




Unsung Heroes of Yugaantar 2018

<p>Guru Nanak Sewa Sansthan</p> 	<p>Nai Kiran Universal School was established in 2005 under the aegis of Guru Nanak Sewa Sansthan with just 2 students in a parking lot allotted to J. D. Khurana. Today, it has evolved into a beacon of free English Medium education (following the DPS curriculum) for around 500 underprivileged children. The Sansthan provides comprehensive support, including educational materials, uniforms and midday meals. Notably, MENSA has recognized and funded the education of four exceptionally intelligent students from the school. Nai Kiran also emphasizes computer literacy from Nursery onwards, and over 200 of its students have successfully gained admission to prestigious schools in Gurgaon. Beyond education, the Guru Nanak Sewa Sansthan runs the Nai Kiran Eye Hospital, offering free eye care, surgeries, medicines, spectacles, and transportation to thousands of needy individuals, earning the organization numerous prestigious awards for its selfless service.</p>
<p>Urmi Foundation (Sonalee Shyamsunder)</p> 	<p>Sonalee Shyamsunder, the founder of Urmi Foundation (established in 2012), is dedicated to empowering children with disabilities from marginalized communities in Mumbai. This Chembur-based non-profit focuses on providing crucial education and therapeutic intervention, aiming for the children's physical independence and literacy. The foundation's thoughtfully designed programs, with effective impact assessment tools, also teach parents the importance of education, therapy, and pre-vocational training. Their unique model integrates functional academics with essential Activities of Daily Living (ADL) skills, specifically tailored to the challenges of slum environments. Urmi Foundation's objectives include disability awareness and detection, identifying out-of-school children, counseling parents, and assessing children's IQ and health. To date, Urmi Foundation has extended its support to 6 BMC schools and 7</p>

	community schools, positively impacting over 2000 beneficiaries, including special children and their parents, striving to create inclusive and adaptive environments for these vulnerable individuals.
Triveni Acharya (Rescue Foundation) 	<p>Founded in 1996 and formally established in 2000 by Mrs. Triveni and the late Mr. Balkrishna Acharya, the Rescue Foundation has been a steadfast force against human trafficking, inspired by a pivotal encounter in Kamathipura. Despite the loss of Mr. Balkrishna in 2005, Mrs. Triveni's unwavering dedication has propelled the organization to rescue over 7,000 girls and care for 11,157 lives, reuniting 10,778 families with comprehensive support, including medical aid, education, and skill development in their protective homes across Boisar, Pune, and Delhi. Through robust rehabilitation programs, legal aid, and collaborations with government and international organizations, the Rescue Foundation continues to fight for a future free from trafficking, honoring Balkrishna's legacy and ensuring justice and empowerment for survivors.</p>
Mr Dhimant Parekh Founder- Better India 	<p>Mr. Dhimant Parekh is the Founder and CEO of The Better India, India's largest social impact media platform, which he co-founded in 2008 with Anuradha to address the lack of constructive and solutions-oriented journalism. A computer science engineer with a management degree and a background as a top technology product manager, Dhimant leveraged his skills to build a media outlet that drives large-scale change by sharing inspiring stories of grassroots innovations and unsung heroes. Under his leadership, The Better India has catalyzed significant positive impact across the country, including rural electrification, supporting urban slum schools, empowering farmer widows, rejuvenating lakes, influencing government policies, and generating numerous jobs, all through the power of positive storytelling and democratized news reporting.</p>



