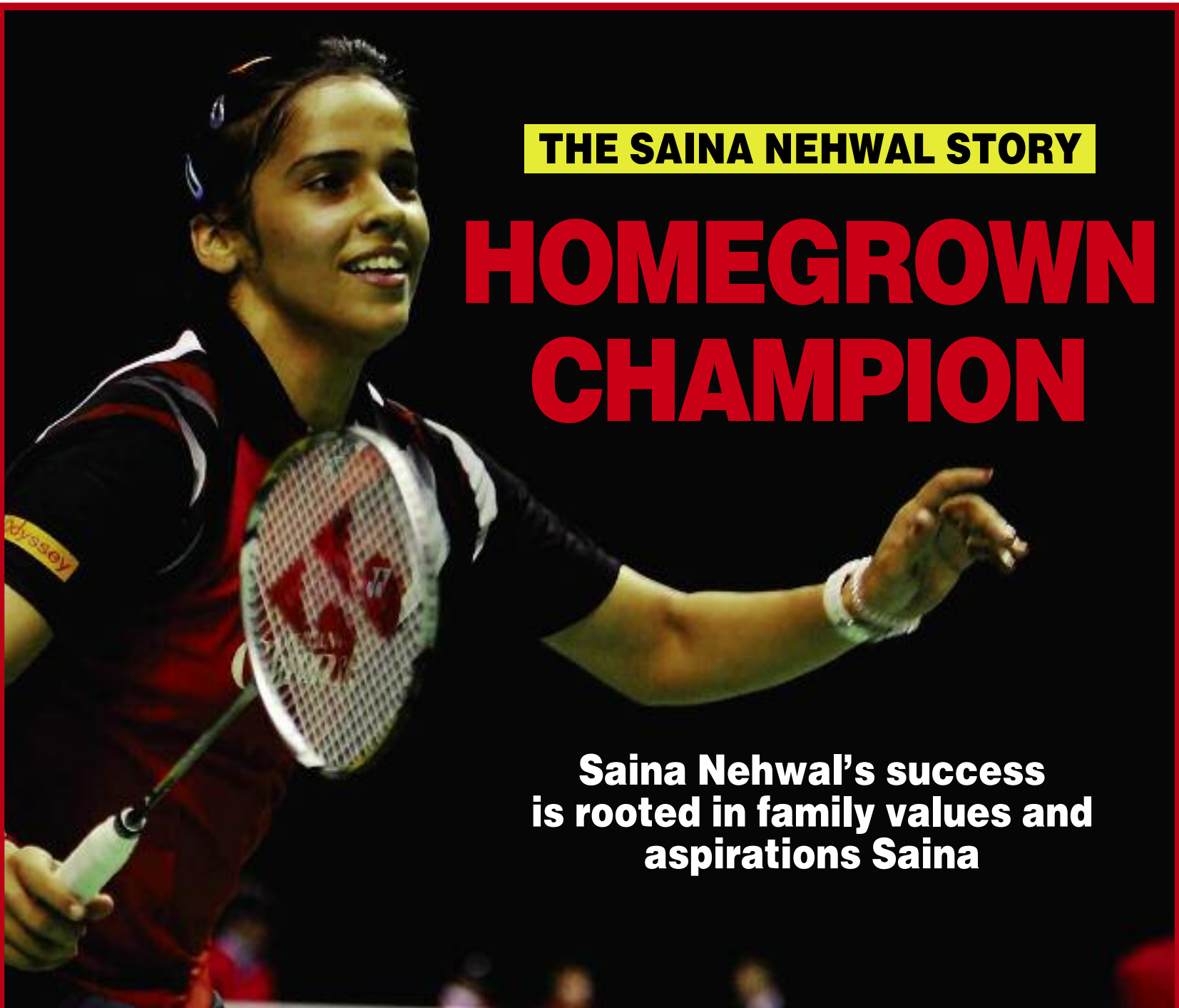


# Civil Society



**THE SAINA NEHWAL STORY**

## HOME GROWN CHAMPION

**Saina Nehwal's success is rooted in family values and aspirations Saina**



**'SHANGHAI IS A FOOT IN THE DOOR'**  
Dibakar Banerjee on his kind of cinema  
Pages 6-7

**CANALS vs WATER TANKS**  
Pages 8-9  
**VIZAG STEEL WAS WARNED**  
Pages 10-11  
**INSIDE A GREEN OFFICE**  
Pages 14-15

**THE BUZZ ABOUT BUZZARIA**  
Page 26  
**GREAT PARK, RARE GOAT**  
Pages 32-33  
**KISHWAR ON SURROGACY**  
Pages 34-35

# SUSTAINABILITY STARTS AT HOME

## AFTER ALL, THE EARTH IS OUR COMMON ADDRESS.

Sustainability is integral to our business. Our approach to sustainable development focuses on the triple bottom line of Economic, Environment and Social Performance.

Our activities aim at optimum resource utilization with minimal environmental footprint. Our social initiatives are targeted at improving the life of the communities around our plants focusing on their basic healthcare, primary education and skill development needs. We partner the Schwab Foundation to recognise, reward and support the leading Social Entrepreneurs through the Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

We believe that profitability and sustainability are complementary. Our efforts in this direction have been recognized by international agencies.

Jubilant has featured prominently in Standard & Poor's Environmental, Social and Governance Index and in International Finance Corporation's worldwide survey. Our sustainability report has been rated as A+ by Global Reporting Initiative, every year since 2007.

We are constantly working to make this earth a cleaner, healthier place for all of us.

### **We are Jubilant Life Sciences**

An integrated Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences Company

*Jubilant Life Sciences Limited, an integrated pharmaceutical and life sciences company in the largest Contract Research and Manufacturing Services (CRAMS) player and a leading Drug Discovery and Development Solutions (DDDS) provider out of India, has been ranked at No. 8 position amongst the Top 10 Global contract manufacturing & service outsourcing players of the pharmaceutical industry (Source: UNCTAD).*

*The Company provides Life Science Products and Services across the pharmaceutical value chain, serving its customers globally with its global presence in India, North America, Europe and China. The Company is well recognised as 'Partner of Choice' by leading life sciences companies worldwide. For more information please write to us at [stappark@jubil.com](mailto:stappark@jubil.com)*



# CONTENTS



COVER STORY

## HOMEGROWN CHAMPION

Saina Nehwal's success is rooted in family values and aspirations

18

COVER PICTURE BY SHREE PADRE

Jarawa buffer zone is in force .....	8
For a perfect road .....	10
Learning the natural way .....	12
Elephants and 3,000 workers .....	16-17
'No policy for inclusive ventures' .....	24-25
Ganga can be reborn .....	27-28
When love defies old age .....	31-32
Ayurveda: Tone up your liver .....	36
Products: Desi Spanish & Natural Art ...	38

Contact Civil Society at:  
response@civilsocietyonline.com  
The magazine does not undertake to respond to unsolicited  
contributions sent to the editor for publication.

# Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

## The jackfruit solution

**F**OR inclusion to work there has to be prosperity. The Sri Lanka cover story this month shows how the simplest of initiatives can be drivers of employment and put money in people's pockets. Why can't we look at Sri Lanka and Southeast Asian nations and do similar things for our farm sector?

Our cover is one of many stories we have done on the importance of fresh thinking in the search for economic growth. Big investments are needed, but can they ever be a substitute for enabling people to earn in small robust ways with their immediate resources? The best growth we can hope for should be broadbased. It should involve letting small enterprises come up by linking them to markets and helping them with finance and simple technologies.

The humble and unglamorous jackfruit is a solution only to those who see its intrinsic merits. It is packed with nutrition. It also grows without a fuss. Value addition comes when you make chips and flour and ice cream from it.

But even easier is partial processing which makes the jackfruit ready-to-cook. And by identifying this opportunity, Sri Lanka has helped a whole agro-industry to come up. People can work out of their homes for a few hours in a day to increase their incomes.

In this issue we feature Dibakar Banerjee whose film *Shanghai* has been making waves. We can proudly say that *Civil Society* began bringing you stories on the new Mumbai cinema much before it got identified as a definite trend. These are new filmmakers with different backgrounds and mostly from small town India. Dibakar says *Shanghai* has given his kind of filmmaking a foot in the door. Acceptance and demand have perhaps gone much further than that. There is a rapidly growing consciousness which expects greater relevance and authenticity of cinema, as it does of journalism. Simultaneously, there is a demand for sophistication. Tedious breast-beating won't do. It is expected of new creative offerings that they be mainstream and engaging. The reason is that mainstream concerns have come to be redefined. Technology has allowed people to explore their world in adventurous ways. They espouse values and experiences like they never dared do before. Additionally, problems relating to land, water, housing, pollution now affect everyone.

You will also find in this issue a story on the Sehgal Foundation's green building in Gurgaon and another story from Bangalore on how to make the perfect road. We believe such initiatives, though small, matter. They raise the bar for what we should be doing.

**Publisher**  
Umesh Anand

**Editor**  
Rita Anand

**News Network**  
TS Sudhir, Shree Padre,  
Jehangir Rashid, Rakesh  
Agarwal, Susheela Nair

**Photo-journalists**  
Gautam Singh,  
Lakshman Anand

**Layout & Design**  
Virender Chauhan

**Cartoonist**  
Samita Rathor

**Write to Civil Society at:**  
D-26 Basement, South Extension  
Part 2 New Delhi-110049.  
Ph: 011-46033825, 9811787772

Printed and published by Umesh  
Anand from A 53 D, First Floor,  
Panchsheel Vihar, Malviya Nagar,

New Delhi-17.  
Printed at Samrat Offset Pvt.  
Ltd., B-88, Okhla Phase II.

**Postal Registration No.**  
DL(S)-01/3255/2012-14.  
Registered to post without  
pre-payment U(SE)-10/2012-14  
at New Delhi PSO  
Registered with the Registrar of  
Newspapers of India under RNI  
No.: DELENG/2003/11607  
Total no of pages: 40

### Advisory Board

ANUPAM MISHRA  
ARUNA ROY  
NASSER MUNJEE  
ARUN MAIRA  
DARSHAN SHANKAR  
HARIVANSH  
JUG SURAIYA  
SHANKAR GHOSE  
UPENDRA KAUL

### Get your copy of Civil Society from

**Delhi:** Bahri Sons, Central  
News Agency, stalls at Green  
Park market, South Extn Part  
II, Aurobindo Market.

**Gurgaon:** Music Store at  
DLF Phase 1 Market.

**Kolkata:** Oxford Bookstore,  
Classic Books.

**Bangalore:** Variety on St  
Mark's Road.

**Lucknow:** Ram Advani  
Bookseller at Hazratganj.  
**Chandigarh:** The Browser.

**INTERNET EDITION**  
Civil Society is on the net at  
www.civilsocietyonline.com.  
Subscribe for a PDF version.  
Register online or write to us  
at response@civilsocietyon-  
line.com

TATA POWER



Ensuring an  
energy secure future

Tata Power Club Enerji is a nationwide energy conservation movement driven by school children. It has reached out to more than 400 schools across India, educated over 2 million citizens and has saved 3.4 million units till date, equivalent to saving 3300 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. Enough to light up 1496 houses for a year!



Jiyo Power Se!

'Environmental Leadership and Best Corporate Social Responsibility Practice 2011 Award' by Asian Leadership Awards.

'Best Marketing Campaign of the Year' Award by CMO Asia Awards 2011.

'Most Innovative Campaign 2010' Award by USA's Energy Daily's Leadership Awards.

Gold medal for 'Environmental Communications 2010' by The Association of Business Communicators of India.

Lighting up Lives!



## IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR

### LETTERS



#### Baba Adhav

Your cover story on the 'Pension Parishad' by Baba Adhav is timely. As a retired person lucky enough to have a pension I can say it is very difficult to make ends meet. The prices of daily necessities have skyrocketed. Pension has to be linked to inflation, especially for the poor.

**D K Sinha**

Apart from pension, I think it is important to revive the public distri-

bution system (PDS). The middle class sometimes falls into poverty and depression for many reasons. Cases of severe malnourishment among women living in isolation are reported from time to time in the media. In the old days, the middle class used to access the PDS. It should be made functional and available for anybody.

**Asha Choudhury**

Pension is the right of the retired poor. They also need PDS and free healthcare. A few entitlements will give them dignity and respect within the family.

**Sheila Mehta**

#### Civic bodies

Thanks for the interview with RK Srivastava, director of local bodies in the Delhi government. I think the trifurcation of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is a sincere effort to provide better services. Srivastava and his team have done their best under the circumstances. Much will depend on how the new law on municipalities shapes up. The committee drafting it should invite public comments.

**Rajesh Nautiyal**

#### Bottom-up business

Your story titled, 'Bottom-up Businesses' had very inspiring, innovative and original ideas. These are all worth taking the risk. I especially liked the solar light section very much.

**Pradeep Pratap**

#### Game Changers

The Building as Learning Aid (BALA) project is a good idea for your Game Changers series. I have been following some of their innovative work in Alwar.

**Rajesh Lawania**

BALA should be implemented in schools across the country. The transformation that takes place in the school's environment is quite stunning. It creates a learning atmosphere that relaxes children and teachers and helps them learn. The sound of children's laughter is heartwarming.

**Kritika Desai**

#### Hill farms

Many thanks to Rakesh Agrawal for his story, 'Hill farms begin to blos-

som.' As a resident of Almora, I am very impressed with the Himalayan Action and Resource Centre's (HARC) work. It just shows that small and marginal farming should not be dismissed as economically unviable. Agriculture along with agro-processing provide dignity and livelihood to people unlike menial jobs. A winning combination is lucrative farming with good education.

**Bina Mishra**

#### Books

Please could you make your books and authors page a regular feature. We find this keeps changing. The book reviews are sometimes long and sometimes short. It is very disconcerting for readers since we like familiarity.

**Linda Gonsalves**

#### ERRATA

In the story, 'Fatehpura's radical NREGA union' it was wrongly stated that the Rashtriya Rojgar Khatri Kamdaaronu Kayda Union (RRKKKU) is a member of the New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI). The RRKKKU is an independent union and not affiliated to the NTUI.

**Editor**

# **INTERVIEW** Sudhanshu Batra says mediation is 'In mediation litigants get to

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

**S**AMADHAN, the mediation centre at the Delhi High Court, has seen a steadily rising number of cases being referred to it. Last year it received 2,565 cases. The year before that 1,489. And this year in six months 1,238 cases have been sent to it.

There is also a noticeable diversity in the cases. In recent times, the mediation centre has been handling labour disputes and wrangles over electricity bills when earlier it mainly got divorce cases and property matters.

