

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

Nitesh came to the Vatva Centre supported by his parents, his hands were tightly tied with a rope, on seeing that I immediately asked his parents why have they done that, they told us - if they open it, he would immediately start scratching his ears to the point that it starts bleeding! We immediately conducted a thorough assessment of Nitesh and he was identified with cerebral palsy, speech problem, slight visual impairment and severe mental retardation. The team at Prabhat including me a special educator, physiotherapist, occupational therapist and a speech therapist sat together and developed an IEP (Individual education plan) for him, which included several sensory activities using tactile materials like sand, cloth, rough textures, clay, etc. Nitesh started enjoying music sessions and we realized his responses were also better with music in the background, so we started using music especially during his therapy sessions and he started following Dr. Kavitha's instructions very well. Pre-lockdown Nitesh was given a pair of callipers to help him stand and eventually walk. We started helping him at the Centre but soon the lockdown hit, but thankfully we had trained his parents on using the callipers. With regular online counselling and training, we could see improvement even on the video calls. Now that things have eased and Prabhat is working towards bringing normalcy by setting up community level centres, children have also started coming regularly, following all covid protocols. One day we were setting up the *dehlu* to start the session and I heard someone call out to me I looked back and saw Nitesh walking into the *dehlu* wearing his callipers! I and Dr. Kavitha were both surprised and so happy seeing him walk and he said 'teacher I have come to school by myself today'. Nitesh has made tremendous progress, his hands are seldom tied now, and his scratching has also reduced drastically. We also realized that his scratching was a manifestation of lack of activity and limitation in ways of expression. He is regularly attending the *dehlu* and mingling well with other children.

By: Kashmiri Upadhaya
Special Educator



" From the moment my son Haider was born, I was filled with joy and happiness as those ten little toes and ten little fingers made their way out of my womb. I clung to him tightly as doctors struggled to get me to give him up for his neonatal tests. As separation anxiety crippled me, the doctor entered the room with a solemn mood. He expressed his concern over the fact that Haider could not open his fists as they were clenched from the time of birth.

I was confused, I had waited nine months for this miracle and there stood a doctor in front of me telling me about early signs of cerebral palsy. Leaving that hospital I was filled with anxiety, fear, and sadness over the unknown. Would he open his fists? Will, he able to use his hands? Will he ever walk? I wept late into the night as the prospect of a troubled life for my child was too much for me to handle. The thought of him suffering, treatments, medication, everything frightened me. Those initial few years his condition worsened. Soon he lost all motor functions. My days consisted of bathing, feeding, and exercising Haider. He was on medication for behavioral problems as without it he would lose control. As a mother, and as parents, my husband and I were desperate for a cure. The doctor had already made it clear that Haider's condition would not be cured, but as a mother, desperation always reasoned over science. A lady came along who encouraged us to be hopeful as she knew of a cure that would treat our child and 'fix' him within a month. We didn't even think twice. Handing her money equal to three months of rent to make the medicine, we became hopeful. She never showed.

After countless phone calls, home visits, we realized all the information that she had given us were false. It was hard for me to accept that things would never change. I had already begun looking at schools for him. When I learned that it was all for nothing I was heartbroken.

One day Haider found me crying as I lay next to him. He moved his hands towards me and nudged me to come closer to him. As I did, he moved his wrists towards me and wiped the tears off my cheek and gave me a beaming smile. He started patting my head, just like I would pat his, whenever he would cry in pain. At that moment, I felt guilty. Guilty because I realized my child was still a child. He could still feel sadness and still understand others around him. He could understand his mother was not alright and this one simple gesture turned my entire outlook around.

No longer was I looking for someone to 'fix' him because he did not need fixing. So what if he would never walk on his own, there are wheelchairs, so what if he would never be able to do things on his own, he always had me. I began looking past what he did not have and looked out for the things he could do despite his crippled limbs.

When I heard of Prabhat, I was hopeful. It's been a long time since Haider has been a part of the home-based services at Prabhat. His condition deters him from going to the center, so we have regular therapists who come home. They exercise his limbs to make them less stiff, teach him how to grip his hands, straighten his legs and sit upright. Tell him stories, show him colors and teach him textures. Every week, he sits eagerly by the door as Namrata ma'am arrives at 11am, to begin his therapy.

