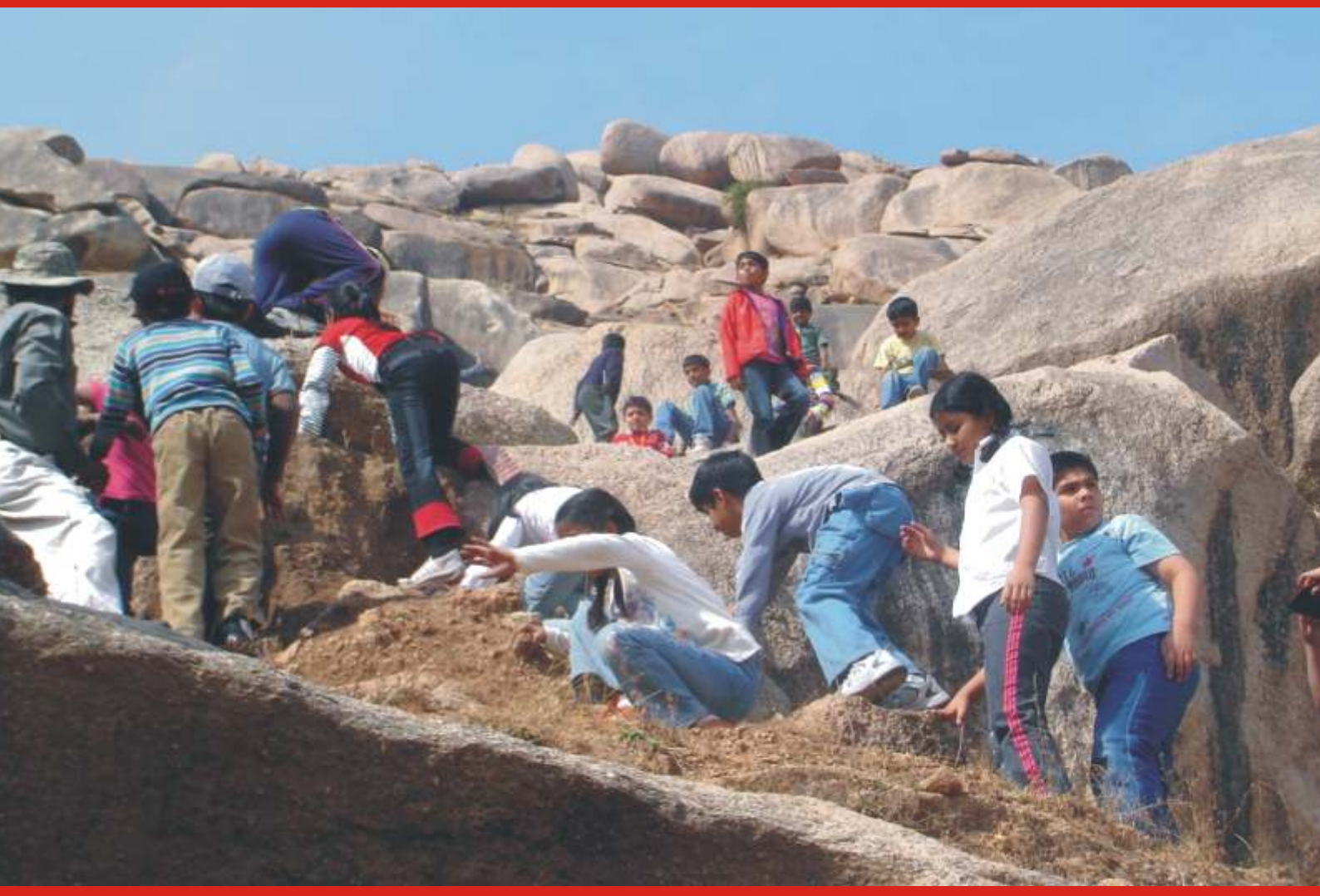




# 2003-2006 A Report



PRABHAT EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Ahmedabad, India



## Making Learning a Joyful Experience

for those who need an alternative

Prabhat is committed to the national effort to help children with special needs to find their way to independent adulthood. Prabhat programmes seek to bring about positive changes in the lives of these children by building their skills, knowledge and self-confidence. Prabhat is one step toward every Indian child having the opportunity to exercise the fundamental right to education, and to fully participate and contribute to our society.

