

VALMIKI WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP 2010

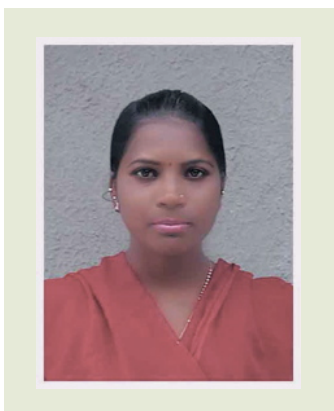
NAVSARJAN

PINKY BHALABHAI PURABIYA

Dholka town, Ahmedabad district

She came to DSK (Navsarjan's vocational school in Nani Devti) and completed a mobile repair course. Before she arrived at DSK, she worked as a manual scavenger. She remembers the difficulty of having to clean while 20 year old boys were looking at her. She'd feel shy and fearful—sometimes, to the point of crying. As a manual scavenger, she and her mother would have to go to the center of the village for left-overs from the dominant caste households, who could at any time refuse to give them food. Sometimes they would refuse.

DSK helped Pravinaben. She stopped manual scavenging and learned how to improve her life. Now, she knows better than to resign herself to a life of manual scavenging, and wants to spread that message to others.



BHARTI ISHWARBHAI HARIJAN

Tamsa village, Anand district

She's seen Valmiki's face constant discrimination. Sometimes, for example, they'd go to the Patels' well for water because there's no water in their own well—but the Patels would refuse. The kshatriya community keep a separate vessel outside the house for people from our caste to drink tea. When they want to buy something, they are not allowed inside the shop. When they're given tea, they're given it in separate cups. They're not allowed to enter some public places and are prohibited from walking in many temples. She has studied up to 12th grade

Bharti has seen various forms of discrimination against members of her own caste and wants to help change it.

SUNITA SANJAYBHAI VEGADA

Vartej in Bhavnagar District

Discrimination forces Valmiki's to suppress all their talent. Her talent is that of a beautician—but how could she ever run a successful beauty parlor if no one in the village would visit a Valmiki shop?

Sunita got married, and when she went to her in-laws village she was asked to do scavenging and she felt very ashamed to be forced to manually scavenge. They say that God gave them a "gift" by working as manual scavengers. But she knows this is the wrong mentality. She wants to stop doing it and wants to eradicate manual scavenging altogether. She suggests that all Valmiki's rise up and do something—anything—other than manual scavenging. They have the power and talent and capability to live another kind of life.



KAVITABEN SHANABHAI HARIJAN

Vandar village, Dahod District

Her parents died, and she now lives in her husband's house. There, she does manual labor. In her husband's village, she has no easy access to water or electricity and is not allowed to take water from the dominant caste well. She and her husband have no land of their own, and live below the poverty line. At present they have built a mud house on a waste land.

Kavitaben wants to go to DSK to learn how to do something else. With education, she hopes to join Navsarjan to help eliminate manual scavenging and improve the lives of her fellow Valmikis.

SHITAL ASHISHBHAI DATHIYA

Aakhalol village, Bhavnagar District

We're living in a democracy, but the reality is that we're living in a slave-based system. Why? Caste-based discrimination. And, it exists everywhere. Beggars refuse Valmikis' alms. The only problem is one of birth; it's not her fault that she was born a Valmiki. Her son faces questions at school about his caste, and when he comes home at night, he asks her which caste he's from, and she doesn't know how to answer.

Shital can't tell anyone what her caste is, because it will immediately result in the other person's change of behavior. She once visited DSK and thinks it's good for her fellow Valmikis. They're also human, and are entitled to live in dignity.



HETAL CHAMANBHAI SHOLANKI

Bechar village, Mehsana district

In this modern age, women are still forced to clean human excrement and then beg for left-overs at night? They're still handed things from a distance?

Hetal's father dragged dead dogs and cats for a living. She doesn't want her children to follow his footsteps. They'll have to become educated. DSK is a perfect place for a Valmiki to learn how to do something else.

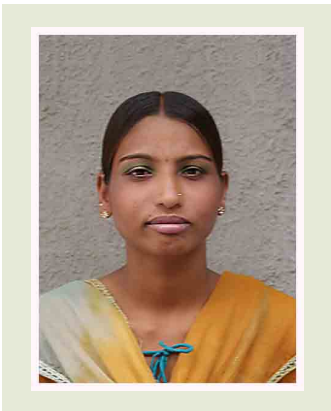


POONAM LAXMMANBHAI PARMAR

Kariyani village, Surendranagar district

Poonam is at the moment studying in 12th grade. She has witnessed untouchability in the villages. When she was a girl, she went to her uncle's house and she saw Valmikis drag dead dogs through the village. Why do we have to do this work?

Ponnam wants an education for herself and for other Valmikis. That is how manual scavenging will be eradicated.



DHARAM KANTIBHAI VALA,

Bavla town, Ahmedabad district

She completed a computer course at DSK. Before joining the leadership training, she used to do cleaning work in a golf/country club. She asks herself: Why are we forced to do certain kinds of work, and others are not? In her village there are different castes that practice untouchability with Valmikis and is difficult to understand that situation. She used to get angry when the dominant castes didn't allow them to fetch water from the public well.

Dharam believes everyone is equal and that manual scavenging must be eliminated.



