PRABHAT EDUCATION FOUNDATION

September 2021 Issue No.22

Roshni

A monthly newsletter by Prabhat Education Foundation

About Prabhat

The Prabhat Education Foundation reflects a journey that began in 2003 through the identification and nurturing of children with learning difficulties struggling in mainstream schools. In time, Realizing the need for education and learning of this group and particularly of children, Prabhat conceptualized an institutional facility to provide systematic learning and rehabilitation services that could be accessible for those challenged by poverty and mobility. Working with and through local communities is Prabhat's hallmark.

What started as a modest beginning, with one child in 2007, has now reached to 3000 persons with special needs in Ahmedabad as well as to their families, neighbours and communities.

An experience

Hi, I am Laxmi Vishwakarma working as an educator at Prabhat. I would like to share with you a funny experience I had with a Prabhat child at the Danilimda Centre.

Chintan visited the Centre for the first time with his parents, he was 6 years old at the time and upon assessment he was found to have intellectual disability, speech impairment along with down syndrome. We kept him for observation for 8 days, after which we formalized his admission at the Centre. Being new and very young he would not mingle and would stay alone, we knew he needed time to adjust. Gradually he started joining in on the group activities and especially enjoyed dance and game sessions. Being an introvert, Chintan was very shy and quiet by nature. With time passing by, he started to make friends in the class and started getting involved with everyone.

At present, he sits with other children in the classroom, follows the teacher's instruction well and can draws standing and sleeping lines, shapes like circle & square. He enjoys coloring, watching tv, listening to music and the one thing he's very fond of is making and wearing necklaces using different materials. Once at the Centre, we were transferring some material from the computer onto a pen drive, we usually mark the pen drives by threading it, so that everyone can identify theirs. I kept mine on the table after work and went off to take my craft session with the senior girls. While winding up, I went to collect my pen drive and it was missing. We all spent hours looking for it but couldn't find it. After a couple of days, we realized we won't find it anymore and gave up looking for it. That day Chintan was the Centre and was having water, he spilt some on his t-shirt and fearing he would catch a cold, I helped him change. While doing that I found a colourful thread round his neck and then looked down and there it was my pen drive! He was wearing it proudly as a chain, thinking the pen drive to be a pendant! I started laughing and asked him where did he find it, he told me, he found it on the table and liked the colours, so he wore it! I tried to explain that it is not a chain but an office pen drive, it took me a while to make him understand, but he then finally handed it to me, feeling sad! I realized he liked the colours of the thread and the way I had plaited them. So, the next day I had a surprise ready for him, when he came in, I gave him a small gift, I made a thread chain along with a small pendant for him and gifted it! He was elated and wore it with all happiness and showed it off to his friends and family. That day Chintan made me realize how little it takes to be happy in life, I wish all of us can be blessed to find this kind of innocent joy and happiness.

By Laxmi Vishwakarma
Educator

Stories of inspiration

In today's post we are doing something different – inspiring, nevertheless. Today we honour the role of a mother in the life of a special needs child. Today we honour those who have stepped up to be their primary caregivers.

"Vikram has always been such a playful child. From the moment he was born, he was always ready to grasp at things, play with people's hair and quick to crawl. As I was enjoying the early days of motherhood, everything changed at the six month mark. He suffered an epileptic attack that compromised his neural function. He had difficulty carrying out basic tasks such as eating, sitting upright, walking. My child could no longer grasp things properly with his hand and no longer even attempted to. Crawling became difficult as he lost his sense of direction. This drastic change left me distraught. My days were filled with taunts and insults hurled at me by my in laws as they blamed me for birthing a child like him and my nights crying and begging my lord to take this sickness away. They called him possessed and crazy. Never once held him or fed him or told him a bedtime story.

Soon we began his treatment. The treatment caused thousands. Thousands that I did not have. I had nowhere to turn to except my in laws. It took every ounce of courage and putting my pride aside to ask them for money, thinking I could appeal to the grandparent in them. I was wrong. They did not even bat an eye. That was the day I decided, I would never ask again. For anything.

Somehow I was able to borrow enough from close friends and Vikram's treatment began. We were in the hospital for ten days. The treatment was a lot for the both of us. My 7 month old baby who should be lying in his own pram listening to lullabies, was being poked and prodded with needles all day and night.

The next 9 days, I was left all on my own. My husband was out there working as much as he could to scrounge up money for Vikram's treatment. To my surprise, my in laws sent food for me the first day, but the next day I was told the burden of making food for another person was too much for my mother in law to handle. But in reality, my son and I were the burden that was too hard for her to handle.

From that moment on, I decided to never be so dependent. Never to ask or to beg or to request. No longer would I memorise medical jargon to help make them understand. No longer would I dream about them accepting my child. No longer would I let my child be considered a freak of nature, by his own family.

So after those ten painful and tear jerking days, we moved into a different house. After all this pain, things were on the upward turn. The doctor had advised medicines and asked him to spend a lot of time around children. Each day, I would take him to our local anganwadi where kids who were his age would come to play.

I hesitated initially. The adverse response from my in laws had tainted my view of people. I went in, dreading the reaction of other children and their parents.