Prabhat Education Foundation reaches out to those who need and are looking for a creative environment in which learning takes place, quite distinct from “learning by rote” so common in our system. In all its programmes, Prabhat can be seen as an expression of the national effort to remove the burden of stereotyped approaches in school education, and to replace these with experience that can help the child to grow and succeed in a complex world.

Current programmes are ‘building blocks’ which are helping to prepare Prabhat for its central mission: to create learning opportunities through a new school which will welcome children who cannot cope with exam-oriented school systems.



### Prabhat for Kids

This is a centre which enhances and develops a positive attitude towards learning through joyful activities.



### Prabhat for Environment

The idea of teaching Nature to children is to sensitise them to the environment. This should happen at an early age, learning through fun and enjoyment toward future citizenship.



### Prabhat for Teachers

Prabhat works with school teachers to lift their education skills and capacities, working in partnership with institutions such as Riverside School (Ahmedabad) and Udaan (an initiative of Janvikas)



### Prabhat Jeevan Taleem

This programme provides an environment in which the needs, abilities and challenges of special children are respected and opportunities created for them to learn and to grow as citizens.



### Prabhat School

This concept and approach is directed at Prabhat’s goal of a new school with the mission of welcoming children who need an alternative to exam-oriented school systems.

*Trustees:*

Sridhar Rajagopalan

Geet Sethi

Renu Seth

Ashoke Chatterjee

Keshav Prasad Chatterjee (*Managing Trustee*)

## Introduction



Prabhat Education Foundation reaches out to those who need and are looking for a creative environment in which learning takes place, quite distinct from “learning by rote” so common in our system. In all its programmes, Prabhat can be seen as an expression of the national effort to remove the burden of old approaches in school education, and to replace these with experience that can help the child to grow and succeed in a complex world.

The central mission of the Foundation is to create learning opportunities through a new school which will welcome children who cannot cope with exam-oriented school

systems. To achieve this, Prabhat believes it important for its team to be engaged with a selection of teaching and service activities that can help build a competent team of teachers who have the experience and flexibility to adapt to a variety of learning needs. A first step has been to open a small pre-school learning centre, Prabhat for Kids. A Jeevan Taleem programme

has been started to serve special children with life skills they need, and to help understand the special education requirements which should be made available through a new school designed to serve their

needs. Special workshops and camp opportunities for special children have also helped Prabhat to interact with their needs and the thoughts and aspirations of their parents. Two other partnerships are assisting Prabhat to build its awareness and experience in education. One is Riverside School (Ahmedabad) where Prabhat offers environment education services. The other is Udaan (a Janvikas initiative) with whom Prabhat works on teacher training, aimed primarily at supporting the needs of rural school teachers. These experiences are building Prabhat's experience and competence in education, and providing valuable insights into innovative approaches that will be essential to the mission of a new school for special children.



This report describes the Prabhat journey over three years, and gives an overview to those who have helped build these experiences and whose encouragement is now the foundation for its future. The report provides a brief account of Prabhat's development year by year since its Director Keshav Chatterjee initiated the activities which have led to establishing the Prabhat Education Foundation and initiating its current activities: working on the needs of special children (through the Prabhat Jeevan Taleem programme), starting Prabhat for Kids (an activity centre), Prabhat Environment Education (through cooperation with Riverside School) and Prabhat for Teachers (including training support to Udaan and other institutions).



## 2003



*Prof Philip Morrison (MIT, USA) and Prof Phylis Morrison discuss science education with Keshav Chatterjee*

## Exploration

This was the first year of exploration toward the central concept of 'special education' for which Prabhat was founded. The background to this effort was the Director's experience of six years (1998-2004) as an educator at Eklavya School (Ahmedabad), which was founded to help demonstrate new standards of quality in Indian education. Eklavya took an active interest in children with special needs, and it was there that the Director had his first opportunity to help create a stimulating learning environment for those bright children who cannot cope with rote learning and exam-oriented systems. The idea took shape of creating a special facility for such children between the

ages of 12 (by which time exposure to normal systems would have helped identify particular needs) and 18 (the age at which decisions are taken about future careers). During 2003 the Director contacted schools and educators in and around Ahmedabad and in several parts of the country to share with them his experiences and the thoughts that were leading to the Prabhat concept. Visits that year covered Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and several locations in Gujarat. Those who shared their insights with Prabhat included Rishi Valley and The School (both institutions of the Krishnamurti Foundation), the Centre for Learning and Aditi School (Bangalore), Ms Devika Singh of Mobile Creches (Delhi), Dr Eleanor Nicholson of the University of Chicago, and development NGOs with an interest in education including Communication for Development & Learning, Madhyam and Voices (Bangalore).