Significantly, the number of pre-litigation cases has been going up. What this means is that awareness of mediation has been spreading and people find it cheaper and quicker to come to agreements through mediation.

Mediation is not a substitute for litigation. But by bringing litigants face to face it helps them discover solutions for themselves and saves the time of the courts. Sometimes long-drawn court battles end quickly in the atmosphere of a mediation room.

Samadhan's reputation as a mediation centre has been built over six years through team work among lawyers. It is the only mediation centre in India that is run by lawyers though it is attached to the High Court and a supervising committee includes four sitting judges.

*Civil Society* spoke to Sudhanshu Batra, senior advocate and organizing secretary of Samadhan. Excerpts from the interview.

**It has been some years since Samadhan came up at the Delhi High Court. How far has mediation moved?**

It has been over six years since this mediation centre came up. There has been a lot of activity at the centre over the past four or five years. Mediation as a movement has been going forward very rapidly. There is a mediation and conciliation project committee of the Supreme Court that has been organizing national conferences. Last weekend, the fourth conference was held at Vigyan Bhavan. A number of the judges from the high courts and the district courts were present at the conference. The clear message was that mediation is not only here to stay but is going forward.

You see, mediation is a system which is party centred. Typical litigation on the other hand is lawyer-controlled or judge-controlled. In mediation the parties involved are the focal point. But there is growing acceptance of mediation (in the judiciary and among lawyers).

**So what happens at these conferences?**  
There is deliberation on various issues.



**Like which issues?**

There was discussion on the advantages of mediation over the adversarial process. On how the two can be complementary. So what we are trying to say is that this is not an alternate redressal forum, but an appropriate redressal forum.

**But your mediation centre in Delhi is already judiciary-led.**

In some ways, it is true in as much as it is court annexed, but Samadhan is run by lawyers. In the past couple of years we have started receiving pre-litigation matters as well. Either lawyers suggest that the parties go in for mediation instead of litigation or the parties themselves, when they are aware of mediation, approach us. And when one party approaches us we issue a request letter to

the other party to join in the process. We can't force any of the parties, so a request letter goes out. In most cases, we get a positive response and they come to participate in the mediation process. **The pre-litigation option was available earlier as well. To what extent has pre-litigation grown?**

We have had about 200 cases in the past year or so. It is also important to note that various types of cases have been brought to us for pre-litigation mediation. For instance, labour matters, commercial transactions, property disputes –besides of course matrimonial disputes.

**Do more judges tend to refer cases for mediation than they did earlier?**

Yes, yes, certainly. We get 30 to 40 matters per day. These are matters which are court annexed.

# fast becoming a movement talk and think'



annexed, the lawyers have a free hand to make the centre grow. We have received a very enthusiastic response from lawyers.

**So, this model in the Delhi High Court is unique?** Yes it is unique. But of course this is also supervised and controlled by the overseeing committee of the mediation centre, which includes four judges.

**You spoke of labour disputes coming for mediation. What are the other kinds of cases coming for mediation? What is the picture which is emerging?** Initially, matrimonial disputes would mainly be referred for mediation. But now the scope is being enlarged. We are going into commercial disputes, service matters and labour matters. We are also going into construction contracts. Public sector units are coming to us, which is a very healthy sign because it means the mindset within PSUs is changing. BSES matters (regarding billing complaints by consumers) are getting settled through mediation. Of course this kind of change will take its time. It cannot happen overnight.

**Do you have mediators with the required skills to**

**'The sector as a whole got 18 per cent marks. Ispat got 40 and the Vizag Steel Plant 36. So when we say the Vizag Steel Plant got an award, it is a little better**

**deal with this growing number of diverse cases?**

Right now we have 266 mediators attached to the Delhi High Court Mediation Centre. There are 400 applications that are pending. Lawyers qualify to become mediators only when they attend two courses, which are conducted by the mediation centre. One is the basic course and the other is the advanced course. Both courses are for 40 hours each.

Now, just by doing a course no one can become a mediator. The techniques and skills which are needed are acquired with exposure. Initially, in the early days of the mediation centre, lawyers who became mediators were doing so intuitively, based on gut feeling, so to speak. But now we teach the basic structure of the process. Naturally, the success rate is much higher. Our message to

lawyers becoming mediators is to follow the structured process. Results are not the goal. Whatever the results, if the process has been followed and the parties have walked some steps forward you have achieved a lot.

**Are you saying that mediation is not so much about resolving disputes as parties coming closer in legal terms?**

No, no (not in legal terms). Coming nearer in understanding their conflicts and the interests that underlie them. Ultimately what they have to see is what is in their best interest and not the stand or position they have taken in court.

**So to that extent it is best for mediation to work as an adjunct to the court process.**

Court annexed mediation is always far better. This is not a substitute for the litigation and adversarial process that we have. It is in fact complementary to it. You see, if the parties don't reach any settlement they go back to court where a decision is taken.

**Are you saying that having been through mediation makes it easier to ...**

Come to a consensus in the court.

**So, they may be telling their lawyers to agree to things they may not have earlier.**

Absolutely. They start thinking. The adversarial system is lawyer driven. Mediation is party centred. Once the parties start talking, they start realizing that what they are actually fighting over is perhaps not in their interests. And what they get from court adjudication is very uncertain. Here they have a win-win situation. They give up something, accept something and then enter into a mutual understanding, which is drawn up and signed by them.

**So, it would not be right to assess the work of the mediation centre on the basis of results?**

We have a high success rate. But to my mind that should not be the measure for assessing the mediation centre.

**A lawyer who also serves as a mediator wears two hats. What makes this possible?**

Nothing is easy. It is difficult to keep changing hats. But don't we do that at home?

**Well, let's put that differently. How difficult is it to train practising lawyers to be mediators? This thing of 40-hour courses...**

Is not enough. We continue to have refresher courses. After the basic and advanced courses we have refresher courses and interactive sessions within our centre. The problems mediators face are openly discussed.

**Mediation is not particularly remunerative.**

You are right. Mediation is not remunerative at this stage. We do feel that lawyers are putting in a lot of time. We give them an honourarium. But as private mediation becomes popular, mediators will be well paid because mediation will always be quicker and cheaper than litigation. This is going to take time. But I hope it happens and mediators can charge reasonable fees.

**Are there instances of mediation being misused?**

There is also a process of sensitisation which has been taking place. The Delhi Judicial Academy in association with Samadhan has been conducting orientation courses for judicial officers. This weekend, one such course was held in Manesar. On a regular basis, judicial officers are being sensitised and exposed to what is happening at the mediation centre. They are then better equipped to identify matters which have elements of settlement and can be referred to mediation.

**How is mediation doing elsewhere in the country?**

Bangalore is doing very well. But this centre in Delhi is the only mediation centre which is being run by lawyers. The others are being run by judges. In Delhi, though the process is court

**Tanushree Gangopadhyay**  
Ahmedabad

**A**N angry protest is gathering momentum in Mithi Viridi, a picturesque village in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district. Four villages have united forces to oppose a nuclear plant coming up in their vicinity. Mithi Viridi is likely to become as famous as Jaitapur and Kudankulam.

In 2008, Mithi Viridi was placed on India's nuclear map when the Indo-US Civil Nuclear deal was signed. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) endorsed an MoU with Westinghouse, a nuclear major in Pennsylvania, to build a power plant on land acquired from four villages here. External Affairs SM Krishna and US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, cemented the MoU during a meeting in the US early this year.

Farmers here are fuming. They were never consulted, they say. "We have resolved never to part with our land of gold. This region is Gujarat's Kashmir. We grow the best species of mangoes – langda, kesar, rajapuri – besides cashew, coconut, cotton, groundnut and our orchards of fruits. We do fishing too," says Arjunbhai Dabhi of Mithi Viridi.

"There seems to be a conspiracy against people like us, living along the coast of Gujarat," say the angry farmers.

Since the past five years, farmers have been holding rallies, meeting ministers and attending similar protests across the country. They are organized and have good leadership.

Utthan, an NGO that has been working in this area for over two decades, has empowered them. "Our women are very strong. They are leaders of their community," says Nafisa Barot, director.

Geetaben Dodia of Samarthan Mahila Sangh is one such leader. She belongs to the Kshatriya community of Mandva. Geetaben has been holding public meetings and talking to politicians. "We will lose our land and livelihood if the nuclear project comes up. These companies don't have any market in the West, so they are planting themselves on us. We have toiled hard to make our land productive. As it is the Alang ship-breaking yard adjacent to our villages has ruined the environment. Women and girls are being violated. Our next genera-



caption

## Mithi Viridi on the nuclear warpath

tion will lose their fertility because of pollution. Why should all this toxic waste be burnt on our seashore? The companies don't realize that the seaside is our pilgrimage," she says, bristling with

anger.

There is also Krishnakant Chauhan, another active leader. He is a member of the Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti and has devoted all his energies to the movement ever since it began incipiently, five years ago.

The recent leakage of tritium in the Rawatbhata Atomic Power Plant in Rajasthan, which affected around 40 people, has created a flutter here. Nuclear scientist Dr Surendra Gadekar and Dr Sanghamitra Gadekar, a medical practitioner went to Rawatbhata and conducted radiation studies on the critically affected people.

They too are opposing the Mithi Viridi nuclear plant. They say this part of the coast is prone to earthquakes. It falls in Seismic Zone No 3. The town of Bhavnagar is only 34 km away. Mithi Viridi and its adjoining villages have felt tremors periodical-







caption

ly for over a decade. "The Kutch earthquake in 2001 affected this place. Fukushima has not taught the Indian government any lessons," say the Gadekars.

Last year an accident happened at the Kakrapar Atomic Power Plant (KAPP) near Surat. Contract labourers were injured and affected by radiation. "The outside world learnt about their plight only one month after the accident," say the Gadekars who have been blacklisted by the plant authorities. The workers had to appeal to the District Collector who then prevailed upon the NPCIL to act, say the scientists.

The 220 MW reactors with heavy water as moderator leaked in 1998 five years after they went critical. The reactors were switched off for 66 days due to a leakage in the cooling loop. Accidents in nuclear plants are not uncommon. A fire in the Narora plant was once contained thanks to the operators' presence of mind, according to the Gadekars.

P.M. Shah, Chief Project Engineer, NPCIL, based in Bhavnagar, dismisses these fears.

He says those reactors have old technology. The Mithi Viridi plant will have a light water reactor fuelled with enriched uranium. The plant will be earthquake proof. It will be very strong, he reassures.

But the Gadekars and other nuclear scientists counter his assurances. "Are we here to weaponise? Enriched uranium is used for nuclear weapons. Are Indians not equipped to run nuclear plants? Why doesn't Westinghouse set up plants on American soil?"

"The answer is clear. New nuclear plants are banned in the US," says Professor Falguni Sen of Fordham University in the US.

Shah, however, dismisses the issue of radiation from nuclear plants. Quoting an Atomic Energy Department's propaganda booklet, "Public perceptions about Atomic Energy: Myths vs Reality,"

he says even cosmic rays produces 45 millirem (mrems) per annum, water and foods, 25 mrems per annum, a Mumbai-London flight gives off four mrems and, of course, MRIs and X-Rays also emit radiation.

"They forget that Hiroshima's radioactivity is still active after nearly six decades. People are still dying there," counter the scientists.

As if these fears were not enough, farmers have been left in the dark about their destiny. The state government is not parting with any information. The government has allotted 777 hectares from the four villages of Mithi Viridi, Jaspara, Mandva and Khadadpar. Villagers have not allowed officials to enter their villages. The District Collector has "not issued any notice to the villagers." But it appears the sarpanchs of these

**'Hundreds of truckloads of rations are being clandestinely sold to hoarders by officials of the CAPD,' a reliable official of the CAPD said. 'Hundreds of truckloads of rations are**

villages have been issued notices.

Though the nuclear plant will be named Mithi Viridi, it will actually be located in Jaspara, across the river, where 757 hectares will be acquired. Mandva and Khadadpar will lose 10 hectares each, according to Shah. It is unclear right now how much land Mithi Viridi will lose.

A Site Selection Committee conducted a survey and selected the land. The Atomic Energy Commission has approved the site, says Shah. The Westinghouse reactor will have six units of 1,000 MWs each and is expected to generate 6,000 mega watts initially, which will be enhanced to 63,000 MW by 2032. The plant is expected to become operative in 2019. Half the power generated will be retained by Gujarat and the rest will be fed to the National Grid.

Farmers here don't believe a word of what the NPCIL says. In fact, 55 of them hired a bus and went to see the Kakrapar, Tarapur and Jaitapur sites.

"We didn't see any fruit trees. No bird chirped there. Residential colonies were far away from the nuclear factory. The labour, which is on contract, is changed frequently. We suspect that everything is amiss in those areas," said Arjandada.

"The displaced tribals of Kakrapur told us not to move out of our lands. In Tarapur we were told that the government did not stick to its promises. It did not give affected farmers the ₹8,000 per acre that it had promised," rues Vasramdada, whose village will lose 757 hectares. The government will acquire 100 acres of his fertile productive land.

All four villages are prosperous. They have schools and good infrastructure. The government's promises don't cut much ice with them. All these are false, they say. ■

# Bhagyas slog for nothing

**Bharat Dogra**  
Udaipur

**D**ESPERATE for work Bholaram travelled from his village Chikla in Kotra block of Udaipur district in Rajasthan to North Gujarat leaving his family behind. He found work as a farm hand on a farmer's field. He toiled day and night. But after all the crop work was done, the farmer threw him out without paying his dues. This injustice has happened to him twice. Yet he is prepared to migrate again since his chances of earning anything in his village are dim.

Like Bholaram hundreds of farm workers from Rajasthan travel to North Gujarat – known for its intensive modern farming practices – in search of work. Most of them are tribals.

The migrants are called 'bhagyas' since they work under a system called 'bhag'. According to this arrangement the migrants are entitled to a 'bhag' or 'share' of the crop after they do all the agricultural work on the field. The bhagya can agree to work for two crop seasons – kharif and rabi - or for just the rabi season. Generally if the worker decides to work for the entire year, he gets an advance which is then deducted when his final accounts are settled. The crop-share can range from one-seventh to one-fifth of the crop.

Dharmchand, President of the Adivasi Vikas Manch (AVM), a voluntary organisation involved in mobilisation of tribals in Kotra block says, "First, the share of one-sixth or one-seventh of the crop is too small for workers and their family members who do the entire crop work at various stages. If additional workers are employed for harvesting, then their wages are deducted from the bhagya's accounts. Often bhagyas do additional work like feeding cattle or clearing dung. Secondly, even within this unjust arrangement, the bhagya is further cheated in various ways."