<p>Sheroes Cafe</p> 	<p>The women of Sheroes are courageous survivors of devastating acid attacks who have transformed their struggle into a powerful movement challenging societal norms of beauty. Operating unique cafes, like those in Lucknow and previously in Agra, entirely run by acid attack survivors, they create vital spaces for empowerment, productivity, and learning. These "Sheroes," exemplified by Promodini Roul, who survived an attack at 15, offer not just employment but a platform to reclaim their lives, inspire others, and educate society. Beyond the cafes, Sheroes represents resilience and a collective fight against violence, demonstrating the profound strength and inner beauty of these remarkable women.</p>
<p>Tong-Len Charitable Trust</p>	<p>Founded in 2004, the Tong-Len Charitable Trust is dedicated to uplifting the impoverished slum communities of Kangra and Dharmshala in Himachal Pradesh by focusing on their education, health and overall welfare. Since its inception, Tong-Len has positively impacted over 500 households, educated more than 300 children through diverse programs, ensured near-universal vaccination among them and tirelessly works to improve their living conditions. The trust's core mission is to provide holistic education, nurturing compassionate and ethical individuals who can contribute positively to the world. To achieve this, Tong-Len operates a hostel providing residence and learning for children attending leading schools in Dharmshala, alongside a primary-level in-house school that emphasizes not only core subjects but also ethics, coding, dialectics, and social work. With a future vision to extend its reach to every child in the slums, Tong-Len aims to cultivate a generation that, through education and opportunity, will eradicate slums and become agents of positive change for the nation.</p>

<p>Adwait Dandwate</p> 	<p>Adwait Dandwate is the dedicated founder and executive director of Vardhishnu, an NGO committed to enriching the educational opportunities for child waste pickers and child laborers. Recognizing the harsh realities faced by these vulnerable children, as exemplified by his encounter with a young waste picker, Adwait established community learning centers like Anandghar ("A home of happiness") in Jalgaon, Maharashtra, which currently supports over 125 children. Through Vardhishnu's efforts, more than 100 children have been successfully enrolled in mainstream schools, offering them a pathway to a brighter future. Holding a Master's in Sociology and pursuing further studies in management, Adwait's commitment is further underscored by prestigious fellowships and his participation in programs like Wipro Seeding and TFlx, all driven by his belief that every child deserves a safe, joyful learning environment and a life of dignity.</p>
<p>Wing Commander M.A Afraz (Retd.)</p> 	<p>After a distinguished 25-year career in the Indian Air Force, Wing Commander M.A Afraz (Retd.) transitioned into social entrepreneurship, driven by a desire to give back to his Fauji community. An alumnus of MSU Baroda and IIM Ahmedabad, he founded Honourpoint, India's unique online memorial dedicated to the martyrs of the Indian Armed Forces from 1947 to the present day. With a current database of over 12,500 martyrs and an ambition to document every fallen soldier's story, Honourpoint serves as a vital tribute to these heroes and their families. Collaborating with organizations nationwide, Afraz believes Honourpoint fulfills a national debt of gratitude to the families who have made the ultimate sacrifice.</p>

Udaysinh Jadav

Mr. Udaysinh Jadav started "Ahmedabad No Rickshawalo" on 21st October 2010, on Dussehra, with the concept of a "Gift Economy". His auto has a colorful ambiance with a ceiling adorned with Kalamkari murals and walls displaying Gandhian principles. There's a dustbin, a library filled with magazines and books and an MP3 speaker playing songs. Additionally, two boxes offer water bottles and homemade Gujarati snacks from his wife. He gifts badges & smileys to all passengers and gives toys, comic books and chocolates to children. Upon reaching the destination, he hands you an envelope and looks away, not asking for anything. You can pay whatever you want, with the meter reading zero. The principle of the Gift Economy entails paying forward for someone in need, where the rider before you covers your travel costs, and you pay it forward for the next. During COVID-19, he prioritized safety with sanitizer, masks, and aid distribution, strictly following government guidelines. His passion enriches every journey, inspiring deeper thoughts, broader smiles, and stronger connections.