*Prof Yash Pal (former Chairman of UGC and NID) interacts with Keshav Chatterjee at India International Centre, New Delhi*

## Responses

Everywhere the Director found a clear welcome to the Prabhat school concept, and caution about the many steps that were needed to realize it. It was apparent that many educators throughout India shared Prabhat's concerns and were looking for alternative approaches and new ideas to better serve the needs of young people who are often discarded by traditional systems and structures. There was agreement also that large numbers of children are awaiting the kind of opportunity that Prabhat intends. Such environments can help children grow more confident and independent. Many issues were discussed. Special education of this kind would need very special preparation. The first of these was the importance of careful selection of children, after thorough understanding of their needs and the attitudes of their parents and communities. Issues of age



*Visiting public schools in Pennsylvania, USA.*

of entry were discussed. The importance of parental support for an experiment of this kind was underlined. Their concerns would be focused on the relationship of Prabhat to the child's future. This would bring in other issues of mainstreaming (such as affiliation with Boards, ICGSE or Open School systems), vocational learning, social skills, confidence building ---- all the elements that could contribute to a confident personality with a capacity for self-reliance. Parents could have high, and often unrealistic expectations of Prabhat. They may look for reassurance and perhaps even guarantees that could be difficult to provide.



*Keshav Chatterjee's first class at Eklavya School, Ahmedabad.*

Safety of their wards would also be a concern among parents. Affordability was important: to what income group should Prabhat appeal? Curriculum development was explored in detail, appreciating that within a curriculum framework Prabhat may have to tailor opportunities to a variety of individual needs. Prabhat would require an evaluation system that must not only be carefully developed but one that both parents and children would be able to understand. Teachers would have to have the vision and commitment for participating in such an experiment, the outcome of which can be uncertain. In addition to this stamina for service and experimentation, teachers would need to be excellent observers, flexible in their approaches and open to change. They would also have to reflect strong ethics.

## Concept Development

It was through these discussions that a revised concept paper was developed for Prabhat that sought to reflect the wisdom and richness of the dialogue that had taken place through the year. The Director also devoted his time to making contacts with potential parents, teachers and resource persons and designing an administrative framework for the future.

## 2004



### Linkages

Throughout this year, the preparation and dialogue of 2003 was continued. It also saw an important linkage with the Riverside School (Ahmedabad) and its Director Ms Kiran Sethi. Under an agreement between Prabhat and the Riverside School, the Director began to provide Environment Education opportunities for children, conduct workshops for teachers on teaching techniques for mathematics and on creativity, and for parents on development a scientific temperament. Environment Education activities focused on children in the Grades 1-5. These included classroom and campus sessions, outdoor activities, field visits and overnight sessions. The programmes provided exposure to nature as well as to rural life. The Riverside connection helped Prabhat to maintain contact with a teaching community committed to quality education and to making education a joy and representing a resource of ideas from all over the country and the world. In October, the Director attended the Franklin Covey South Asia training opportunity: "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Training Program".

## 2005

### New Partnerships

The activities initiated in 2004 at Riverside School continued, and cooperation was established with Anala Outdoors to assist with camping and other outdoor facilities, using the Polo forest area in the Aravali Hills. The purpose of the camps was to provide fun and adventure through intensive exposure to forest and wildlife and the joys of the natural world. Local history and culture were incorporated in these field programmes under Prabhat supervision.