R.D. Vyas, a senior activist of Astha explains, "For their daily subsistence bhagyas need to buy foodgrain and other goods. The employer provides them access to a shop from where they can get these goods. However, all the accounts of the shop are controlled by the employer. So when money is deducted at the time of the final settlement, a higher amount can be easily charged. Similarly, all details about the sale of cash crops and actual produce, are known only by the employer. He can easily fudge accounts and deprive the workers of a fair share."

As a result there are frequent complaints by



caption

bhagyas that after toiling for months they are left with very meagre earnings, and sometimes, nothing at all.

Bholaram, who got a meagre advance of around ₹5,000, says during the first year he returned with 16 sacks of wheat, the next year he got 20 sacks of wheat and during the next two years he received nothing at all.

Raavji, another bhagya from Mahari village, migrated for work with his partner Surti without taking an advance so that he would be able to earn enough for his marriage. According to customs in his community, he can live with the girl

**'The sector as a whole got 18 per cent marks. Ispat got 40 and the Vizag Steel Plant 36. So when we say the Vizag Steel Plant got an award, it is a little better**

he likes for a while, if she agrees, and they can get married later.

For three years Raavji and Surti toiled on a farmer's field. In return, the farmer met their daily subsistence needs. In their fourth year of work they were paid ₹5000 which they spent on their marriage. In the fifth year they got 16 sacks of wheat. But the next year, when they took advance of ₹4000, they got nothing at all. A dispute broke out with another bhagya couple and in the ensuing uproar both the couple involved in the dispute as well as Raavji and Surti had to leave without receiving their dues.

"The behaviour of the employers is good in the initial stage," says Bholaram. "We get chaach and sometimes tea from them. But when the crop is ready and the day of settling our final accounts

approaches, they can start getting really nasty." People believe that this change in behaviour and inciting disputes is often a ploy to get bhagyas to leave in a hurry without proper settlement of their payments.

The bhagyas have to live in huts on fields often near a well and be at the beck and call of their employers. Their work involves spraying toxic pesticides and contact with genetically modified crops. Bt cotton is widely grown in this area. There are other health hazards – snakebite and exposure to extreme weather conditions. Sometimes women workers face the threat of sexual exploitation. The education of children is badly disrupted. Small children live in neglect. Elder children toil with their parents.

Apart from bhagya migrant workers, child workers have been regularly taken from Rajasthan's tribal belt to Gujarat's Bt cotton fields. This trafficking has reduced significantly thanks to efforts by activists and officials, but it has not stopped entirely. Just a few days ago 11 children were rescued. Last year, there was disturbing news reports about such tribal children being chained at night by their employers.

But farmers in Gujarat deny the prevalence of child labour on their fields. They say that exploitation of bhagya workers is also rare. Instead, they complain, sometimes bhagya workers run away after receiving an advance. Some farmers said they have suffered due to the increasing tendency of bhagya workers or their agents to go to labour courts.

Sanjay Patel, a coordinator with Ajivika Bureau based in Idar town of Gujarat said that exploitation certainly exists as is evident from the growing number of complaints but his organisation is trying to bring both sides together for reconciliation and settlement of disputes.

Sarfraz Sheikh, a senior activist of AVM who has closely monitored these trends says, "The examples of bhagyas running away after receiving an advance are rare. The overall reality is still of grim exploitation. We have to work on several fronts to check this exploitation since for several years bhagyas will continue to migrate due to

# Lake drowns in tourism

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Bhimtal (Uttarakhand)

SHAPED like a saucer, Bhimtal, a 60 ha lake near Nainital attracts hordes of tourists every year. But this tourist boom is its bane. Hotels, resorts and restaurants have mushroomed around the lake's shores, threatening its very existence. Gated communities have sprung up in Bhimtal's catchment area, throttling its flow of water.

This encirclement is killing the lake. Its minimum depth, which was 12 meters, has reduced to a few inches and most of its upper banks (Mallital) have become dry.

According to local legend, the lake owes its origin to Bhima of the great epic, the Mahabharata. It is said that he visited this place when the Pandavas were banished (vanvas) from their kingdom. They were very thirsty. So Bhima, known for his strength, hit the earth with his club (gada). Water sprouted and Bhimtal lake was born. An old Shiva temple, called the Bhimeshwara Mahadev Temple has been built near the lake commemorating this event.

The shrinkage of Bhimtal is starkly visible from the upper banks of the lake.

Here there is a small temple dedicated to Kaichula Devi, a much-revered goddess of the town. The temple used to touch the banks of the lake and had an idol of Durga which was partly submerged in its waters. But now the temple and its idol stand on dry land.

"Years ago, devotees would first take water from the lake and then offer it to the idol. Sadly, all that has become history now," laments Jagmohan Pokhariya, a long time resident.

The lower end of the lake, Tallital, is crowded with hotels, restaurants, villas and an aquarium. Viewed from here it appears as if the lake has not shrunk. Instead, residents and tourists have dumped debris and garbage into the lake. It is an ugly sight.

This sad state of affairs is due to relentless construction. The administration looks the other way. PN Shivpuri, 80, an educationist settled in Bhimtal for decades alleges the authorities are hand in glove with builders and businessmen and just want to earn a lot of money.

"Construction around the lake must be stopped. Instead of the current road an alternative route to Naukuchiya Tal, – another lake which attracts tourists – must be found. I suggested these measures to the Lake Development Authority (LDA) way back in 2002, but they said they were helpless," he says.

Indeed, the LDA, whose job it is to control construction and regulate all business activities near lakes has turned a blind eye to the current construction boom. Builders are blithely defying all building and construction norms. Debris is dumped on hill slopes and eventually slides down to the lake's shoreline.

Citizens say the LDA makes a few 'token' ges-

from 39 meters to 27 meters.

Residents say the desilting work was so badly done it ended up destroying the lake's catchment area. "The LDA dumped hundreds of truckloads of silt excavated from the lake into nearby slopes that are basically the principal catchment of the lake," says Doris Shivpuri, 75, a Danish lady married to an Indian.

Kuatal, which lies northwest to Bhimtal, was a key catchment. Through underground channels and its sloping surface it fed water into the lake. But today Kuatal is littered with multi-storied apartment blocks and gated communities.

According to construction norms, nothing can be built within 250 meters from the shoreline. But almost every hotel is located a stone's throw from the lake, some even touching the shore.

Citizens including some shopkeepers, a few hoteliers and local politicians have started a *Jheel Bachao Andolan* (Save the Lake Campaign). "This lake is our identity. It sustains our lives. We'll not let it die," says Devendra Singh Pharatyal, a small shop owner.

The campaigners are distributing pamphlets, going door-to-door and organizing sit-ins.

"We are urging people not to dump their garbage, sewage or debris in the lake," says Dalakoti who has assumed a leadership role. The activists are planning a public awareness rally and a plantation drive along the shoreline. Housewives have also joined the campaign.

The civic authorities have not provided a single dustbin along the lake's three-km shoreline. So tourists and residents dump garbage wherever they like. There is also a half km road here which is full of potholes.

Residents say in 1999, a seven-km sewer line was dug for ₹5 crore. "They were digging it 22 feet deep. I forced them to reduce the depth to six feet by writing to the Commissioner of Kumaon," says Shivpuri.

Finally, the sewer line was constructed. But, ironically, the sewage system hasn't become functional even after nearly 13 years since the sewage treatment plant's huge pumping station constructed close to the lake neither has a power connection nor staff to man it!

It's hard to believe but residents say many years ago thick oak forests carpeted hill slopes around the lake attracting a variety of migratory birds. The lake too contained rich aquatic life. "Now we see pine trees on hill slopes and crows cawing outside," rues Champa Upadhyay of Maitra Sansthan, a citizens' action group in Nainital. ■



Bhimtal lake

tures now and then to calm down angry residents. "The LDA has totally ignored Bhimtal as their entire attention is on Nainital. We have submitted several proposals to the LDA. For instance, we requested the LDA to inform the Irrigation Department to prevent silt from a 130-year-old dam from entering the lake. It would have cost the department around ₹8 crores. But the LDA did not listen. It has cleaned the lake just once in 1999 at a whopping cost of ₹84 lakhs," alleges D.K. Dalakoti, Chairman, Nagar Congress Committee, Bhimtal.

The desilting of the lake was carried out by the LDA and the Irrigation Department. At that time the lake had depleted by 1,415 cubic meters. Its area had shrunk from 60 ha to 46 ha and its depth

# Sonagachi becomes global hub for sex workers

*Collective defends itself against critics*

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

INDIAN sex workers who were not given visas to attend an AIDS conference in Washington in July, decided to host a parallel meeting in Kolkata instead.

The Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) is the largest collective of sex workers in the world. Since its representatives could not go to the US, DMSC invited sex workers from 27 different countries to Kolkata to attend Global Hub: Sex Workers' Freedom Festival.

Global Hub bucks a global trend. It comes at a time when the US and Europe are cracking down on prostitution in the belief that this will reduce trafficking in young girls.

DMSC is based in Sonagachi, Kolkata's red-light district and says that by reaching out to sex workers it has succeeded in bringing down the incidence of HIV/AIDS – in the areas where it is active.

"We have shown that focused intervention pays. The major transmission of HIV is through sex workers," says Dr Smarajit Jana, principal of the Sonagachi Research and Training Institute. For over 20 years Dr Jana has worked in Sonagachi. He helped organize the DMSC, the first recognized union of sex workers in India.

At a press conference in Delhi, Dr Jana and Bharati Dey, secretary of DMSC, refuted charges against the sex trade in India. They said the trade needed more transparency and its own rules and regulations. It should come under the category of unorganized labour, they said.

"If you stigmatize the sex trade and put the police after sex workers, the trade will go underground. That will make it harder for us to reach out to sex workers and ensure they get access to services. It could make HIV spiral out of control. Instead, we can develop collectives of sex workers to empower them, curb HIV, and increase their bargaining power," said Dr Jana.

"We need to discuss the sex trade, laws relating to it, policies and legislative practices by service providers," he said.

DMSC is not short of critics who say any formal status accorded to prostitution only ends up in more trafficking. But Dr Jana claims sex trafficking has been conflated.

"I too used to believe they were trafficked. After 20 years I know the truth. It takes time and patience," he says.

In 1991, Dr Jana was working as an epidemiologist with the All-India Institute of Public Health and Hygiene when he was asked by NACO to find out the prevalence of HIV among sex workers. He began visiting Kolkata's red-light areas.

"In the last 10 years more than 900 girls have been removed from the sex trade by us. Contrast this to the police. They rescued only 100 girls. The existing system fails because the police are a

**'The sector as a whole got 18 per cent marks. Ispat got 40 and the Vizag Steel Plant 36. So when we say the Vizag Steel Plant got an award, it is a little better**

major beneficiary of trafficking," says Dr Jana.

In West Bengal, the DMSC has set up 'self-regulatory committee boards' in 33 red-light areas. The boards are headed by government officials, the MLA, a representative from the social welfare board and from the medical fraternity amongst others.

Dr Jan says any girl entering the trade is identified and brought before the committee. Her health and mental condition are examined. She is put in a short stay home, or a hostel run by the social welfare board or sent back home. If she wants to stay in the trade she is counselled on how to deal with her health, police, violence,



caption

goons etc.

"We need similar boards in other states," says Dr Jana. He says the sex trade in India is very different from prostitution in the West. For instance, he says, most sex workers in the West are single and take drugs.

But in India studies reveal that sex workers have families, even joint families. Often they have fixed clients. "We found no case of drug abuse among prostitutes in North India. Poor women don't have an education. What options do they have? Their choices are limited to domestic work, construction work or sex work. And sex work provides better money."

Sex work in India is sometimes seasonal. Dr Jana says their study found that women in the South who work on cashew nut fields or in the jasmine industry got work for only three or four months in the year. During the remaining months, 90 per cent of them earned a living by doing sex work. Most of them were single women who headed families.

Attempts by the government to 'rehabilitate' sex workers have failed miserably. A commission by the Supreme Court asked DMSC's Usha cooperative, which provides loans, health services and livelihood training to sex workers, to look into



**'The sector as a whole got 18 per cent marks. Ispat got 40 and the Vizag Steel Plant 36. So when we say the Vizag Steel Plant got an award, it is a little better**

policy," he points out.

Doesn't this indicate that sex work is just due to poverty? Dr Jana says that's for economists to judge. "We do find there is an increase in the number of sex workers after a disaster. We saw a surge of sex workers in Sonagachi after Cyclone Aila. The cyclone destroyed everything. So the women came to earn."

Though sex work does provide more money than other menial jobs, the life span of such work is brief. Former sex workers say the retirement age is at 45.

Dr Jana says the problem is that pimps and the police take away a substantial sum of what a sex worker earns. If women can keep 85 per cent of their earnings, they can lead a healthy life after 45, he says. On an average, a sex worker can earn up to Rs 15,000 a month.

The DMSC's cooperative society, Usha, was started with 13 girls. "Now we have 20,000 members and a turnover of ₹15 crore. Women can take loans to start small businesses after leaving the sex trade. We have a vocational unit too," says Bharati. The DMSC is cited as a role model.

It is the children of sex workers who will finally transform Sonagachi. "Today some of our programme directors are children of sex workers. There are graduates among them. Some have become football players, representing India abroad. In 1991 when I started this programme not a single child had completed Class 10. Now 80 per cent of them go to school. If this trend continues Sonagachi will see a huge change," says Dr

three aspects of the sex trade – how trafficking can be prevented, rehabilitation and the provision of rights and dignity.

Dr Jana says four studies were done on rehabilitation. In Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai they found sex workers did not want to go back to their villages. They wanted the government to provide accommodation for all family members. But the government sees sex workers as individuals and is willing to provide housing only to the sex worker.

The women said they needed decent pensions of around ₹10,000 to survive. But the government doles out laughable sums of ₹200 and ₹300. And even those are hard to get.

Neither does the government have any facility to shelter the women. Government-run homes are dreaded. No sex worker wants to live there. The general opinion is that they are like prisons.

For livelihood, women are taught skills like candle-making, pickle-making or sewing and stitching which does not earn them an income that can support their families.

Dr Jana says 95 to 97 per cent of women are in the sex trade out of choice. A survey of one million self-identified sex workers revealed that only three to five per cent had been trafficked.

The survey excluded rural sex workers, part

time sex workers, transgender sex workers and male sex workers. "Eighty per cent of women sell sex if they don't get jobs. We have 10 million sex workers so you need to be sensitive and rational before designing a development programme or

**BCF announces a 2 month distance learning education program on CSR.**

**Course starts every quarter**

October 2012, January 2013, April 2013 and July 2013.