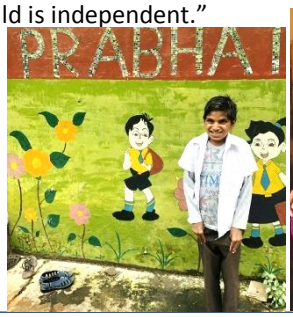
Our first day there, we began playing ball as Vikram whisked it over to another boy by mistake. Taking the opportunity, that boy was keen on playing a game of catch. As he rolled the ball towards Vikram, Vikram struggled to pick it up as he had a problem with grasping objects. Seeing this difficulty, the other boy came to him and said, "its okay, we can play football!" Vikram was a natural.

This instance made me realise something important about the human race. We are all born with this childlike innocence, but our society teaches us differently. Our society teaches us to marginalise the less fortunate, discriminate against minorities and stigmatise those who are different. If anything, our children could teach us a thing or two. That child made me realise that a special needs child does not need a separate school, education and livelihood, but he needs extra support and slight modifications to the current system. He needs a ramp in a regular school to get to class, changes to sports class to encourage their participation and a behavioural shift to consider special needs children - different not abnormal. He needs inclusion.

Soon after we were introduced to Prabhat. My first day there, I was overwhelmed. Overwhelmed at the amount of support they had for both me and Vikram. It gave my child a platform to be himself, develop and get the right kind of therapy for his condition. It also gave me something. It gave me a safe space. A safe space to share my troubles, ask my questions and combat my anxieties about raising a special needs child.

Its been 1.5 years since I enrolled him into Prabhat and the before-after images are stark. My boy can do so much on his own. He helps out with groceries, helps clean the house, carries out his daily routine on his own (won't let me even touch his comb anymore). Prabhat has made my child independent. Prabhat has not only included my child but celebrated him.

Two weeks ago today, on teachers day, Vikram became the physiotherapy teacher. He wore a white lab coat, and pretend examined the kids with motor difficulties and carried out their daily exercises. Seeing my little boy help others kid out, filled my heart with joy. I am proud to say that I am the mother of a special needs child. And I am proud to say that my child is independent."



Story narrated by: Vikram's mother Pushpa; **captured by:** Yamini Mehra

Training: Prabhat's association with NR Institute of Physiotherapy dates back to almost 3 years. It was through a field visit of the faculty of the Institute that they realized, the range of disabilities that Prabhat works with how beneficial it can be for the students of the institute and how it will further build in their practical knowledge of working with people and children with special needs. Since then Prabhat regularly has been training almost 20-25 students from NRIP every six months. This month 22 students trained under Prabhat's in-house experts at the various dehlus. These associations are mutually beneficial as the organization also gains a lot from these young minds who come to learn. The students spent close to a month getting on hands-on experience of providing physiotherapy to children of various age groups and disabilities.

Health workshops continue: with the technical support provided by oowomaniya, Prabhat continues to spread health awareness, focusing on menstrual hygiene. This month several workshops were conducted in schools (which have begun for grades 6 through 12). Schools have also been very accommodating to provide the space and logistics to conduct these workshops. The sessions are kept interactive. Students were provided with biodegradable sanitary pads as well. The schools selected for these workshops are located in and around the area Prabhat serves. Conducting these workshops are also helping Prabhat build networks and associations with several mainstreams schools, where in the near future deeper relationships can be forged and would help pave a way for the admission of children with special needs.

Survey: Although Shah-wadi is an area Prabhat has served in the past but being predominantly a migrant community there are new residents very often, thus Prabhat engages in short door to door surveys to identify new children with special needs every now and then. The survey also give an insight into the lives of the population – language, culture, etc. which later help in designing community engagement activities.

Offline meets: children mainstreamed by Prabhat now come to the dehlu almost regularly. They engage in various activities and also clarify their curriculum based doubts. Apart from activities at the dehlu the online learning continues. The students are provided with a task for the week based on their age and grade and the evidence of the assignments are shared through whatsapp to the school programme team at Prabhat, who assess and provide the feedback. The team has also started conducting parent teacher meetings for mainstreamed students to apprise the parents of the child's overall development.

Aids & assistive services: this month Prabhat worked towards registering 12 people with special needs at the newly launched 'E-Shram' portal for workers from the unorganized sector started by the Central government. Registering on this portal will help workers to receive social security benefits such as Bima yojna insurance cover. The field team also assisted 12 people to get their medical certificates from Civil hospital along with registering 11 people for aadhar cards, 30 people for the pension scheme and 12 have been assisted with ST passes.

Demystifying disability and the new Act: sometimes rude comments or stares given to a person with special needs is rooted in lack of awareness. Like the terrible experience Jeeja Ghosh had to go through on the flight (1 Woman & the Supreme Court Make Travel for Differently Abled Easier (thebetterindia.com))Prabhat realized this entire incident was steeped in mis or lack of information and thus, since then has made a mandate towards reaching out and doing this sensitization. Towards this Prabhat from the past couple of years has been working towards simplifying the new disability act which will help people/businesses understand disability and rights of people with it. Prabhat's association with Riverside School dates back to almost 11 years and the understanding the students have of Prabhat and its work is immense, thus the organization roped in students from grade 8 to develop materials which translates the new disability act into an easily understandable format.

Snap-shot of the month

Chintan enjoying a day out with his Buddy!

NRIP students engrossed in a conversation with Prabhat's special educator & physiotherapist

Prabhat Education Foundation
A-4, Sujal apartment
Opp. Satellite bungalow
Ramdevnagar
Ahmedabad 380015

Phone: +91-79-4890-305
Email: prabhat@prabhatedu.org
Website: www.prabhateducationfoundation.org

PRABHAT
EDUCATION FOUNDATION