## Rural Outreach

This year began with another important partnership, this time in teacher training. Prabhat forged links with Udaan, a resource centre on primary education by the well-known NGO, Janvikas. Udaan is concerned with rural education through a Janvikas network that extends to the Panchmahal and Kutch districts of Gujarat. Prabhat was invited to provide inputs in teacher training, with specific attention to developing core teams of youth selected from both areas who could be teachers and role models. This selection was preceded by a talent search in February

which began with classroom observation, followed by programme design based on these observations. A workshop was organized through which selection of candidates was finally made. The teams, nicknamed “Kabuliwalas”, were provided a three-month intensive residential training opportunity between March and June in creativity, art, craft and music, and innovative ways of using the everyday environment to stimulate children and link their learning to common experience. Many of these school environments are deprived of facilities common in urban schools, so teachers tend to give up easily. Prabhat developed a curriculum covering classroom design and management (and making the most of the simplest resources through creativity), curriculum development (including environment exposure, using the environment to teach science and health), computer basics, the life and work of great educators, and the importance of evaluation and feedback. Teaching techniques and skills shared included story-telling, skills that utilize the body, voice and listening, interaction with home environments, and counseling. This programme was enriched by many experts who contributed their ideas and time, including Vijay Parmar, Kiran Sethi, Prof Syed Ansari, Deepika Singh and Gagan Sethi. Personal development to encourage a sense of self-worth among teachers and students was an important element of this effort.



The mutual learning from this three-month activity led on to a 2-year agreement between Prabhat and Udaan, in which Prabhat's Director would devote 15 days of each month to the field. The curriculum development activities would cover standards 1-4 in Gujarati medium. Prabhat would train Udaan educators who in turn would encourage village youth into careers in primary education. The emphasis is on equipping educators to use their environments as a resource for teaching, rather than to feel constantly constrained by the lack of facilities. This program was named Meghdhanush (Rainbow) to identify these educators with the values of the programme, including

issues of equity and gender. Regional supports were provided at classes set up in the Panchmahal area (Halol, Kalol and Ghoghumba talukas) and for Jamiat teachers from interior regions of Kutch, and brought together in Anjar and Bhuj.

## Networking

During the year the Director attended a residential workshop on human rights education organized by People's Watch Tamil Nadu at Coimbatore and the international seminar on Education for a Sustainable Future held at the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE, Ahmedabad). Prabhat conducted capacity-building 'ToT' workshops (of half-day to five-day duration) for trainers and on human rights education for Government primary school teachers (half-day to five-day duration) on behalf of People's Watch at Ahmedabad and Karamsad (Gujarat). A workshop on special children in Baroda was attended by Shailee Majithia, conducted by Disha Charitable Trust. A workshop on waste management at CEE attended by Keshav Chatterjee was among other opportunities utilized during the year. A dialogue and workshop with teachers at the Jamiat campus in Anjar was conducted by the Director. It focused on teaching supports for mathematics, parent-teacher relationships, and on health and personal hygiene.



## The Team & Prabhat for Kids

The year saw the beginning of Prabhat's own office with basic facilities and the induction of four educators (Jayshri Shah, Pratibha Atreya, Hima Chandrani, and Keshav Chatterjee) and Manjuben as support staff. Plans for an activity centre were worked out by this group and Prabhat for Kids was inaugurated on Dussehra day with 50 well-wishers joining the celebration. Beginning with three children and a donated collection of toys, books, games, computer, and audio material, Prabhat for Kids aimed at developing

six basic skills: language, numeracy, community/environment awareness, personal and social responsibility, physical wellbeing and cultural expression.

## Jeevan Taleem

By December a Jeevan Taleem programme for girls, all of whom were special children, was introduced in the same space each Saturday, to provide basic life skills in a happy and caring environment, with activities designed for their particular needs.

## 2006



## Registration

January 2006 saw the completion of formalities for a trust deed for Prabhat Education Foundation, a process greatly assisted by the advice and counsel of Mr Prafull Anubhai. It announced the members of its first board: Mr Sridhar Rajagopalan, Mr Geet Sethi, Ms Renu Seth, Mr Ashoke Chatterjee and Mr Keshav Chatterjee. Registration procedures were taken up with the Charity Commissioner and an account opened at the Bank of India (Paldi) to receive deposits of fees and donations. Meanwhile Prabhat continued to operate on family resources mobilized by the Director. Part-time accountancy support was arranged through Prabhat's CA, Shri Yogesh Dave.



Prabhat for Kids continued into the new year. When the academic activities ended in April for the summer break, Shailee Majithia, who joined in February, initiated the idea of a Summer Fun Club for school-going children. A 10-day workshop included programmes in environment, craft, art, drama, dance, sports, story - telling, aerobic exercises, yoga, meditation, and personal etiquette. A variety of craft and cultural activities brought in external resource persons and volunteers. The Club ended with a one-day camp at which special children were welcomed to join the good time had by all.