JALPA SHAMBHUBHAI BERADIYA

Mahuva town, Bhavnagar district

She has done a course in primary teachers training. She has never seen her father. Before she was born, her parents got separated. She was brought up by her mother. Her mother encouraged her to go to school, even though their family was in a poor financial condition.

Jalpaben's goal is to improve the lives of fellow caste members.



SURYA SURESHBHAI BALANDA

Matar town, Kheda district

She's a widow, having three children and used to be a manual scavenger in the gram panchayat. She completed 10th standard but had to work to earn money. She had done all kinds of laborious work to feed the family.

If she gets an opportunity to work with Navsarjan, she'll do her best to help the people of her caste.



DAKSHA POONABHAI CHAUHAN

Motadevaliya village in Amreli district

When Daksha was 12 years old, her father passed away. With great efforts, her mother brought up Daksha and her three siblings. Daksha finished her 10th grad and left her studies. Daksha has also experience discrimination in her village.

Anytime Dakshaben speaks out publicly, she's told she's a woman and to keep quiet. She wants to work with Navsarjan where she won't have to be told to keep quiet.

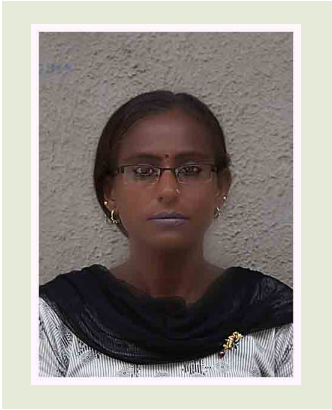


BHAVNA CHIMANBHAI HARIJAN

Sundalpura, Anand District

She finished 10th standard, but then had to stop going to school and work. In her village, she feels there is unending discrimination. For example, she has to go to the center of village with her mother and ask for left-over scraps of food. She also used to drag dead dogs and cats.

Bhavnaben wants the chance to have a better life.



GITA GANPATBHAI SOLANKI

Mehsana city

She finished 7th standard, but faced a lot of discrimination at school. Her village is quite small, and everyone in her family are manual scavengers. Her grandfather was one too. Today, she's a housewife, but is still forced to ask for left-over food at night from dominant caste villagers. She also faces discrimination by the dominant castes.

Gita wants to break free from this "slavery-system" and do something new.



ILA MANHARBHAI VAGHELA AKLACHA

Kheda District

Her parents work very hard, but their financial condition is very bad. She was in school, through 10th standard, but it was difficult. For example, her classmates broke off friendships with her when they found out that she was a Valmiki and ostracized her. She also wasn't allowed to participate in cultural programs.

Ila knows that people are capable of showing kindness, and wants to do the same for her fellow Valmikis.



GITA BACHHUBHAI PARMAR

Jakhan village, Surendranagar district

She has studied up to 7th grade. While she was studying, she was abused with caste-based words in the school. After 7th grade she faced difficulty to commute from her village to Limbdi town, so she dropped out from her studies. She joined the vocational training center of Navsarjan and got trained in stitching. Her mother continues to do manual scavenging. If they don't go then the Kshatriya caste men criminally threaten them.



RAMILA NARPATBHAI HARIJAN

Rampur village, Dahod district

Ramila comes from a very poor family. She has gone through many bitter experiences in her life. The children of the Valmiki's caste are discriminated and are seated separately in the schools. When she goes to fetch water at the village well, the Patels shout and order them to sit away from the well. She asks a Patel to fill their pots with water and they pour the water from the top. She and her family do not have a house and do not have a plot to build a house neither.



LALITA TULSIBHAI VAGHELA

Jhinjhuwada village, Surendranagar district

After she became a widow, she was thrown out by her in-laws. She has two children whom she is raising up and while living with her parents.



BHARTI SIRESHIYA

Mandal, Ahmedabad district

Since her childhood, she has seen poverty in her family. Her father encouraged her to get educated and she finished 10th grade. While she was young, she used to accompany her mother in the scavenging work. During school vacations, she used to help her parents in the work. Before she reached 18 years her father got her married. She was not treated properly by her in-laws. After two years of marriage her husband died in road accident when her daughter was 20 days old. Her in-laws threw me out of the house and she went back to her parents. She is worried for her daughter and wants to educate her. She wants to give her love of both mother and father.



BHAGWATI V. PURABIYA

Tarapur village, Gandhinagar district

While she was growing up, she went through good and bad experiences. They were three sisters so their mother was harassed by her in-laws for not giving birth to a son. But her father never discriminated them and she was raised just like a son. While she was in the 12th grade, her father passed away. There is only one family from her Valmiki caste. After the death of her father, the other castes people started harassing and forcing them to do the scavenging work. While this was happening she got the opportunity to join the leadership training program of Navsarjan who have been supporting her and her family to fight against injustices and discrimination.



RESHMA ISHWARBHAI PATADIYA

Patdi town. Surendranagar district

She was born at her maternal uncle's village. She lived there until four years old. Her father was working in the railways and he was an alcoholic. When she was young her father in drunken state injured her and then threw her, damaging her ear. As a result of that she cannot hear properly. Seeing her parents, she decided not to get married and she will not marry. After finishing 10th grade, she was very keen to study ahead. She was financially supported and finished 12th grade. She have worked cleaning gutters and while she was doing the dirty work, she used to feel ashamed. Her father has passed away. After his death their situation became worse. Then she met a local worker of Navsarjan and I joined the leadership training program. She says that after joining the organization, the situation of her family has improved.
