years and I still have to come across a man like him who has dedicated his whole life for the cause of blind welfare.

I wish and pray to the Almighty that Jagdishbhai may live for another hundred years to work for blind and inspire all of us to work for this nobel cause.



15 July, 1997

**Mrs. Dakshaben Manmadbhai Patel**  
(Sister of Jagdishbhai)  
355, S. Y. Road  
202, Lila Apartment  
Opposite Golden Tobacco  
Vile Parle (West)  
Mumbai 400 056

What can I possibly write about my beloved elder brother? I get so emotional just thinking about him, that already my throat is getting choked. His influence in my life is all pervasive, benevolent, tender and caring. I see in him my father - he has been my father figure — indulging my whims and fancies, fondly agreeing to all my demands,

reasonable and otherwise. My children, Mandeep and Minoti adore him, they call him “Dada” (Grandfather), they love meeting him, pulling pranks, laughing with him. They are very protective about him and always want to help him in his mobility and take the utmost care to see that he is happy. My husband Manmad is his fan and looks up to Jagdishbhai for advice on family and business matters.

I remember that when I was young, I used to stay with Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben on the BMA campus. I used to run around and be friendly with the blind student boarders. Jagdishbhai used to encourage me to talk to them and treat them with dignity and respect. My bond with Jagdishbhai remained strong and grew in strength over the years. My marriage and my shifting to Bombay did not cause any cooling in our concern. In fact my husband encouraged me to keep in close touch with my family. When my son got admission in the Pharmacy course in Ahmedabad, I was overjoyed. He was going from our house to Jagdishbhai’s and Bhadraben’s home. What could be better? In the years that Mandeep stayed there, he was loved and given the best of care. I am grateful to my brother for this concern. I cannot adequately describe or quantify Jagdishbhai’s impact on my life.

He has been instrumental in moulding my life and making me happy. I owe a debt of gratitude to this great man who has made me a captive in this net of love and concern.

Mr. Harish Kakwani, Assistant Director, Ahmedabad Doordarshan and Mr. Jasubhai Kavi, Principal, Cama Secondary and Higher Secondary School for the Blind produced a T. V. Programme on Jagdishbhai for Ahmedabad Doordarshan. Jasubhai Kavi conducted a series of interviews of Jagdishbhai and Bhadraben. He had detailed discussion with Jagdishbhai and his other close associates. He also studied the “Tributes to the Visionary” and “Thoughts of the Visionary”. The T. V. programme was telecast on 9 May, 1997 at 4.30 p.m. from the Ahmedabad Door Darshan.

*Jasubhai volunteered to prepare a summary of “Tributes to the Visionary” which is presented below:*

# A MAN OF TOMORROW

*Jasubhai Kavi*

Jagdishbhai - a man with such an awe-inspiring personality, whose personality traits cannot be adequately encompassed by any one author! A person gazing out at the crests and foams at the top of the unceasing waves, may describe or write about the invisible potency or beauty of the waves, in the manner that he perceives these waves. His assumptions may be honest and near the truth but they are not the truth... The bed of hard rock underneath the waves remains a mystery. A poet, a marine specialist, a scientist, a nature lover, a pearl diver, a philosopher may epitomize the ocean in their own unique ways, they might see a myriad intangible qualities and if all these attributes are brought together, may be a reader may glean some comprehensive information about the immense masses of ice and rock and beauty gathered by the ocean in its innermost recesses.

Jagdishbhai and his unfathomable personality are to me, a reflection of those hidden boulders of ice and stone hidden under the sea. I am tempted to give this simile because even after decades of association with him, I am yet unable to arrive at all the specialities, gifts and drawbacks in his make-up! Trying very hard will only result in my abandoning the project in sheer fatigue.

What then is the solution to this vexing problem? There are a number of alternatives, the simplest being, asking people who know him what they think of him? How do they perceive his behaviour? Taking all these reactions and opinions and putting them together may give the reader an idea of the vastness of his personality. As was the case with the sea, it was felt that putting together of information given by various people from various spheres of life, may give an idea of Jagdishbhai's personality and achievements. This Book is to act as a bridge or a chain and convey this vital information to readers. This according to me would be a fitting tribute to Jagdishbhai's life and work.

A motley of people from various walks of life have commended, spoken and written about Jagdishbhai and his personality like the Late Shri Giani Zail Singh, Former President of India, Blind Welfare Titans like Lal Advani and Dr. Rajendra T. Vyas; Late Alan Johns, Former Director, Sight Savers International; Arvind Lalbhai, President, Blind Men's Association; John Mayo, Director, Help the Aged UK; Nalin Patel, Former Minister, Government of Gujarat; Former District Governor Lion Homi Tarapore; Late Kanubhai Thakar, Founding Father of BMA; Kalyansinh Chudavat, Attendant, BMA to name a few.

I have been working directly with Jagdishbhai for the past 22 years and have had an opportunity of observing him at close quarters. I am putting together a collection of thoughts as told to me by a number of people, whose names of course I will not be able to write and to these thoughts, I am adding my own.

Jagdishbhai has channelized all his energies and poured them into the field of blind welfare. I sometimes feel that Jagdishbhai is oblivious to everything else. In every cell and tissue of his body the field of blind welfare seems to permeate. In fact after many years of association, I feel that the only subject on which you can converse with Jagdishbhai is on blind related aspects. Talking about anything else would be blasphemy. Persons who have accompanied him on holidays and other personal outings, have opined that he continues to think about and analyze happenings in blind welfare. It is as if he has pledged his every living moment to this field.