## Jeevan Taleem Summer Workshop

During this experience, Prabhat decided to respond to the needs of special children, expressed to it over the year by many parents. A one-month programme was developed in May by Jayshree Shah and Shailee Majithia and held at space made available to Prabhat by the Ahmedabad Education Society. Physical and personal skills, yoga, nature study, gardening and craft activities were blended to provide a soothing yet stimulating environment in which dance and music and sports were included. The programme proved hugely enjoyable

for the children and equally important for their parents, Prabhat educators and those who came in to help from local institutions. Volunteers included students, teachers, 'special education' educators and counselors as well as physical education staff from several schools, both government and private, including the Mahatma Gandhi International School. Some activities were alien to the participants' experiences, many of them having led very secluded



lives. Each day brought surprises and learning for all: the potter's wheel, tree climbing, a grandmother's story telling, a birthday and sports day were among the highlights that helped discover how well such students could mingle with and support each other. An openness to healthy competition was encouraging, and without deliberate effort the programme achieved a level of inclusion between children and volunteers (including other children of the same age group) that now has important lessons as Prabhat moves forward in its efforts to serve children with special needs. A parent-teacher interaction was planned on the final day at which children performed for their parents, showed photographs of



their activities during the month, and provided an opportunity for parents to share their insights on the impact and change encouraged through the workshop.

Support work commenced in summer with teachers of classes 4-10 of the Jagruti Charitable Trust (Halol, Panchmahal District). Prabhat is assisting them design programmes, upgrade teaching and evaluation skills, and improve other aspects of their systems.

In September, Jeevan Taleem took forward its summer experience in rented space in the premises of Apang Manav Mandal. A positive attitude towards learning among such children was encouraged through physical, mental and spiritual opportunities. Social awareness and skill-building have been other objectives. The number of children reached has been small as finding space took considerable time, and by September some children had made other arrangements. Parents have been appreciative while expressing their preference for learning environments closer to regular schools to better offer a sense of permanence and normality on par with other children.





## Riverside School

In August, Director Chatterjee led a group of Grades 5 & 6 students on a one-week environmental field trip to Mussoorie, in liaison with Woodstock School. The experience included mountain treks, nature study activities and exercises to sensitise children to the social and natural environment of the Himalayas. 'Night-Out' environmental exposure programmes were conducted for Grades 1 and 2 in and around the school campus. The Director also conducted training programmes for two batches of teachers from The Galaxy International School (Rajkot) and Anand Niketan (Ahmedabad) on behalf of Riverside School, on organizing school-level nature clubs.

## Udaan

Through its link with Udaan, in October Prabhat began cooperation with Bhasha, an institution which works with tribal communities all over India to help preserve their cultural identity. Director Chatterjee conducted workshops at Dalit Shakti Kendra (Nanidevati, Sanand) for teachers and field workers to help them develop skills and materials to assist outreach to children.

The Director attended the Buniyadi Shiksha: Nayi Taleem seminar at Gujarat Vidyapeeth in December.

Prabhat began work on developing its website. It registered as a support institution for the welfare of mentally challenged children. The Times of India assisted by including Prabhat in its 'Events' column. The Foundation received its first financial donations from James and Allie Loehlin of Massachusetts (USA) and Mrs Sneih Singh of California (USA).

During the year, Ms Meetal Dadiwadia joined as Special Educator.

## 2007...



In addition to on-going activities, January included a two-day session by the Director with teachers from the Jamiat-e-Hind on classroom skill development with emphasis on academic and non-academic skills related to child behaviours. A 'ToT' for human rights trainers was conducted at Janvikas by the Director. He was also invited by the Dalit Shakti Kendra to judge an elocution contest, in which 140 students from several vocational streams participated. A 3-day workshop for teachers of the pioneering NGO Navsarjan was conducted to project classroom management and teaching techniques. This was followed by two days of teacher evaluation and interviews. During this month, discussions were

held by the Director at several school and other institutions on the problems of school admission faced by children below the age of five. These discussions highlighted the pressure on parents to find early school admission even though they would prefer the child to start school later.

Prabhat opened a Jeevan Taleem centre in Maninagar in March. Ms Alka Panchal joined as Special Educator and Pranav Shah as Coordinator.



