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A blind man's vision for the blind

By: [Manthan K Mehta](#)

April 6, 2005

A blind man leading another blind man may be a phrase coined to express the futility of a situation where one seemingly inadequate person leads another.

But K Ramanshankar sees nothing wrong, and certainly nothing futile, in this arrangement. For the past 20 years, Ramanshankar, a visually impaired resident of PL Lokhande Marg, has been working to improve the education options for the physically challenged in general and the visually-impaired in particular. He is visually-impaired since birth.

Forty-one-year-old Ramanshankar has just returned from Tiruchirapalli, where he was awarded by the All-India Blind Welfare Trust in recognition for his role in providing education to the blind students.

The organisation gave Ramanshankar the National Award for Exceptional Services on April 2. "The award is significant in the sense that this is the first time an organisation has recognised services of this kind," he says.

Ramanshankar, who is a well-known music teacher, is also the head of the department — education with the National Association of Blind, a Worli-based institution educating and imparting basic vocational training to blind children.

"While working at NAB I have developed a variety of short-term courses for volunteers, who are willing to spend a couple of hours teaching the visually-impaired. Besides, I have also tried to introduce the NAB para-professional training course for schoolteachers and community volunteers who can then teach special children," says **Ramanshankar, who has an MA degree in social work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).**

Besides working for the blind children, Ramanshankar has also been instrumental in working on a project for people afflicted with multiple disabilities.

The project, which is currently functional at five locations in India (Lucknow, Goa, Midnapur, Gwalior and Nayagarh), ensures that tutors come home and teach students suffering from multiple disabilities.

"Students with multiple disabilities find it very difficult to get educated. A

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blind school may not want to admit a person who is also mentally challenged and vice-versa. Therefore, home-based modules are necessary for such people,” says Ramanshankar.

His efforts have ensured that at least 10,000 visually-impaired students have been educated in the last two decades, while another 150 have received formal education by being integrated into mainstream schools.

Apart from his mission to teach disabled students, Ramanshankar is also a trained music teacher.

“I have learnt Hindustani Classical music from Surendra Rao and Ajay Pawankar and Marathi abhangs from Mohanrao Pai,” he says.

Ramanshankar teaches music at three different places in Chembur — Road No 16, Amardeep, Runwal Residency and at Government College. “Students, who have learnt from me have been able to pass audition tests for light music played on All-India Radio.”

manthan@mid-day.com

Ramanshankar on Black

K Ramanshankar is impressed with Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Black. He says it is the first Hindi film that has dealt with the issue of multiple disabilities.

Black is the story of Michelle Mcneally (Rani Mukerji) who is deaf, dumb and blind. Ramanshankar had arranged a special meeting of students of NAB with Amitabh Bachchan and Rani Mukerji after watching the movie.

‘Ramanshankar is very hard working’

“Ramanshankar is highly professional. He is in-charge of national project on integrated education, which imparts training to at least 1,000 students spread across India. He leads his team with utmost zeal. He is very dedicated towards his work.”

CM Jayant, executive director, NAB