Not just that, they helped me. They helped me accept Haider the way he is, encouraged me to come to the center and mingle with mothers whose plight was similar to mine. I found so much emotional support in these powerful women who each had a story to tell, united by the strong force of motherhood.

The rest is history, and my life is filled with joy now. We are a family of 8 and there is never a dull moment. Although Haider has started becoming increasingly naughty. His favorite time of day is when his sisters come home and he can trouble them. He is just like any other teenager!"

- Reshma Ben (Haider Ali's mother)



Captured by: Yamini Mehra



https://www.instagram.com/prabhat_education_foundation/



<https://www.facebook.com/Prabhateducationfoundation/>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe1oxuBWMDvyCRk2EPzzjIA>

Festivities are all about the coming together in different ways, a beautiful demonstration of inclusion.

Prabhat every year takes these opportunities to bring some magic into the lives of those with special needs and those around her. The month leading up to Diwali is always buzzing with activity and excitement at Prabhat. This year we had to double the fun, to make up for last year! The most interesting part of the festive journey, this year was the involvement of school children, they were dedicated and earnestly involved in the process of diya making, and it was heartening for all to see! The process of diya making is a multi-pronged activity with proven benefit for children, especially for those with special needs. The start of the process with moulding the clay is an excellent therapy for exercising fine and gross motor skills, apart from the therapeutic benefits there is also a lot of learning that is also involved in this process. Children learn new words, learn to work in groups, improve concentration, etc. And off course the added element of fun is always what makes it a sought after activity. Prabhat puts in a lot of love and care in making these symbols of light and happiness to share it with all those, who have been a pillar of support in the organizations endeavour.

Other highlights of the month include:

Getting healthy: Prabhat has started regular yoga sessions for the children. The need for this session was brought on by the parents, who are now spearheading it. There is a lot of fun, giggling and off course some serious pranayamas! The yoga sessions are conducted at all the Prabhat *dehlus*.

Craft sessions: for the festive season children were taught craft they could use to decorate their homes and neighbourhood with. Children practiced a lot of cutting, folding, stitching using various materials like cloth, paper, jute, etc. Material (decorations) prepared by them was used at the *dehlus* and also at the homes of the children during the festive season.

Outdoor visits: With winters setting in, everyone wants to be out in the sun! Prabhat's children had a joyful day filled with dance, music, games and fun foods at the 'Happy Street' an event organized by aProCH and NGO working towards building a 'child-friendly city'. The 'Happy Street' event is organized at one of the busiest streets of Ahmedabad once in a couple of months and for that day, the street is converted into a children's playground. It is a sight to be seen. Prabhat's children enjoyed thoroughly and soaked up every bit of the fun. This month the children also enjoyed a visit to their favourite Riverside Schools, and the staff and the children there take every effort to make it the most joyful and memorable time for their Prabhat buddies!

Distribution: Prabhat also takes this festive season to bring joy in the lives of those living in these communities by way of distributing gifts. This year Prabhat with the support from donors and well-wishers was able to distribute school bags, lunch boxes, water bottle, stationary, cooking vessels, mattresses and blankets.

Assistive services: With a lot of social security schemes now being online, it is convenient but also a limitation for those who cannot use online platforms. Prabhat has been extending assistive services to those with special needs for more than 8 years. The access to social security schemes is important for those with special needs especially for those with limited means. These schemes help them lead a better life with access to free public transport, monthly pensions, free health insurance, and medical service benefits, monthly ration, etc. For accessing these schemes proof of identification and disability certificate is also a must, for which Prabhat's field team works tirelessly making multiple rounds to the local government hospital. For the online services as well, Prabhat field team allocates certain days of the week to work on this and also does all the follow-up. The organization makes sure that all those associated with Prabhat have all their documents in place so access and enjoy all the government benefits. This month the field team assisted 15 people with the ST pass, 17 with Pension scheme, 7 with Aadhaar Card and 12 with e-shram cards.

Snap-shot of the month