## Looking Ahead

This report is an overview of an effort over three years to develop the contacts, experience and systems that can serve children who need a creative environment for their learning. Prabhat acknowledges that this journey has only just began, but the team has been greatly encouraged by parents, children and well-wishers who have expressed their faith in the Prabhat concept and have given the team the confidence to move ahead. The major challenge now is to raise resources that can provide a permanent space for the activities described above and to strengthen the Prabhat team for the tasks that lie ahead. Prabhat takes this opportunity to acknowledge the partnerships and friendships which have assisted this journey.



## Acknowledgements

Partners who have strengthened Prabhat activities during these years have included Riverside School, Udaan (a Janvikas initiative), Anala Outdoors and Setu Developmental Intervention Centre.

Prabhat Education Foundation acknowledges the special contribution of Mr. Venkat Krishnan (Director, GIVE India), Ms Kiran Sethi (Director, Riverside School), Mr Sridhar Rajagopalan (Director, Educational Initiative), Mr Sudhir Ghodke (Director, Educational Initiative), Prafull Anubhai, Education Management and Ms Minal Doshi (Director, Setu Developmental Intervention Centre). They have given most generously of their time, ideas and encouragement, despite their many preoccupations. Introductions provided by them have helped Prabhat identify resource persons. The Prabhat logo was designed by Kiran Sethi. Prabhat cannot forget the late Shri Nikhil Dave whose vision helped guide its early steps. His generous donations made Prabhat for Kids a colourful place. The Riverside School has not only been a friend and supporter but has helped with guidance, feedback as well as furniture and materials that Prabhat children now enjoy. A 'friends of Prabhat' committee comprising Prof S Balaram of NID, Ms Sushma Jacob and Ms Padmini Balaram gave generous guidance, meeting every Sunday over several months to help work out concepts, proposals, lesson plans and other development needs and helping communicate Prabhat to others.



*Prabhat would also like to acknowledge the contribution and support of all these friends and colleagues:*