Another speciality of his personality as pointed out to me by a number of people is his unflinching self confidence and courage. He never loses both these important qualities in any circumstances. In fact, the more the dilemma, the greater the risk, the more does his courage emerge stronger. When he is at peace and relaxed, he advises people around him to never lose hope.

His confidence is unbounded and yet does not cross the limits into rash over confidence. He does not hesitate to ask about issues which he has no knowledge about. He believes that by asking questions one emerges stronger. Another important aspect of his personality which is appreciated by one and all is his dynamism and openness to change. He does not adhere to stereotypes or typical run-of-the-mill thinking. In fact he does not encourage the company of such orthodox thinkers. He believes that sticking to old ways in the name of tradition blinds a person to change and where change stops, life stops. If a person, an institution, a society or a country does not keep pace with changing times and does not adapt to newer ideas, it will get lost in the ever fast changing quagmire of time.

This is obvious in the contemporary programmes viz. professional training, community based rehabilitation, integrated approach and human resource development initiated in the institutions under his care. He can be rightly called as the "*Man of Tomorrow*". He uses yesterday only to draw from its experience, he despises the habit of discussing and brooding over yesterday and sacrificing today in the process. In people of advanced years, one sees the habit of reminiscing and inactivity and a very expected tendency of insecurity and fear of change. In Jagdishbhai, I see a man, who is restless for tomorrow and this and only this, is the reason for the lively spirit in his not-so-active body.

A lot of people have eulogized about his uncanny memory, how much and how far he can remember. I find it difficult to even remember how much he can remember! In the narrative, it is mentioned earlier that Jagdishbhai is the quickest and most efficient method for data retrieval regarding telephone numbers. He is also a living and walking anthology of the history of blind welfare. He wants to dictate the saga of blind welfare but needs a writer. He is like Ved Vyas who was willing to dictate the Mahabharata but wanted a scribe who could keep pace with him!

Jagdishbhai has a great capacity to joke and more importantly to be a butt of the jokes. His sense of humour is so subtle that it takes time for the listener to understand! Some people after many years are still trying to understand his jokes. When the joke is aimed at him, the smile on his face is a delight to watch!

According to the peons and attendants of the BMA, he has always been one of them. Jagdishbhai has the ability to move with kings and crowds alike. He blends in well with any group.

Many other people have appreciated his insistence on brevity. He admires people who can convey the message in brief. He gets irritated with people who beat around the bush and do not get to the point. He himself economizes on words and yet manages to convey exactly what you want. He does not like ornamental language and finds it a hindrance to communication. If a speaker at a function speaks at unnecessary length, Jagdishbhai in his winding up speech highlights the significant points given by the speaker. This enables people to remember the important issues and discard the rest.

In spite of such a detailed analysis of Jagdishbhai's personality in my own thought processes and my meanderings with other persons, I come to the conclusion that even today I cannot say with the utmost confidence that I truly know Jagdishbhai. He is still an enigma to me and I cannot find the necessary words to describe the many qualities that are part of his latent and overt personality. He is too big a figurehead to be confined in words. Many people in this book have tried to hold a mirror to Jagdishbhai and they may have succeeded towards a certain extent but I still feel the complexity and intricacy of jagdishbhai's personality cannot be analyzed and gauged by any one person in isolation. One still feels the slight dis-satisfaction of doing a job imperfectly. As I said in the beginning, the sea cannot be confined in the imagery gleaned by a one onlooker, so is Jagdishbhai an enigma who still defies total comprehension.

**BLIND MEN'S ASSOCIATION**

President	Mr. Arvind Narottam Lalbhai
Vice Presidents	Mr. Jehangir Cama Mr. N.P. Kinariwala
General Secretary	Mr. Jagdish K. Patel
Secretaries	Mrs. Bhadra Satia Mrs. Nandini P. Munshaw
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Secretaries	Mrs. Nandini Rawal Mrs. Vimal B. Thawani
Treasurer	Mr. Futarmal J. Porwal

## **1. EDUCATION**

- K. N. Desai Adult Training Centre for the Blind
- Secondary School for the Blind
- Minnie Cama Higher Secondary School for the Blind
- Nandini Ramesh Gandhi School of Physiotherapy
- Rajesh Mehta Technical School for the Blind
- Shakriben Mangaldas Music School for the Blind

## **2. TRAINING**

- Adult Training Centre for the Blind
- S.L. Multicategory Training Centre for the Disabled
- Priti Jagmohan Bhogilal National Rehabilitation Engg. Institute
- Cama Computer Training Centre for the Blind & Disabled
- BMA-IDBI Electronics Training Centre for the Blind & Disabled
- Dahiben School of Stenography for the Blind & Disabled

## **3. REHABILITATION**

- Chandrika Natwarlal Kinariwala Mental Hygiene Clinic
- Shree Rangavdhoot Employment and Placement Cell
- Temple of Hope Scheme
- Urban Community Based Rehab. Project for Aged & Disabled
- Multiple Sclerosis Unit
- Community Based Rehabilitation of the Rural Blind

## **4. SUPPORT**

- Prevention of Blindness and Disability
- Handika Marketing Outlet
- A.N. Kinariwala Talking Book Library
- C.N. Braille Circulation Library
- Harshvadan N. Makim Braille Press
- Braille Children's Library
- Lioness Karnavati R. D. Gardhi Research Division
- BMA Newsletter
- Fund Raising Unit
- BMA Central Office
- Lioness Karnavati Hostel for Blind Women
- Ratanlal Lallubhai Centre for Multi-handicapped Children