**BUSINESS & COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

**Certificate Course**

intended for students, managers, practitioners, academicians & teachers.

**Last date for application**

15th September 2012, 15th December 2013, 15th March 2013 & 15th June 2013.

**For details contact:**

**Business & Community Foundation,  
Y-85, Ground Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi - 110016,  
Tel. No.011-26522485, 32536392  
Email: anil@bcfindia.org Website: www.bcfindia.org**

# Online advice for village home

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

ON 15 July, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi hosted a group of professionals working on rural housing in diverse geographies of the country. The agenda for the meeting, which was co-hosted by several partners, was to present a portal built for the rural housing sector ([www.rural-housingnetwork.com](http://www.rural-housingnetwork.com)) and to get feedback before the portal goes live in a month.

"It will be [www.ruralhousingnetwork.in](http://www.ruralhousingnetwork.in) when it goes live. We have been at it for a year now," says Professor Vijayaraghavan Chariar, coordinator at the Centre for Rural Development and Technology at IIT Delhi.

The idea was incubated a year and half ago by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD). BK Sinha, Secretary, was very passionate about it. Government funds several million houses under the Indira Awas Yojana, but does not have any information on the relevant technologies to adopt. The ministry wanted to deploy tested, eco-friendly, cost-effective and disaster-resilient technology. So they contacted IIT Delhi and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (Hudco) to create an accessible repository of knowledge, resources, success stories, best practices etc.

Both the institutions have gone to great lengths to ensure that the portal is owned by the community. They have pooled together all their contacts and invited architects, building technologists, civil engineers, companies, non-profits, panchayat members and government professionals working in the sector.

The interaction between participants in three different parallel sessions was lively. Some of the suggestions were practical. For instance, it was felt that if an end-user has to access the portal, the site has to offer a decision-making tool and the supply chain has to be available too.

Some suggestions were philosophical. "We feel poor people deserve poor solutions. We have to overcome that mindset," said Joe Madiath of Gram Vikas who was chairing a session. "We believe three generations of them will live in one room. They deserve privacy not pigeon holes," he added. "Houses should be an economic asset for the poor much like it is for us," said Kirtee Shah a respected architect from Ahmedabad.



Vijayaraghavan M Chariar

**'The sector as a whole got 18 per cent marks. Ispat got 40 and the Vizag Steel Plant 36. So when we say the Vizag Steel Plant got an award, it is a little better**

"This is what we want," said Chariar. "We want the community to own and generate content. We recognize that the final user may not be ICT enabled. But a local organization whether it is a building centre, NGO or the panchayat can help him," he explained. State governments that want to implement schemes currently have no idea about what other governments are doing. Alternative materials have not become popular because they are not on the list of the government's approved

materials. Creating a database of success stories validated by experts would make them more acceptable.

The team's first charter is to document all good construction practices and case studies of projects across the country. For example, the Laurie Baker Centre has implemented projects with some of its technology and Auroville has worked extensively with compressed mud blocks. "We are looking at vernacular or traditional practices, innovations and also modern materials," says Chariar. The technology profile in the website for each of these methods would have two levels — a simplified level for the end user and a detailed technology description for an architect or an engineer. The site would have a directory of practitioners in rural housing.

"Housing is not about technology alone. It is about aspirations and social acceptability. Habitat has a strong bearing. It is also livelihood dependent," explains Chariar. So coastal zone housing would be different from a house in an arid zone. A fisherman's house needs to be differently designed from that of a weaver. Also, it is never a single house. It is always a settlement, which means the process should have

the participation of people.

The initial updates would come from a team that is travelling across the country. Hudco is the technical consultant. Hudco's building centres in districts across the country have provided their inputs even though several of them are now in a state of disuse. They also have partnerships with non-profits in each region. The Laurie Baker Center will serve as the secretariat in the South. Other partners are: COSTFORD in Kerala, Unnati in Gujarat and Gram Vikas in Orissa.

It is expected that partners will update the portal with their own innovations and what they see in their neighbourhoods. "We expect 25 to 30 organizations to actively contribute content and share their innovations in project methodology and financial structure too," adds Chariar.

The idea is also to build the portal into a solutions exchange where experts will answer specific queries and also get their own queries answered. However all contributions to the site will be peer reviewed by a panel constituted by the team. The panel includes researchers from academia and practitioners. "After all even Wikipedia is moderated," says Madiath.



cap

## Heritage makeover in J&K

**Jehangir Rashid**  
Srinagar

**T**HE Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has been entrusted with the responsibility of preparing a blueprint of the Dastigeer Sahib shrine that was gutted in a devastating fire on 25 June.

In recent years INTACH has been doing a lot of visible work in J&K which is being deeply appreciated. It has embarked on a mission to preserve the heritage and cultural ethos of the state. INTACH has been instrumental in exploring villages in the Valley to bring them on the tourism map. It hopes that people will throng to these places of tourist interest and they will become a permanent feature in the itinerary of tourists.

Mohammad Saleem Beg, Convener of INTACH in Jammu & Kashmir, said that the trust has moved beyond Srinagar city. It has expanded its activities to other districts of the Valley. Beg said that INTACH's prime concern is restoration of the distinctive character of heritage structures in the state.

"Kashmir across the world is known for its famed Mughal Gardens. We have been able to put the Mughal Gardens on the tentative World Heritage list under the category of Global Cultural Assets. Hopefully more people will come to know about these gardens," said Beg who retired as Director-General of Tourism some years ago.

Beg said that INTACH has been able to change the mindset of people who believed that that reconstruction of dilapidated heritage structures was the only way forward. He said they have been

able to inspire people to restructure dilapidated structures instead of dismantling them.

"We have been able to motivate lawmakers to frame legislation for the conservation of heritage structures in the state. The bill has been named the Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation Bill, 2010. The rules are being framed. The bill envisages protection of all the tangible and intangible heritage monuments of the state," said Beg.

He said people of the state were very interested in knowing about the state's glorious past. Some landmark religious structures have been taken over by INTACH for restoration, he explained.

"The state is full of landmark religious structures. We thought it is our duty to preserve them. Aali Masjid at Eidgah in downtown Srinagar has been restored and people are happy with our work. The religious structures in Kashmir have a rich heritage. It is the duty of all stakeholders to put in their best efforts to preserve the distinctive character of our structures," said Beg.

INTACH has also taken up restoration work of the Thag Baba Sahib Shrine in the Shah Kadal area of Srinagar city. The shrine has now been thrown open to the public. People in huge numbers are thronging to it. Public opinion is in favour of INTACH's work. The restoration work was done under the emergency funding programme. Money was provided by a Netherlands based organization.

"We took up the work of documenting coins at the Sri Pratap Museum in Srinagar under the supervision of the National Institute of Luminastics, Nasik. This activity was unique since along with documentation, we were able to interpret and document 75,000 coins," said Beg.

He says the work at the Sri Pratap Museum was done under the National Monuments and Antiquities project. Visitors to the Museum can now get details about ancient coins along with monuments and antiquities.

"INTACH will be working on restoration in 17 towns across the state. Both historic and vernacular structures in these towns will be documented. This would place them on the heritage list map. People will get to know about such places of heritage importance," explained Beg.

INTACH is also converting Lalded Memorial Public School's dilapidated building into a cultural centre. It will be inaugurated shortly and will add a new dimension to the heritage conservation process in Kashmir.

"The Lalded Memorial Public School was dogged by many controversies. Finally, the building was dismantled. We took up its restoration. It was decided to christen the building as the Lalded Memorial Cultural Centre. The centre will showcase the cultural life of Srinagar city through artifacts and visuals," said Beg.

Beg says Lalded's contribution to poetry in Kashmir has been enormous. The centre is in many ways

a tribute to Kashmir's legacy of poets. Traditional ballads, locally known as Waakh, will be played at the centre. "We have published a book in two volumes mapping the cultural resources of Srinagar city including its architectural heritage and medieval old world charm. The publication contains the geographic and socio-cultural history of Kashmir and the evolution of Srinagar city with its settlement patterns and life," said Beg.

More than 800 listed properties and precincts with photographs of religious, residential, civic, public, natural and manmade sites including the Mughal Gardens have been included in the publication. "The book includes tables on major socio-cultural events of the city, manmade and natural disasters, as well as residential neighborhoods associated with different arts and crafts of Kashmir. The listed properties in the book have been mapped on a heritage map for 130 sq. km of the historic city of Srinagar and its colonial extensions," said the INTACH convener.

Beg says tourist villages like Vasaknag and Shari-Shalli villages in South Kashmir have been listed as tourist villages under the Rural Tourism Programme of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

"The Naranag temple in the Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir has been declared as a protected site by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). INTACH has been designated as the Documentation and Research Centre of the ASI. The work on the reconstruction plan of the Dastigeer Sahib Shrine has just begun and it will take some time before the plan is finalized," said the INTACH convener.



# Ahmedabad spruces up its old heritage

**Tanushree Gangopadhyay**  
Ahmedabad

**I**N 1411 Sultan Ahmad Shah built a modest citadel on the eastern bank of the Sabarmati river. He wanted to be near his spiritual guru, Sufi saint Sheikh Ahmed Khattu Ganj Baksh who was living in Sarkhej, close to present day Ahmedabad.

Displaying amazing prescience, the Sultan shifted his capital from Patan in north Gujarat to Asawal which he conquered from the tribal king, Asha Bhil. He named it Ahmedabad after four Ahmads, including himself.

Six centuries later the city Sultan Ahmed Shah founded is applying to UNESCO for World Heritage City status. "We have moved UNESCO for consideration of Ahmedabad as a World Heritage City," says Guru Prasad Mohapatra, the Municipal Commissioner of Ahmedabad, with considerable pride.

"The city has a rich heritage. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has identified 12,502 heritage structures mainly residential houses in the Walled City. We have 54 exquisite monuments of national stature under the Archeological Survey of India's (ASI) protection."

The city has experienced tumultuous times. The Mughals, the Marathas and the British have ruled Ahmedabad. Diverse communities have always lived and prospered here.

Ahmedabad's artisans developed a unique secular style of architecture.

Lattice work on stone in Sidi Saiyad's mosque, ornate stone carved mosques, beautifully etched Jain temples, shaking minarets in five mosques including Sidi Bashir and the exquisitely carved wooden panels in Pol houses are some of the city's significant heritage structures.

The Walled City, fortified with a 10 km derelict wall, has 14 gates.

The residential houses here are organized in pols. Each pol was a sub-settlement, a sort of gated community where a specific guild, religious group or caste group lived. There are now over 300 pols. The pols promoted cooperative living and security.

Each pol comprises a narrow road with homes on each side. Houses had beautifully wooden carved exteriors with gates. They also conserved rainwater by collecting rain from the roof and storing it in tanks in the basement.

The powerful Mahajan culture of enterprise flourished in the pols. It was this 'can do' spirit which created some of India's greatest educational institutions here like the National Institute of Design, the Physical Research Laboratory and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM).

Under an ongoing conservation programme being carried out by the French government since 2000 pol houses are being upgraded and toilets being made.

"We are considering giving the pol homes incentives for maintenance as realty prices are skyrocketing," says Mohapatra.

Famous poet Akha Bhagat's house in Desaini Pol has been restored and a chowk has been made to commemorate him. Similarly, Kavi Dalpatram's house has also been restored. Their birthdays are celebrated and poetry is read here. The pols, no doubt, are steeped in history.

The 600-year-old Gujri Bajar or Flea Market is being given space in the Sabarmati River Front Development Project. Around 1,200 shops are being



# INDIA

constructed for vendors, but after a lengthy fight.

Says Nafis Ahmed Allahwala, president of the Gujri Bajar Vendors Association whose family has been selling costume jewellery in the same place (where?) for three generations.

"It has been a long battle fought in various courts since 1975. Had it not been for Professor Navdeep Mathur of IIM, we would never have got anywhere. The government does not realize that Gujri Bajar is a heritage market started by Ahmed Shah Badshah in 1411. Earlier, it was a Friday market when we sat in the Bhadra area. We were shifted to the riverbed in the last century. Following the jacketing of the Sabarmati under the River Front project, we were asked to move out."

The AMC has allocated around ₹90 crores for revitalizing several old monuments. This will displace thousands of vendors for which the AMC has no policy as yet. It appears they too will be resettled near the Sabarmati.

The historic Dandi bridge from where Mahatma Gandhi started his Dandi March in 1931 was recently gutted. It will now be salvaged by the AMC at a cost of ₹2 crores. The bridge adjoins the Sabarmati Ashram.

Calico Dome, another architectural marvel designed by Dutch architect Mie van der Rohe, was dismantled by a court order following the Calico mill dispute. AMC had moved the High Court to install it since the dome is a heritage site. It will now be reconstructed at a cost of ₹1.50 crores.

The AMC is also promoting a series of heritage walks. The walk from Swaminarayan temple to the Jama Masjid fuses six centuries of history in a couple of hours. You can see the pols,

the Jain temples, chabutras (bird feeders), and the Fernandes bridge under which the river Sabarmati used to flow many centuries ago.

AMC has allocated ₹67 lakhs for redesigning this walk. Other walks in the works are a night walk, an audio walk, children's walk and a craft walk in collaboration with SEWA. Street food is an integral part of Amdavadi culture so a food walk has been proposed and a Sarkhej Roza walk.

What are the advantages of having the World

Heritage City tag? "The city gets an identity, heritage structures are protected and the quality of life is improved," explains Nayak.

Socially conscious citizens point out facets of the city that are being ignored. Lost in the city is its founder, Ahmad Shah and his Sufi legacy.

"Sultan Ahmad Shah was a pious and great man who detested all bigotry. He would not take money for his personal expenditure from the state exchequer, so great was he," says Dr Saroop Dhruv, a poet and cultural activist.

"The government has jacketed the Sabarmati river and it now looks like the Narmada Canal. Sultan Ahmad Shah had plans to build a port so that traders could negotiate their way to the sea. Today, all the activities on the river have been curtailed. It is dead."

Dr Dhruv asks where has Ahmedabad's Sufi culture gone? "Even Vali Gujarati, the famed Sufi poet's tomb was broken during the 2002 Gujarat riots. The Rathyatra was a symbol of secularism. Today it is a dreaded festival with communal forces ruling the roost. Where are the wonderful artisans of Kinkhab? I fear that the World Heritage tag will simply push the poor out of the city."

Ahmedabad has five Islamic seminaries where original works are being scripted, says Professor Bombaywala, who retired from the Gujarat Vidyapith and has been working in the 300-year-old Pir Mohammad Shah Library that has 4,000 manuscripts.