Aashaka Dalal, Therapist  
Ahmedabad Education Society  
Ajay Gupta, Manager  
Amit Ambalal, Artist  
Ankita Patel, Educator  
Aparna S. Rajagopalan, Educationist  
Apang Manav Mandal  
Asha Poddar, Spark Kids  
Ashish Dholakia, Audiologist &  
Speech Pathologist  
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University  
Bhavanaben, Utthan Sansthan  
Bhavana Social worker  
Binoy Acharya, UNNATI  
Bipin Mehta, BPA  
Centre for Environment Education  
Centre for Learning, Bangalore  
Charu Dholakia, Special Educator  
Dalip Kumar Seth, Educationist  
D.R. Laxkar, PE Educator  
Dr. Bhairviben, Psychologist  
Dr. Pragnesh Nathawad, Physiotherapist  
Dr. V.G. Shashtri, Dr. Ambedkar University  
Deepika Singh, Udaan  
Devang Anglay, Artist  
Devika Singh, Social Worker  
Devisha Kulasekaran, Educator (USA)  
Dipti Sukla, Artist and Educator  
Dipti Raju, Social Worker  
Dinesh Korjan, Designer  
Education Initiative, Ahmedabad  
Eklavya School, Ahmedabad  
Eleanor Nicholson, Educator (USA)  
Esther David, Writer  
Gagan Sethi, Janvikas  
Geet Sethi, Sportsperson  
Geeta Ram, Craft Council of India, Chennai  
Geeta Sehgal, Educator  
George & Beth Ann Taylor, Educators (USA)  
Gopi Venkat, Educator, Mumbai  
Griva Shah, Special Educator (UK)  
H Kumar Vyas, Designer and Educator  
Hakubhai Shah, Artist  
Hiren Choksi, Educator (Dubai)  
I.C. Joseph, Designer, Bangalore  
Indu Lata, Educator (USA)  
Jajvalya Sukla, Educationist  
Jagruti Charitable Trust, Halol  
James and Allie Loehlin, Educators (USA)  
Jamiat-Ulama-e-Hindi, Anjar  
Jaya Shah, Counselor & Educationist  
Jayanti Nayak, Sculptor and Designer  
Jayesh Shukla, Artist  
Jigna Vora, Readers' Nest  
John Kurrien, Centre for Learning  
Resources, Pune  
Jyoti Dhomse, Centre for Social Justice  
Jyoti and Rakesh Roongta, Industrialists  
Kamal Mangal, Anand Niketan  
Kartik Sankar, Educationist, Tamil Nadu  
Katherine, Gintara, Bangalore  
Kiran Bhalodia, Education Manager  
Kiran Sethi, Riverside School  
Kishore Saint, Development Activist,  
Udaipur  
Krishnakant D. Parekh, School for  
Hearing Impaired  
Lata Jhala, Educationist  
Lata Jhunjhuwadia, Special Educator  
Learning Tree Montessori School, Chennai  
Leena Mahadevia, Interior Designer  
Liza Thomas, Educator  
M. Hakimuddin Qasami, Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind  
M. K. Prasad, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad  
Madhu Menon, Anala  
Mahatma Gandhi International School  
Mahendra Nikkam, Photographer  
Manish & Shilpa Jain, Sikshantar, Udaipur.  
Martin Macwan, Dalit Shakti Kendra  
Manish Jain, Sikshantar, Udaipur  
Minal Doshi, Setu Developmental  
Intervention Centre  
Mirai Chatterjee, SEWA  
Minal Buch Educator (UK)  
Mita Vakil, Educationist  
Mona Malhotra Prasad, Educationist, Mumbai  
Monika Somaya, Educator  
Munjhal Thakkar, Doctor  
Murtuza Mansur Zadli, Manager, Mumbai  
N. Ramjee, CEE  
Neelam Boora, Educationist (Canada)  
Neelam Iyer Ghose, Designer, Dehra Dun  
Neha Shukla, Educationist  
Nikhil Dave (late), Manager  
Nilima Shah, Doctor  
Nina Sabnani, Designer  
Nitesh Solanki, Special Educator  
Nupur, Centre for Social Justice  
Padmini Baram, Designer and Educator  
Parul Patel, Riverside School  
Parag Dalal, Educator  
Payal Shah, Educator (USA)  
Poonam Bir Kasturi, Designer, Bangalore  
Pravall Anubhai, Education Management  
Pranav Shah, Blind People's Association  
Pranav Trivedi, Environmentalist  
Pushpa Verma, Artist  
Ravi Panda, Computer Engineer  
Raju Dipti, Social Workers  
Radhika Joshi, Designer  
Rashmi Korjan, Designer  
Rajesh Shukla, Artist  
R N Vakil, Dean, CEPT  
Rishi Valley School, Madanppalli A.P.  
Ritika Banker, Educator  
Riverside School, Ahmedabad  
Romola Joseph, Social Worker, Bangalore  
Rukshana Mallik, Educator (UK)  
S Balaram, D J Academy of Design,  
Coimbatore  
Sangita Trivedi, Environmentalist  
Sanjay Yagnik  
Samar Bagchi, Scientist and Educator,  
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Sandhya Nair, Educator  
Sanket Speech and Hearing Clinic  
Sara Ahmed, Activist  
Sashi Gupta, Educator  
Shanta Guhan, Activist, Chennai  
Shailendra Gupta, Eklavya Institute of  
Teachers Education  
Shailesh Modi, Visual Communicator  
Shalini Talsania, Educator, Mumbai  
Shashi Bhatt, Sri Ram Vidyalaya  
Shrenik Lalbhai, Education Management  
Setu Developmental Intervention Centre  
Shilpa Jain, Sikshantar, Udaipur  
Shilpa Sutaria, Educator  
Siddiq Panwala, Advocate (Australia)  
Smrithi Joseph, Educator (Eklavya, M.P)  
Sneih Singh, Activist (USA)  
Sonali Thakkar, Student Volunteer  
Sridhar Rajagopalan, Education Management  
Suchita Subramaniam, Psychologist  
Sudesh Saint, Educator, Udaipur  
Sudhir Ghodke, Education Management  
Sushma Jacob, Educator  
Sybil David (late), Educationist  
Tara Kini, Aditi International School,  
Bangalore  
Tom Alter, Actor, Mumbai  
Udaan, Ahmedabad  
Vaishali Hyderabad, Jagriti Foundation  
Valley School, Bangalore  
Venkat Krishnan, Education Management  
Vijay Parmar, Social Worker  
Vivek Prasad, Educationist, Mumbai  
Woodstock School, Mussoorie  
Yogesh Dave, Auditor  
Yuvashakti, Halol  
Zehra Tyabji, Designer  
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