<p>Bhavna G Padhiyar</p> 	<p>Serving as a senior clerk in the District Panchayat Kutch since 1992, Ms. Bhavna G Padhiyar, an M.A., B.Ed. with a specialization in Sanskrit, recognized a critical gap in her community: a lack of awareness among students regarding government job opportunities and related competitive exams. Determined to address this, Ms. Padhiyar, a strong advocate for social service, dedicates two hours daily to providing free guidance and preparation to aspiring candidates. Her sincere efforts have yielded remarkable results, with 185 students securing government jobs to date, and currently, 390 students are benefiting from her selfless mentorship.</p>
<p>Ms. Taruna Vidhay and Mr. Sushil Meena (Nirbhed Foundation)</p>  	<p>Driven by a shared commitment to empower underprivileged children through education, Taruna Vidhay, a Manager at Union Bank of India, and Shri Sushil Meena, a Senior Section Engineer in Indian Northern Railways, co-founded the Nirbhed Foundation. Inspired by Sushil's encounters with the harsh realities faced by laborers and their families living in slums, and Taruna's desire to contribute beyond her banking career, they began by providing necessities and literacy to these children. Meeting in 2013, they formalized their efforts, initially focusing on preparing students for government jobs. Today, Nirbhed operates eight centers in Ghaziabad, reaching over 450 regular students daily and many more on weekends, providing not only education but also meals, medical aid, clothing, and a sense of family, with the ultimate vision of establishing a study center where these children can live with dignity.</p>

<p>Mr. Savji Vekariya</p> 	<p>Savjibhai Vakariya from Amreli is the visionary social activist credited with transforming Rafala, a small village near Bagsara, into India's first "Golden Village." He has invested two years of his life and considerable personal funds to implement approximately 23 development schemes, creating a modern and evolved Rafala as a tribute to his parents. This transformation included the renovation of temples, construction of a new school alongside the Saraswati temple, improved roads, a new Panchayat Office, animal sheds, a dhobi-ghat, Wi-Fi connectivity, underground gutters, and LED lighting. Rafala even boasts unique features like the "Ladli Bhavan," celebrating married women, and symbolic entrance gates and memorials.</p>
<p>Ms. Beena Rao (Prayas)</p> 	<p>Beena Rao is a dedicated social activist and the driving force behind Prayas, a free coaching institute inspired by her father's work teaching violin to the visually impaired. Starting with a small initiative, Prayas has expanded under her guidance to over ten locations in Surat, providing education to students from class 1 to 8. Her teaching philosophy emphasizes positive reinforcement, leading to improved student behavior and empowering girls in their education. Beyond traditional coaching, she incorporates engaging activities like a mobile library, workshops, movie shows and vacation camps to provide a holistic learning experience for the children in slum areas.</p>

<p>Joyita Mondal</p> 	<p>Joyita Mondal is a member of the transgender community who has dedicated her life to the welfare and development of marginalized groups. In a historic moment on July 8th, she became West Bengal's first transgender judge of a Lok Adalat, a significant step in breaking stereotypes and challenging societal barriers. Prior to this, Joyita worked extensively for the rights of the transgender and LGBT community after moving to Islampur nine years ago. Her commitment expanded in 2015 when she joined projects focused on establishing an old-age home for HIV-positive individuals and forming patient welfare committees. Having served as a Counselor and later a Project Director for Project PEHCHAN, Joyita Mondal stands as a powerful source of inspiration for her unwavering dedication to humanity and her courage in forging new paths.</p>
<p>Pankaj Dagli and Muktaben Pankajkumar Dagli</p>  <p><small>Smt. Mukta Ben Dagli & Sri. Pankaj Bhai Dagli Founding members Pragna Chakshu - Surendranagar, Gujarat</small></p>	<p>Pankajbhai Dagli, an M.A. and B.Ed. from Surendranagar, combines his teaching profession with extensive social work, notably contributing to blood donation camps. Together with his wife, Smt. Muktaben Pankajkumar Dagli, a Padma Shri awardee and inspiration to many, they have dedicated themselves to empowering blind women. Muktaben, who lost her sight at the age of seven, co-founded Pragnachakshu Mahila Seva Kunj in 1995, an organization that provides shelter, education, and vocational training to over 200 visually impaired girls. The couple facilitates their marriage prospects, enabling them to lead independent and happy lives. Both actively contribute to numerous organizations, recognizing their joint and individual efforts in uplifting marginalized communities. Muktaben's efforts have also been applauded by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modiji.</p>