"It is paradoxical that Sultan Ahmed Shah moved from Patan to found Ahmedabad because he wanted to be close to his Sufi mentor, Sheikh Ahmed Khatu," says Bombaywala. ■



caption

## SAMITA'S WORLD

by SAMITA RATHOR

# 'Our focus is on forest rights'

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

A new alliance of groups fighting for the rights of forest-based societies is taking shape. They converged in Delhi from all over India to quietly discuss the contours of this new network this month.

In 2006, when the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 was passed in Parliament almost all political parties supported it. But implementation has been tardy. Most state governments and forest departments putting up every roadblock they can find to frustrate implementation.

Activist groups who spent years convincing the Union government to pass the law now find the going tough. They are therefore thinking of strategies to make the Forest Rights Act of 2006 more effective.

The new network is likely to be firmed up by the end of this year. Its tentative name will be the All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM). Sanjay Basu Mullick of the Jharkhand Jungle Bachao Andolan (Save the Forest Movement) has spent a decade mobilizing forest communities for their rights. He spoke to Civil Society about the new alliance in the works.

## What is the reasoning behind starting an alliance of forest groups?

We would like to take a larger perspective. India is a union of several identities, economies and decision-making processes. They don't know each other well. Those from feudal or corporate backgrounds have very little knowledge of the lives, aspirations, philosophy or decision-making processes of forest-based societies.

As a result we make ill-informed comments like those of former President of India APJ Abdul Kalam. He asked why we want to keep tribals inside forests. They should enjoy the modern world, he said. Well, how little he knows of eight per cent of our population!

People live inside forests because it is their home. They love the forest. They find it peaceful and they hate towns and cities. India is a union of diversities with respect for each other's way of life.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, in brief the (FRA), is creating ripples. It gives

rights to forest-based societies. They can use their knowledge to protect forests and ecology. That is why we want a convergence of civil society and forest dwellers on one platform.

This convergence started taking place before the Act was promulgated.

Alliances came together to persuade the government to bring into centre stage the debate on forest issues. Once the Act came into effect we



caption

thought our job was over. Unfortunately, the entire administration especially the forest department was up in arms over the new law. They frustrated implementation. That has forced us to mobilize civil society and forest dwellers to put pressure on the government to implement the Act and plug loopholes which are being used not to implement it.

## What are these loopholes?

First of all the FRA of 2006 does not penalize those who try to frustrate implementation. They should be penalized. Secondly the FRA should clearly state that it supersedes earlier laws on forests. The forest department all along says we are bound by the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, the Indian Forest Rights Act of 1927, so which Act should we follow?

Although the FRA is historical and progressive, there are serious drawbacks at the implementation stage. When rules have been published, you give one claim form for claiming agricultural land, another for non-timber forest produce (NTFP) or minor forest produce (MFP), but you have not provided a form for community forest rights over natural resources as enshrined in 31 A of the FRA. The forest department is not respecting people's rights to bamboo, sal, tendu etc.

So a major flaw of the Act is that it is silent on some vital issues.

## At what stage is the alliance?

Right now we are in the process of forming alliances. We hope to firm up our union by the end of this year. We are in touch with several small groups. Three large groups -- the Adivasi Jan Jati Adikar Manch, National Adivasi Alliance and the Adivasi Vanvasi Adhikar Manch are joining us. We also have groups from Jharkhand, South Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.

## What are your priorities?

We will focus largely on community forest rights. First we will get community forest rights and then land rights. Forest management will happen if you have control over village resources.

We want to increase the volume of forest flows -- not forest produce alone but water. Forests are the mother of water. Our perennial rivers are dry most of the year. With water and an increase in NTFP, the village economy will be strengthened.

ened.

So far, between the government and the forest department, forests have been mismanaged. They have been turned into a private regime instead of a collective regime. The Madhya Pradesh government's forest policy is to lease out forests to private parties for tourism, for commercial use. We will oppose such policies at an all India level. To do so we need an all India organization.

There are other issues—REDD, the Green India Mission, climate change and carbon credits, areas which the government is keen to enter....we need to discuss these issues.

## What is your strategy going to be? Will you be pressing for implementation of PESA as well?

In Jharkhand they have the Jharkhand Panchayat Act where they have this provision of dividing villages into wards and holding elections. Well, then, what remains of the gram sabha? Nothing.

## When groups are strong, land rights to very small pieces of land are provided.

We can implement the FRA only through mobilization. But it is difficult. In forests, villages are small, scattered and poorly connected. People are so poor they cannot afford to come to town for a

# U S H A

## A FAN FOR EVERY NEED



5 STAR RATING  
ENERGY EFFICIENCY  
GUIDE  
Advanced ceiling fans also available  
in 5 Star Rating variant

**USHA core**

Toll free

1800-1033-111

Email: [usha\\_care@ushainternational.com](mailto:usha_care@ushainternational.com)

Website: [www.ushainternational.com](http://www.ushainternational.com)

 <http://www.facebook.com/ushainternational>

Ceiling • Table • Pedestal • Wall • Exhaust • Air Circulators • Special Application Fans

## Saina Nehwal's success is rooted in family values and aspirations

# HOMEGROWN CHAMPION

*The Saina Nehwal kind of story is what we like to publish. We have a bottom-up orientation and celebrate the successes of ordinary Indians. We see in their efforts the larger picture of India.*

*Saina's amazing rise goes much beyond badminton. It is about middle-class achievements and aspirations in the face of awesome odds.*

*Indian sport, as we know, is plagued by power games and the lack of equal opportunity.*

*Politicians enjoy the kind of control they shouldn't. But when a Saina succeeds despite such circumstances we all have reason to cheer loudly. It is possible, we tell ourselves, for talent and integrity to*

**H**ARVIR Singh, Saina Nehwal's father, an agricultural scientist with the Choudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University in Hisar, moved to Hyderabad on 1 April 1998. It was not one bit a foolish decision. His new office was at the N.G. Ranga University, that is a stone's throw from the new Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad. A distance of 25 km from the heart of the main city, this university has the reputation of having done some pioneering work in the field of agriculture. The Indian Science Congress has been held here, a matter of great prestige for any university.

Taking six weeks to settle down in his new environs and set up home for his wife and two daughters, Harvir went back to Hisar to move them to Hyderabad. A Tata Sumo in the searing heat of May brought them from Hisar to Delhi where they boarded the Andhra Pradesh Express at 5 pm on 25 May. Little did eight-year-old Saina know that she was set to log on to an exciting new world, that would virtually transform her from just another schoolgirl to a [www.aworldwidewonder.com](http://www.aworldwidewonder.com).

It is with a shine in his eyes and immense pride that Harvir points to Usha Rani and says Saina gets the DNA of her game from her mother. And that DNA has its own funny way of working for the progeny. "Her mother was an exceptionally talented badminton player. Even now, people who saw her play in Hisar remember her flicks, the way she would move her wrist. Saina has got her mother's stamina but I would say Usha is still better in skill."

Though the impression most people have is that Saina is her father's pet, Saina draws much of her willpower and a stubborn refusal to accept defeat from her mother.

"Every day on our way back home from the stadium after training, my mother would scold me," says Saina. "She would tell me I did not do this right today or that I committed this mistake. She was very involved in what I was doing."

Saina's introduction to professional badminton came by chance in December 1998. Harvir, as sports secretary of the Agricultural University, visited the Lal Bahadur Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad to enquire about hiring it for a tournament. The stadium was 25 km from the university, but Saina had gone along. Like all little kids, the precocious side of Saina took over when she spotted the racquets kept by the courts. As she started playing with the racquets, Saina caught the eye of the badminton coach,





caption

P.S.S. Nani Prasad Rao.

It is insignificant looking moments like these that become turning points in a career. For Saina, Nani Prasad making a note of how she held the racquet was one such moment.

"He apparently liked the way she held the racquet. Nani Sir asked me to bring Saina to the summer coaching camp in May 1999," recalls Harvir. "I felt very excited, searched for a court near home and Usha Rani and I started our love affair with badminton all over again, this time with Saina in tow."

The summer coaching camp was to begin from 1 May 1999. The doting parents travelled to Hyderabad's old city area near the Charminar and bought for Saina a pair of shorts, a T-shirt and shoes from a Bata showroom. And a Carbonex badminton racquet for ₹1,700. She stood out because she was taller than most girls her age.

Saina's memories of that age are fuzzy but she does point out that her family always has ensured she is insulated from any of the family issues. "My sister is also like my mother. She was aware that my parents would give priority to my game. At home, no one says 'no' to me, as the effort is always to keep me in a happy frame of mind. I think I am blessed that way. No family problems are ever discussed with me, only happiness is shared," says Saina.

But there are regrets. Harvir says because the focus was always on badminton, the small joys of growing up were ignored: "I never bought a doll for Saina. Instead of a doll, we gave her a racquet to play with. Every time I think about it, I feel very emotional."

Goverdhan Reddy, one of the badminton coaches with the Sports Authority

of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) who even today works with kids during the summer, says Saina was among the 120-odd kids who had enrolled for the camp. Now, on the opening day of the summer camp in May every year, Goverdhan shows younger kids, with stars in their eyes, videos of Saina Nehwal winning the gold at the Delhi Commonwealth Games.

Once the summer coaching camp in 1999 was over, Nani Prasad told Harvir Singh that he would like Saina to continue playing badminton. Not that Harvir and Usha Rani needed any prodding; they were as keen.

And within just days of the conclusion of the summer camp in 1999, Saina was asked by Nani Prasad in June to travel to Chennai to take part in the Under-10 category in the Krishna Khaitan Tournament. This tournament is considered one of the most prestigious badminton tournaments even today. Like any family that takes the first tournament very seriously, Saina's parents bought her an expensive Isometric racquet for ₹2,700. Most players those days used the Carbonex racquets that used to cost ₹1,700.

"I made the mistake of sending her without Usha or I accompanying her. We were very tense," remembers Harvir. "But the little girl performed well, reaching the quarters where she lost to Shravani of the East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh. Saina received an award of ₹500 and a certificate for her efforts. But someone, either by mistake or deliberately, took away her expensive racquet. So, when I received her at the Secunderabad railway station, Saina was in tears, heartbroken at the loss. I hugged her and told her I was proud of her for doing so well on debut."

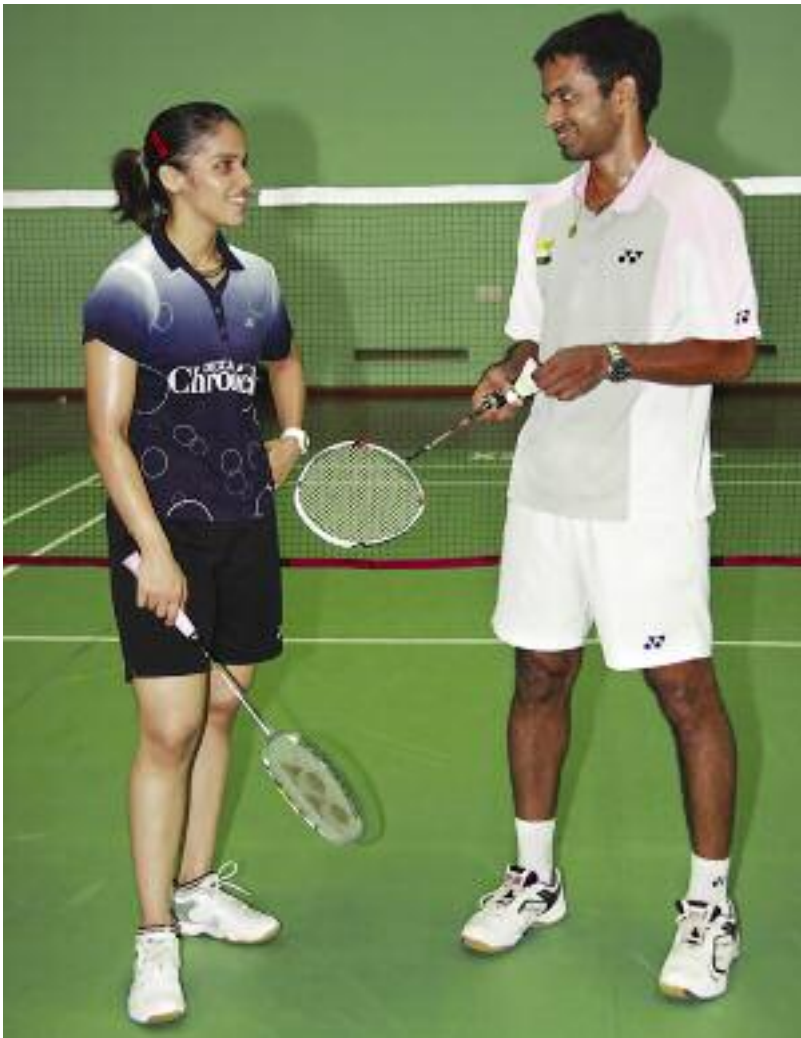
Goverdhan remembers Saina as a girl with a strong shoulder whose base-



Saina and her mother share a deep bond



With her father, Harvir, at Disneyland in Hong Kong in 2010



Saina and Gopi

**'Hundreds of truckloads of rations are being clandestinely sold to hoarders by officials of the CAPD,' a reliable official of the CAPD said.**

line hits were good but drops were slow. "But she was good for her age and showed promise," says Goverdhan.

Saina's next outing was to a tournament in Thane in Maharashtra where she lost in the Under-10 semi-final. Goverdhan says he remembers her exiting the court after the match, as if it happened yesterday.

"There was a grill that she had to cross. Her mother Usha Rani was standing beside the grill. The moment Saina crossed, Usha Rani slapped her. I rushed asking, Aunty why are you hitting her? Her reply was: 'She didn't play the game the way she should have. She just did not concentrate'."

Looking back, Saina says her mother was totally involved with her game. "During those growing up years, she made me eat a lot, made me more strong so that I could compete in five to six categories in the same tournament. She really pushed me a lot."

Usha Rani's phenomenal motivation and dedication to keep Saina's focus on badminton does not come as a surprise to those who have known about her own unfulfilled dream of being a national level badminton player. Chandranshu moved towards volleyball instead of badminton. But Saina's interest in badminton was actively encouraged and supported by Usha Rani.

Like Harvir, Goverdhan credits Saina's badminton sense to her mother. "Till she was 13 or 14 years old, Usha Rani's efforts were outstanding. She would take care of her diet and ensure Saina was punctual and on time. She also influenced Saina's mindset and guided her how to play. I would tell Aunty that on their way to and back from the stadium, she should keep talking about the game to Saina in the bus or the auto."

Saina worried about upsetting her mother by not playing well. It was a combination of fear and respect for someone who understood the game and knew what was needed to excel in it. Today Saina credits her genes for her ability to work hard.

"When I was 9, 10, 11 years old, I used to spend two to three hours just at the gym," she recalls.

But while Usha Rani was strict when it came to badminton, Harvir's forte was to encourage Saina if her spirits drooped. This carrot-and-stick approach worked very well to make Saina a better badminton player.

**MAKING ENDS MEET:** What that summer camp did for Saina was to give her a second home at the Lal Bahadur Indoor Stadium till about mid-2004, when she moved to Gopichand's camp. Every morning, she would be among the first to arrive with her father at 6 am and train till 10.30 am. She would be back on court at 2 pm, this time with her mother, and play till 7.30 pm. Once school reopened, she trained from six till eight in the morning and then again from four till seven in the evening.

The same month, Saina became the cynosure of the badminton circuit in



caption

Hyderabad, by winning the Under-10, Under-13 singles and the Under-13 doubles titles. And by virtue of being the district champ, she got direct entry into the Under-10 Andhra Pradesh State Championship in Tirupati, a temple town.

Interestingly, Saina won the Under-10 title by defeating Shravani, to whom she had lost to earlier in Chennai. The ₹150 award was made much more sweet by the special VIP darshan that was organised for the little champion and Harvir at the abode of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala.

While Saina Nehwal was fast becoming a known name in India's junior badminton circuit, the everyday routine of taking her for practice was quite strenuous for her parents. It was a 25 km ride on the scooter from Rajendranagar to the stadium and Saina had to be there very early. This meant the child had to be up at four in the morning. Many a time Saina would doze off on the back seat of the scooter, which prompted Usha Rani to accompany the father and daughter. In March 2000, the family purchased a Maruti 800 car only for Saina. Maruti is another name for Hanuman, the Monkey God, who is a symbol of strength and positive energy.

Even as Saina was steadily climbing up in the game, Harvir's bank balance was diminishing. He rates the time between 1999-2004 as the toughest period of his life.

"I drew money from my provident fund some six times, mostly citing my wife's illness as the reason. Everyone in the office, of course, knew what the real reason was. Sometimes ₹50,000, sometimes ₹1 lakh. Of course, all of that has thankfully now been put back by me."

Young Saina had no clue about how every day was an expensive affair. Harvir ensured there was no discussion about these matters in the family and got on with the job of ensuring Saina's needs were taken care of. "She was too young to understand all this and I did not want to disturb her," says Harvir.

Saina admits now she never knew he was borrowing from his provident fund to spend on the tournaments. "I did not know where the money was coming from. I did not know that he was taking loans to send me to tournaments. My Mom used to travel with me and sometimes we would spend ₹30,000 to ₹40,000 on one championship. And I would take part in at least 10 in a year. But he never asked me before any tournament if I really want to play it or skip it."

As Saina started tasting success outside Hyderabad, especially abroad, telephone bills became another burden for the family. Saina admits she would be too lazy to acquire a local SIM card in a foreign land and would keep calling home to chat with her parents. There would also be calls from the media. Harvir says during the touring months in the Philippines Open and the World Junior Championship in 2006, the mobile bills were almost ₹50,000.

## The wonder girl

THE Hindi news was being broadcast on All India Radio when Dr Harvir Singh's second child arrived in this world. That is how the father remembers that evening, on 17 March 1990, when Saina Nehwal was born. And adds fondly that it was perhaps a sign to him that the child was herself destined to make headlines in time to come.

No one from either side of the family was around when the baby came at 8:45 pm in what was a normal delivery at the hospital on the campus of the Choudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University in Hisar, where Dr Harvir Singh, an agricultural scientist, worked.

Though the Nehwals are not an overly religious family, as in the kind who frequent temples, they named their new arrival Saina, a short form



caption

of Sainaam, which refers to Shirdi Sai Baba.

It was a week or so after Saina arrived that Usha Rani's mother came to see the baby and almost a month lapsed before her father's side of the family visited Hisar from their village. Harvir says, "I had to listen to sarcastic barbs. My mother said, *"Tu to bulaata bhi nahi hai* (You never call us to your home)."

Many years later, a news magazine quoted Saina as saying "her grandmother was not too happy that Harvir and Usha Rani had had a second daughter." That one of India's most famous and successful daughters, who is now most definitely a youth icon, had been an unwanted girl child, at least for some in the family, was too ironic a symbolism for the media to let it pass. It was picked up widely, magnifying what is accepted in many parts of India as an everyday truth that may not make many realists raise even an eyebrow. But in the world of news, it became a scandalous revelation that underlined the existing gender bias in India.

The family was upset about the unnecessary public embarrassment of an elder of the family. It created fissures in the family. Harvir was told by his brother that it was not fair of Saina to have talked about her late grandmother like this. Harvir agrees the controversy was avoidable. However, open and straightforward as he always is, he points out that in Haryana if the first child is a girl, people are likely to congratulate you, though there won't be a big celebration. But if the second child is also a girl, Harvir says with a laugh, the chances are that the attitude will change to offering solace – "Chalo, koyi baat nahin (It doesn't matter, such things happen)."

Though that has been the social environment in Haryana, Harvir insists that it is not the way his family reacted to Saina's birth. "Two of my brothers already had two sons each by the time Saina was born. So to have two daughters in the family was a blessing. My elder daughter, Abu Chandranshu, was in fact the first girl born in the family after my elder sister."

It was perhaps in the fitness of things that Saina was made the



In action



caption

**'Hundreds of truckloads of rations are being clandestinely sold to hoarders by officials of the CAPD,' a reliable official of the CAPD said. officials of the CAPD,' a reliable official of the**

All this mercifully seems a long way back now that Saina paid ₹60 lakhs in income-tax in 2010 and ₹1.5 crores in 2011. The chartered accountant's fee alone was ₹2.5 lakhs.

Harvir says, "Those years were difficult years but today Saina has made sure there is no shortage of money. I wish every parent a daughter like Saina. If she had decided to study further she wouldn't have earned like this."

**'I AM SAINA':** Dr Harvir Singh leaned forward and asked me to read the brand of the shirt he was wearing.

"BOSS," I said.

"Saina bought this shirt for me in Hong Kong," he said. "This Swiss watch is an 18 carat gold watch by Dubey & Schaldenbrand, worth 8,000 francs. These shoes are by Yonex. From my head to my feet all that I have belongs to Saina. If you ask me, I will say I am Saina."

As he opened the almirah in his office room at the Directorate of Oilseeds Research to take out various things bought by Saina on her different trips abroad, he got emotional. It was obvious the importance of the purchases was not so much in their material value, but in them being symbols of Saina's success. Each represented a rung on the ladder she had climbed.

"This is a Longines watch worth ₹2 lakhs," said Harvir, opening the

box in which the watch was kept. Lest it did not register, Harvir pointed out that this is the brand that Aishwarya Rai Bachchan endorses.

"But then she does not wear a watch at all so it is kept in the almirah. The same is the case with this Sony Vaio laptop that she bought for ₹50,000. She uses a Mac so this brand new piece is kept here. We struggled a lot in the early years, but now the pains have become gains," he continued.

Badminton is a cheaper sport when compared to say cricket or tennis, but if the player has to excel, the parents have to be prepared to keep aside enough funds to take care of every small need. Harvir says that by 2001, when he and Usha Rani realized Saina's future was in badminton, he would purchase expensive shuttlecocks, the ones that she would get to play with in tournaments, despite his modest means.

"The AS2 or AS3 shuttlecocks used to cost ₹55 a piece. There were other parents who said why spend so much on shuttlecocks, but then I did not want to leave anything to chance. I used to buy 10 cartons at a time with each carton containing 10 shuttles, which meant shelling out ₹5,500. At best the carton would last four weeks."

Families make systematic investments in a youngster over years before a champion emerges. Arif says more than the player and the coach, the parents should get the credit for the success of a sportsperson. ■



caption



# Insights

- Opinion
- Analysis
- Research
- Ideas
- Angst

## Dammed by drought

HIMANSHU THAKKAR

**A**LARM bells rang all over India, including in Delhi's power circles this June-July when numerous signs showed that the monsoon may be delayed, scanty and large areas may face drought. The monsoon season rainfall all over India showed a deficit of 30 per cent by 4 July. By 11 July, the deficit had reduced to 23 per cent but concern remained about large parts of India facing some rather serious consequences of irregular rainfall.

These kind of deficits would be difficult to be wiped out by higher rainfall in the remaining period, particularly considering the looming threat of the El Nino phenomenon and the available predictions from the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and others. So it is certain that parts of India will face drought this year.

Indeed, the Union Ministry of Agriculture by 10 July already set up a Crisis Management Group to take care of the possible drought situation. Such situations are not new.

In fact, according to the Drought Manual published by the Union Ministry of Agriculture, about 1.204 million sq km (out of a total area of 3.29 m sq km) of India falls under active drought mitigation areas. It's a bit of a mystery how this area went up from the figure of 1.07 m sq km as assessed in the early 1970s by the then Irrigation Minister, K L Rao. Why should the drought prone area go up after 65 years of water resources development in independent India? It's possibly a matter of defining drought proneness, as various definitions are used by different programmes and commissions like the National Irrigation Commission and the National Agriculture Commission.

All definitions, though, agree that areas with rainfall above 1125 mm cannot be called drought prone. Around 68 per cent of India has rainfall below 1125 mm, comprising 35 per cent that have rainfall of 750 to 1125 mm, 21 per cent having rainfall 400 to 750 mm and 12 per cent having rainfall below 400 mm. The area receiving rainfall below 750 mm is considered chronically drought prone. Blocks having irrigation for more than 30 per cent of the net cultivated lands are also



caption

excluded from drought prone consideration. The Union Ministry of Agriculture estimates that about 16 per cent of India, or 0.526 m sq km area faces drought each year on an average.

The biggest sufferers are rainfed farmers. Out of a Net Cultivable Area (NCA) of around 141 Million Hectares (MH) in India about 81 MH is rainfed, according to the Union Ministry of Agriculture. Out of around 60 MH of irrigated NCA, about 37-38 MH is irrigated by groundwater. Another about 5-9 MH is irrigated by what is known as minor surface water schemes, which are essentially rainwater harvesting schemes. About 11 per cent of NCA is irrigated by Major and Medium irrigation projects.

India indeed seems to have rather elaborate drought management institutions and government mechanisms. The Drought Manual brought out in 2009 by the Union Agriculture Ministry

describes them at length. It recognises that efficient use of reservoirs and groundwater can help reduce the impact of drought. But there is no effective mechanism in place to ensure that reservoir operations and groundwater use are regulated in anticipation of drought. The latest institute to have been set up in this context is the National Rainfed Area Authority. It was set up by the Union Government in 2006 with the express purpose of mitigating the miseries of drought prone rainfed areas. The evidence of its effectiveness is yet to be seen.

The Drought Manual also describes three types of drought, namely meteorological drought, agricultural drought and hydrological drought. Large parts of India are likely to face the first two types of drought this year. Many of them will also face the third kind.

*Continued on page 28*

*Continued from page 27*

If irrigation is the chief weapon to reduce drought impact, it needs to be recognised where our irrigation is coming from and how can we sustain that source. An analysis of irrigation data from the Union Agriculture ministry shows that the net area irrigated by Major and Medium irrigation projects reached a peak of 17.79 m ha in 1991-92. In no year in two decades thereafter, has the area irrigated by M&M projects even crossed that figure. In fact, the area has reduced by about 1.5 m ha in 2009-10, the latest year for which data is available. In this period, the government claims to have completed several hundred M&M projects, spent over two lakh crores, but it seems at best it has been a zero sum game. It's like adding irrigation in some new areas, while reducing it in others.

In the same period, there has been a significant increase in total net irrigated area from all sources in these two decades. This has been possible due to an increase in groundwater irrigation. About two-thirds of irrigation today is happening from groundwater. But seeing the depleting levels and quality of groundwater, there is no doubt that our current use of groundwater is not sustainable.

If groundwater is our water lifeline, as is apparent today, we need to work to sustain that lifeline. This is even more pertinent in the context of drought when groundwater, if available, can help us out through the deficit period. But that option has been exhausted in large number of areas and is going to happen even more in future, considering the way our governments are neglecting the need to increase recharge, protect groundwater recharge systems and regulate use of groundwater in the interest of access to water and livelihoods for millions in drought prone areas.

Under the circumstances, there is no wisdom in going for more M&M projects for irrigation. However, India already has over 5,100 large dams and over 95 per cent of them have been built for irrigation. These reservoirs, if operated prudently, can help significantly in reducing the impact of drought in some areas. However, due to the non-transparent, unaccountable, unresponsive way that these projects are operated, that help is also not coming.

There are projects like the Sardar Sarovar Project on the Narmada River in Gujarat that was basically proposed and justified in the name of drought prone areas of Kutch, Saurashtra and North Gujarat. However, since canals have not yet been built, the water is going to water rich central Gujarat and to cities and industries all over, for whom the project had no allocation. To symbolise the unjustified use, the Sabarmati River flowing through Ahmedabad now flows all round the year, using Narmada water.

In the case of the Vidarbha region in Maharashtra, the region suffers from the highest irrigation investment backlog, white elephants like the Gosikhurd Project and now massive diversion of irrigation water for thermal power plants and other industries, without any participatory process with or consent from the people of Vidarbha.

In the case of the Bhakra system comprising the Bhakra dam on the Sutlej River, the Pong dam on the Beas River and the Thein dam on the Ravi river, these dams all on snow fed rivers, could have built up storage in the summer, when forecasts from the IMD and others had shown that Northwest India is going to experience deficit monsoon this year. But the officials of the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) allowed excessive releases in the first three months of this calendar year, the highest outflows of the last 13 years for which figures are available. To top it all, when there should have been minimal releases in summer, allowing the depleted levels to come up, the BBMB committed the second blunder of the year, allowed the water to flow away, giving priority to power generation rather than building up storages for drought contingency.



Thus when in June and early July, Northwest India needed water, BBMB said they needed to take emergency measures to reduce water supply for all purposes! The BBMB had been found guilty of similar mismanagement in 2004 and 2009 too. But there is no accountability for reservoir managers of India.

What these instances teach, is that reservoir operations needs to be sensitive to weather forecasts and the possibility of deficits or surpluses. Reservoir operations also need to be reworked to ensure downstream releases all round the year as such downstream river flows play a large number of livelihood supporting roles and also help groundwater recharge. Transparency and accountability in reservoir operations needs to be achieved through clearly defined, legally enforceable norms.

Diversion of water from irrigation to non-irrigation uses is not happening in Vidarbha alone. It is happening all over Maharashtra and other states too. I have just mentioned the example of Sardar Sarovar. The Hirakud dam in Orissa is another example, where in fact, farmers have been agitating for years to counter such a move. In cases of the Bisalpur dam in Rajasthan and the Pawana dam in Maharashtra, there was in fact, police firing on farmers when they protested such diversions.

What all this means is that these reservoirs are not available for mitigating drought-like situa-

tions for farmers.

It may be noted here that every farmer of the country would benefit from facilities for better water management. And every farmer has an equal right in the share of state resources for this. But governments have no policy or strategy to use the annual bounty of rainfall for all farmers. There are clear issues of inequities and injustice there.

But there are also serious issues of sustainable development here. For every investment that we make to increase outputs from rainfed areas, the returns are likely to be more than what we may get from big irrigation projects even if they were to be taken up in the best possible manner. This has been proved through hundreds of examples all over India. And climate change imperatives also indicate that increasing the moisture holding capacity of soils, increasing local water systems and taking up water-saving cropping methods like the System of Rice Intensification are indeed the most climate friendly options.

It is high time we do a course correction and focus our water and agriculture policies on rainfed farming. Such a strategy is likely to yield better economic, hydrologic, sustainable, equitable and climate friendly results and foodgrains production as per our future demands. It can also help sustain our groundwater lifeline.

Are we learning any lessons from these experiences? It does not seem we are. For example the 12th Plan Working Group Report on M&M projects recommends unprecedented, highest ever investment of Rs 331 000 crores for these projects. The amount is about 75 to 80 per cent of the total water sector budget for the Fifth Year Plan. Even the Prime Ministers' Office is working like a big dam lobby these days, as does the Union Water Resources and Agriculture Ministries. The recent Supreme Court order asking the government to implement the un-implementable – interlinking of rivers – was yet another indication of this.

In this bleak scenario we can also count our blessings:

**Rainfall:** "High average annual rainfall of 1150 mm, no other country has such a high annual average" says the Manual for Drought Management (November 2009) Ministry of Agriculture, Govt of India.

**Rivers:** India has one of the most bountiful variety and length of rivers. Over 45,000 km of perennial rivers existed in India in the 1950s.

**Aquifers:** These provide groundwater. India is the world's biggest groundwater user country.

**Local water and management systems:** "Traditional water harvesting systems have been largely abandoned," points out the Manual for Drought Management as one of the reasons for recurring droughts in India.

How can we leverage these blessings for people's benefits? ■

Himanshu Thakkar (ht.sandrp@gmail.com)  
South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (www.sandrp.in)

# The vulnerable activist

KANCHI KOHLI

KANCHI KOHLI

A couple of years ago I was casually talking to a fellow social activist during a meeting related to coal mining. A few minutes before the day's proceedings ended, a suggestion was made for follow up actions – as is usually the case in many civil society meetings. The idea suggested was the need to put together a database on a website of social, environment and human rights activists across India so that it would be readily available for anyone who wanted to know about issues in a particular region. While this was limited to resistance around coal mining and thermal power generations, it would have meant that a thorough one-stop place would have been created enabling anyone to track any activist on the ground.

We were to get back to the meeting soon. While we sipped our chai the conversation between the fellow activist and me ended in a deep sigh. Together we had contemplated on the repercussions such a database could have in tracking down and hounding a range of activists – they would be just one click away from being identified with a region or a place.

While many had welcomed the idea in the meeting, sanity prevailed after the meeting and the idea was dropped. The core concern was that such a database would increase the vulnerability of activists to corporate and state repression. Those who were leading struggles or were significant catalysts in local struggles and movements would be particularly at risk.

Why do I recall this incident today? Why has this reference point once again assumed significance? In the last two weeks there have been at least three reported incidents of direct violence against individuals who have been championing social and environmental causes in different parts of India. The essence of their arguments have differed but the core message they have attempted to communicate has its roots in the debate around environment and industrialisation in the country.

Bharat Jhunjunwala in Uttarakhand, Ramesh Agrawal in Chhattisgarh and Akhil Gogoi in Assam are the three people who have been in the news. All three have faced physical assault and serious injuries in late June and early July. What is ironic is that all three are raising concerns in three different contexts with three different strategies but primarily targeting the human and ecological impacts of industrial and infrastructure development in the area where they live and work.

While Jhunjunwala's arguments about the impacts of dams in Uttarakhand have scientific rigour blended with legal action, Agrawal has consistently strived to use the process of environment regulation, public hearings and judicial remedies to raise valid concerns about the spate of mines, power plants and industries coming up in the Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh. Akhil Gogoi of the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti has raised issues that are socio-political in character and highlighted hard hitting issues with respect to hydro power



caption

**‘Hundreds of truckloads of rations are being clandestinely sold to hoarders by officials of the CAPD,’ a reliable official of the CAPD said. ‘Hundreds of truckloads of rations are being clandestinely sold to hoarders by officials of the CAPD,’ a reliable**

generation in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

In March it was reported that 6,000 armed policemen had reached Koodankulam, a small village in Tamil Nadu, to “tackle” and “control” the local protest against the setting up of the nuclear power plant. The agitation was peaceful and had gained significant strength with the state and central governments unable to respond to the core concerns being raised over the nuclear power plant. The news had taken the country by storm and led to several individual organisations being targeted around issues of foreign funding and other allegations.

In November 2011, over 200 fishermen and women had gathered around the police station in the Mundra taluka of Kutch district of Gujarat where arrest warrants had been issued against those who were considered to be ‘trouble makers’ by a company which had initiated construction of a 300 MW thermal power plant without requisite approvals in place. The group came together to hold their collective responsible and not the seven individuals who had been singled out.

The first point I am trying to address here is the narrowing down and targeting of individuals who

would have played a catalytic role in the agitation against a particular industry or industrial activity. It is an old sociological fact that individuals are more vulnerable and can be isolated easier than a group or an entire community. They are then labeled the ‘troublemakers’ who need to be dealt with.

The second, but an equally significant fact is that there is only an increase in individual and collective efforts who are consistently highlighting instances of regulatory lapses, unaddressed impacts and complete lack of democratic decision making. In this effort they have come together to use social, legal, scientific and political arguments and tools to strengthen their case.

Even as such struggles remain volatile and unresolved for the time being, national and state government don't seem to be taking any visible steps to recognise the deep discontent that is growing across the country today. Alongside aggressive attempts to suppress such struggles are increasing. A country with global dreams needs to pause and reconnect with its local rhythms. ■

*Kanchi Kohli works and writes on environment, forests, and biodiversity governance issues. In her writing, she seeks to explore the interface between industrialisation and its impacts on both local communities and ecosystems.*

# Ladakh's feminist SHGs

JIGMAT LHAMO

LADAKH breaks the pattern of shameful gender inequality that is spreading like a virus across India. This remote region continues to remain fortunately immune to atrocities against women and the unborn girl child. In contrast to the rest of India, the status of women is akin to a rainbow breaking the monotony of an arid landscape.

Your first step into this high altitude region will be greeted by the wide and candid smiles of Ladakhi women. They don't peep shyly from windows or from behind the veil. Instead they stand strong on their agricultural fields, with poise, self-respect and strength of character reflecting on their enigmatic faces, flaunting the strong cultural position they enjoy in their community.

Traditionally, the household was the focus of the economy in Ladakh, at the core of the informal sector spearheaded by women. Since this unit was always more important than the miniscule formal sector, it gave women respected status.

The opening up of the Ladakh region to the rest of India around 1974 disrupted the traditional economic, cultural and political characteristics of Ladakh's traditional culture. The community reacted by trying to protect its culture. And this need for conserving tradition was met by the birth of the Self-Help Group (SHG) movement. Numerous SHGs, run by women, are today active in the far flung interior villages of the region.

In Ladakh, a group of local women varying from six to 15 come together with two aims – to empower women and to strengthen indigenous culture and agriculture. Most of the women being housewives, complete their daily chores and then contribute to the group. They spin wool, knit woollen clothes and dye the woollen clothes in a traditional manner.

The farming season is the most laborious. Following the trend set by the older generation, everybody helps everybody on their agricultural fields. This community task becomes a priority for these hardworking women as the agricultural

produce generated forms the basis of many SHG products. Apricot jam and seabuckthorn juice are the highest income-generating products. Besides, decorative home items and local winter clothes are also manufactured by the SHGs and sold in Leh market. The income thereby generated is used for the benefit of the SHG members and society at large.



The most inspiring role the SHGs play is that of benefitting the entire community as well as the women.

The 'Shashi Self-Help Group' started by six women in Chashut village, is one inspiring example. Today, it has around 15 members actively involved in the group's activities. Its enthusiastic president, Amina Khatoon, says with great pride: "After working for five years in this village, we have achieved a lot of improvement in the lifestyle of our villagers. We have started spreading awareness on crucial issues like health and sanitation. We are working with various government agencies to improve the standards of the village."

The communities, with support from NGOs, are working to revive the ethnicity of this cold desert region. Efficiently working away in almost every village is the Women's Alliance of Ladakh, locally

known as 'Ama-Tsogspa' that was started in 1991. Members of the alliance are involved in income-generating activities like weaving, knitting, gardening and sewing. Elderly women actively participate in various social activities, thereby imparting their customary knowledge to the newer generation. They maintain a healthy coordination with their male counterparts in such fields.

However, the SHGs face certain setbacks. These are the remoteness of their villages, the lack of resources and raw material. Wool, pashmina, apricot and seabuckthorn are available locally but the products the SHGs produce are sold only in Ladakh and not sent to national markets. The quantity produced is therefore unable to create demand at the national level.

"I learnt to make handicrafts from my friend who lives in southern Ladakh. When I came back to my village after training, I contributed to the group with my skills. Later, I became an instructor here. But we don't get raw materials for making the handicraft items. We are always in search of alternative sources to get our raw materials here in Leh," said Zara Bano,

instructor at the Shashi Self-Help Group.

In February and March, workshops were organized by the Handicraft Department and by the Union Government's Ministry of Textiles in Leh, Ladakh. These workshops witnessed huge participation from the SHGs. They saw in them an opportunity to learn.

These SHGs have been agents of change in the lives of Ladakhis. If provided training and a platform to sell their products, they can bring about social reform in their society. Their history has always been like that of warriors – strong and committed. By improving their efficiency, their potential can be tapped. They have carved their faint footsteps in the snowy desert; a little support from the administration will indeed strengthen these footsteps for the betterment of future generations. ■

Charkha Feature

WHERE  
ARE WE  
BEING  
READ?

## Civil Society is going places...

Delhi, Dhaka, Trivandrum, Tennerife, Nadia, Nagpur, Kolkata, Ghaziabad, Washington, Geneva, Bhubaneshwar, Ladakh, Paris, Bangalore, Mumbai, Meerut, London, New York, Versailles, Kokrajahar, Vaddo Verla Canca, Goa, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Kerala, Belgaum, Dibang Valley, Shillong, Patna, Shimla, Ahmedabad, Panjim, Hyderabad, Singapore, Porto Alegre, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Lucknow, Surrey, Srinagar, Manali, Pune, Wellington, Peechi, Pondicherry...

**Civil Society**

READ US. WE READ YOU.

# Living

- Books
- Eco-tourism
- Film
- Theatre
- Ayurveda

## Karnataka's monsoon magic

*Myriad waterfalls burst into action*

**Susheela Nair**  
Bangalore

WHEN rain soaks the earth, Karnataka springs to life. Myriad waterfalls burst into action, hurtling down hilly tracts, shattering the silence of the forests. And the best time to view this torrent of sparkling waterfalls is the thundery monsoon.

Brace yourself for a wet and wild holiday.

The Cauvery river flowing across Karnataka abounds in wondrous waterfalls, inspiring poets with their magic. Not all falls are famous. There are many hidden beauties that appear only during the rainy season especially in hilly terrain. This bounteous flow of water makes even small falls look great.

The districts of Shimoga, Kodagu, Chikmagalur and Uttara Kannada have a rich mosaic of waterfalls since dozens of rivers originate from the Western Ghats.

Uttara Kannada district with 18 waterfalls is aptly named the land of waterfalls. West-flowing rivers gush through dense forests in its coastal region breaking into streams that meander over hilly tracts to end in a series of dramatic, plunging waterfalls.

The Unchalli Falls or Lushington Falls amidst the dense jungles of Uttara Kannada district are formed when the river Aghanashini falls down a rugged valley from a height of 116 metres with a thunderous deafening roar. The falls are popularly called 'Keppa Joga' in local language.

Tucked in the midst of thick forests close to Yellapur, Sathodi Falls and Lalguli Falls are a stunning sight. Sathodi is known as the 'mini Niagara Falls' of Uttara Kannada district. You have to climb over hillocks and hack through dense foliage to reach the edge of the falls. Don't miss the mesmerizing Magod Falls formed by the Bedthi river, 3 km from Magod village near Yellapur. The Bedthi river plunges 180 metres down a rocky valley in three leaps before landing in a stony ravine.



Jog Falls



Horseshoe shaped Balmuri Falls

The picturesque hill station of Kemmangundi is blessed with silvery cascades like the Kalhatti Falls where water gushes down 122 metres from Chandra Drona Hill over the top of a temple built into a narrow gap between the rocks. The sprightly Hebbe Falls cascades from a height of 250 ft in two stages to form the Dodda Hebbe (Big Falls) and the Chikka Hebbe (Small Falls). The pool formed by the falls is said to be infused with herbs, making a dip into these waters therapeutic. Deep inside the Kudremukh forest are the Hanuman Gundi Falls, which are best visited after the monsoon.

The most renowned Karnataka waterfalls are the Jog Falls of the Sharavathi river. Located on the border of Shimoga and Uttara Kannada districts, the wild waters of the Sharavathi hurtle down a dark precipice of 810 ft. in four distinct cascades known locally as Raja, Rani, Roarer and Rocket – to create the fifth highest cataract in Asia. The beauty of the Jog Falls is enhanced after the rains, when the environment around it is lush and the 810 ft. drop is a raging torrent. Sometimes thick mists in the valley hinder visibility. When the sluice gates of the Linganmakki Dam upstream are closed, it is possible to walk to the bottom of the gorge to experience the invigorating sting of its spray. The peaceful and pristine environs of the Jog Falls and the hamlet of Kargal close by are a popular destination for film locations.

South Karnataka abounds in innumerable waterfalls along the river Cauvery and her tributaries. The Abbey Falls, (Abbi in Kannada means falls) set amidst a private coffee and spice plantation near Madikeri is significant. A winding, cobbled path and tall trees entwined with pepper vines lead to the falls which gracefully cascade their way down steps to join the Cauvery.

Nestling just outside the Rajiv Gandhi National Park are the Iruppu Falls. Originating in the Brahmagiri Range, the falls plunge 170 ft. in two distinct stages and flow as Lakshmana Theertha (sacred river of Lakshmana). The incessant music of the falls and the silence of the adjacent densely wooded forest are spell binding.

Around 65 km east of Mysore in Mandya district is the island of Shivasamudram which abounds in scenic splendour. It is encircled by two branches of

the Cauvery which plummet from a height of 75 metres into a deep, rocky gorge with a deafening roar to form two picturesque falls, Barachukki and Gaganachukki. When the Cauvery is in spate, watching the river crash into a cloud of foaming spray can be a thrilling experience.

An interesting feature is that the visitor can savour the beauty of the waterfalls unhindered by the presence of a power station since it is located downstream, away from the falls. A commendable example of man's co-existence with nature! Harnessing the natural falls and the speed of its waters, Asia's first hydro-electric project was established in 1902 at the behest of Sir M. Visvesvaraya, engineer-cum-statesman from Mysore to feed power to the former Kolar Gold Fields.

These falls are worth a day trip during the monsoon when they are at their impressive best. You can see the water cascade over a wide area in a series of leaps. You can also trek to the bottom of the Barachukki Falls, take a dip in the deep pool formed by the falls or go on a coracle ride down the Cauvery. Equally impressive are Balamuri Falls, shaped like a horseshoe, in Mandya district.

Located on the outskirts of Bangalore, the Pearl Valley is formed by thin jets of water hurtling down from a height of 90 metres. The sun reflects on this spray making the water look like drops of pearls. Locally the streams are called Muthyala Madu (small, pearly water body). Overlooking these falls is a tiny shrine dedicated to Shiva, adding a religious aura to the place.

Equally appealing are the Chunchi Falls located 100 km south of Bangalore. Here the Arkavathi river plunges down a yawning chasm before creating a glorious spectacle of cascading water and flying spray. Further down, the river joins the Cauvery at Sangama. The lush countryside, the roar of gushing water and a stunning view combine to make this an ideal picnic spot.

**Travel Tips:** Since most of the falls are located in remote areas, accommodation and eateries are woefully lacking. Do ensure you carry snacks and water. The best time to visit these falls are during the monsoon or immediately after the monsoon (July to December). ■

# The fat rhino's kingdom

**Vivek S. Ghatani.**  
*Siliguri (West Bengal)*

THE squat statue of the Great Indian One Horned Rhino greets you at the entrance to the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary. This funny looking creature is the mascot of the sanctuary. It is an endangered species whose population has increased in recent years – a hugely successful effort. The sanctuary was established in 1941 to protect the One Horned Rhino who was then on the verge of extinction.

The Royal Bengal Tiger lives here too but doesn't enjoy the fat rhino's status. Also living in rhino land are wild elephants, deer, swamp deer, hog deer, wild pigs and bison. Some rare species like the hispid hare and the hog-badger are found in the sanctuary. If you are lucky you can even spot the elusive Bengal Florican.

Stretching over 216 sq. km, the Jaldapara Sanctuary in the Alipurduar region of North Bengal is a mosaic of woods, grasslands, perennial streams, sandy riverbanks and extensive belts of tall grass. The river Torsha and the river Malangi flow through this rainforest. The only way you can move inside is on the swaying back of an elephant.

"Jaldapara is one of the best sanctuaries in India because of its rich flora and fauna. The elephants are an added attraction," remarks a tour operator.

An adventurous elephant ride early morning will take you deep inside the grassland. The sight of rhinos in a muddy pond, a herd of elephants or deer sprinting across are thrilling experiences. A jeep safari inside the forest is organised on a regular basis.

The birds you can see here apart from the rare Bengal Florican are the Crested Eagle, Pallas' Fishing Eagle, Jungle fowl and lesser Pied Hornbill. Pythons, monitor lizards, cobras, geckos and about eight species of fresh water turtles have also been found here.

Totopara, a tribal village adjacent to the Jaldapara sanctuary is a major tourist attraction. Totopara is the only settlement for the Totos, one of the most endangered ethnic communities in the world. Their numbers have shrunk to a mere thousand. A lot of initiatives has been taken by the governmental and NGOs for them. To live with them and observe their traditional culture is a precious experience.

Hidden deep inside the Chilapata Forests are the ruins of the 1000-year-old Nal fort built in the 5th Century during the Gupta Empire. It is of



caption



caption



caption

great archeological significance. Leopards, snakes and other animals now romp all over this dilapidated site.

Accommodation for tourists is available in the Madarihat tourist bungalow or the Holong tourist lodge. Most visitors prefer the Holong lodge since it is inside the forest. The Madarihat bungalow is on the fringes of the forest. Since the number of rooms in Holong is very limited, availability is a big question mark.

So you have to book months in advance. Nature Beyond ([www.naturebeyond.co.in](http://www.naturebeyond.co.in)) provides booking here on a regular basis.

The West Bengal Forest Department maintains the sanctuary and organizes elephant rides and jeep safaris. "The best season to visit Jaldapara is from March to June as the weather during this time is moderate. In winter, cold winds make it difficult for the tourist," said Chinmoy Das, a travel agent in Siliguri.

From Jaldapara you can travel to one of the tea gardens to see how tea is manufactured. But don't

stop there. Continue your journey and visit the Buxa Tiger Reserve also in Alipurduar district.

The northern boundary of the Buxa Tiger Reserve runs along the international border with Bhutan. The Sinchula hill range lies on its northern side and Assam is on its eastern stretch. National Highway 31 C runs along the southern boundary of the reserve.

The reserve serves as an international corridor for elephant migration between India and Bhutan. To the southwest, the Chilapata forests form an elephant corridor to the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary. The reserve encompasses as many as eight forest types.

More than 300 species of trees, 250 species of shrubs, 400 species of herbs, nine species of cane, 10 species of bamboo, 150 species of orchids, 100 species of grass and 130 species of aquatic flora have been identified here. There are tall trees and ferns.

The West Bengal Forest Development Corporation has lodges at Rajabhatkhawa, Nimati,

Barobisha, Raidak, Raimatang, Bhutanghat, Buxaduar and Jayanti on the banks of the river Jayanthi. The lodges are in dense forests.

The most popular activity here is trekking. A five km trek from Santrabari to Buxaduar through dense forest leads you to the Buxaduar Forest Bungalow. You can rest your tired feet here. This trek is most favoured by tourists.

Another four km trek leads you to Rover's Point or the 'land of unknown birds' located at 4,500 ft. It is difficult to resist the lure of Rupam Valley in Bhutan, another 12 km from Rover's Point. You should take the plunge.

This journey is full of unknown adventures and excitement. There are breathtaking views of the Jayanti River Valley, the evergreen forest canopy and glimpses of rare animals, birds and colourful orchids.

Buxaduar to Jayanti is another popular trek. This 13 km trek passes through the dense forests of the Buxa Tiger Reserve. The music of the wilderness, the chirping of birds, the song of wild streams and the fragrance of nature will never allow you to feel the stress of a long trek.

The journey ends with a warm reception by an old priest at a stalactite cave called the Mahakal cave. It is difficult to enter this narrow, dark, damp cave but trying it might be another exciting activity. The downhill trek from here leads to Jayanti Forest Bungalow. Lying by the river-side surrounded by old Sal forests and hills, Jayanti is just the right place to stretch your weary legs. The cool breeze brushes away all exhaustion.

"Buxa is one of the oldest settlements in North Bengal. It is 24 km from Alipurduar and 180 km from Siliguri, well connected by road and rail. Several trek routes originate from Buxa," say tour operators here.

To get to the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary and its surrounding forests take a flight to Bagdogra Airport in Siliguri. There are direct flights from Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata. Taxis are available from the airport and cost around ₹7 per km.

The nearest railway is at Madarihat. A better option is the Jalpaiguri railway station which is connected to Delhi, Chennai and Kolkata. You can also travel by road or bus. From Siliguri to Alipurduar via Madarihat takes about four hours. ■

## FACT FILE

**Nearest airport:** Bagdogra

**Nearest railway station:** Alipurduar junction / New Alipurduar

**Nearest town:** Alipurduar

**By road:** NH 31 is the main highway. One can hire a car from Alipurduar.

**(Please note elephant rides in Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary are booked only on the spot)**

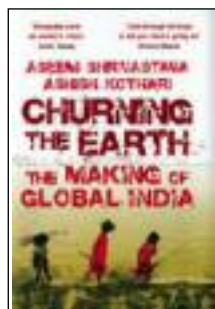


# Churning what we already know of our earth

*Nandan Maluste takes a close look at some serious concerns*

**T**HOMAS Robert Malthus framed the hypothesis two centuries ago. He argued that a growing human population would, in a foreseeable future, consume more than it could produce from the earth. The model proved flawed: productivity grew faster than consumption since Malthus. But the idea was recycled after the oil price spike of the early 1970s. The Club of Rome's Limits to Growth predicted that the earth's resources (especially fossil fuels) could not keep up with consumption (fueled by unchecked voracity of the rich, exploding numbers of the poor). We would begin to experience critical shortages by the end of the 20th century. This prediction, too, failed because resource consumption became more efficient, as did resource discovery, and population growth belied the pessimism of the seventies.

But, directionally, Malthus and the doomsayers of Rome seem right. In recent years, we have been



**CHURNING THE EARTH  
THE MAKING OF  
GLOBAL INDIA**

Aseem Shrivastava,  
Ashish Kothari  
Penguin/Viking  
₹ 699

forced to acknowledge ecological limits. All but a few diehards accept the finding of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (which won a Nobel) that the looming disaster is largely man made and could strike within the life time of

many reading this magazine. Even the Economist newspaper, which long propounded that market forces (fairly regulated) would balance supply with demand and produce technologies to solve crises including environment and poverty, recently ran a cover story on the melting polar caps. It pointed out that a complex of interacting factors may be taking us to a tipping point — apocalypse could occur suddenly, sooner than we might think.

So the big picture is well known. Technology, markets and an ideology of material consumption or greed (in part, tempered by compassion and altruism) has got humankind many gains over the last two centuries. The majority of the world's people have much longer life expectancy at birth, for example, than in the 18th century; the knowledge and cultural resources available on the internet would be unimaginable to anyone living when the Economist was founded mid 19th century; the lux-



uries afforded to upper middle class people (global travel, in home climate control, fresh food from around the world, etc) were probably beyond even the dreams of kings and emperors of bygone centuries. And yet, a seventh of the world's seven billion people have been left out. Of which many, especially in India, parts of Africa and Amazonia, live as their forebears did centuries ago – or worse, because the modern world despoils the water, vegetation, soil and air upon which their lives hang.

Endless growth, which might be succour for the poor and feed the greed of the rest is only possible if new technologies can be found, and quickly, to stretch (ideally, infinitely) the earth's resources. Otherwise, we need to redistribute wealth, income and prepare for low consumption future. This, or cataclysm, ecological as well as social. But history does not lend optimism for redistribution.

If the big picture is so known, what to look for in a new book is detail — presented well and credibly, perhaps with some new insights. Also, if possible, a way out of the chakravayuh. Disappointingly, the Preface says *Churning the Earth* targets an uninitiated reader.

Shrivastava & Kothari who deliver insights on the big picture and details in the small are highly commended by such renowned scholars and activists as Ashis Nandy, Jean Dreze, Madhav Gadgil, Aruna Roy and Mallika Sarabhai. They provide data on the panorama of issues that impact the environment and livelihoods in India. These include politics, policies, laws, administration, business, media, finance, inequality, global institutions, predatory global corporations. At root, of course, is a dominant ideology summarised in Deng Xiaoping's words, "To be rich is glorious."

Unfortunately, they also fail. Perhaps because they have chosen to cover such a vast canvas that, as they admit, they cannot have expertise over it all. I would have preferred they had stuck to what they know, produced a more reliable book.

Let's touch aspects of *Churning the Earth* that I do appreciate. To begin with, it well explains that everything is about everything else. When I first met Ashish Kothari in the last 1980s, I thought that the crucial environmental issue was deforestation. Vegetation converted carbon dioxide into oxygen, prevented run-off of water and soil, provided food and habitat for wildlife, and so on. So "all" that do-gooders like me needed to do was protect and plant trees. But planting trees requires land and water: every bit of which is claimed by some living thing; this results in issues of ethics (including between species), politics, livelihoods, and so on... I wish *Churning the Earth* was available three decades ago.

Secondly, the book does provide data points which may not be widely known. For example, that forest-rich and tribally populated Orissa has four dozen memoranda of understanding for iron and steel plants! (Perhaps they should be renamed memoranda of misunderstanding since implementation would devastate millions of already desperately poor people) And that Gujarat's economic

progress, over hyped in the last decade, has destroyed mangroves and other habitats.

So what are my main complaints? Firstly, with decades in business and finance, I find many errors in Shrivastava & Kothari's exposition of how business and finance have, through government, driven the rape of the earth and many of its denizens. These have been run selfishly, enhancing the power and wealth of the corporations, their managers, shareholders and sometimes cus-



**'Hundreds of truckloads of rations are being clandestinely sold to hoarders by officials of the CAPD,' a reliable official of the CAPD said.**

tomers. Further, the people concerned have not uniformly displayed probity or competence – since the fall of Enron in 2011, this has shown this too often. But details have to be right if we are to comprehend, then unmake an all pervasive system. In this the book is not too careful.

Here is just one example. The book again and again says that governments in India acted against domestic interests because of conditionalities imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (IFIs), through the late 1990s and beginning of the new millennium. In fact, on this

point, *Churning the Earth* reads like a political pamphlet, alleging without evidence or argument (both of which can be found) that the IFIs act at the behest of Transnational Corporations. In fact, the IFIs could only have dictated terms when they were the sole source of loans to India. For instance, around the crisis period of 1991, when the IMF bailed us out, or earlier when the World Bank group was the principal long term lender to projects such as the Narmada dams.

However, starting about 1994, FIIs poured money into the Indian stock markets and even foreign direct investment dwarfed borrowing from the IFIs. How then could IFIs "impose" policies on India? The short answer is, they could not. In support is that none of the financial regulators fully bought the "Washington Consensus", not the Reserve Bank (which has refused free float or full convertibility of the rupee), nor the Stock Exchange Board of India (which still limits the freedom of foreign investors, however effectively), nor the Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority (which has not supported higher foreign equity in Indian insurance companies).

Why then did many officials bleat about "conditionalities"? Because, of their own volition, they took up projects (for example, dams which the authors and I might protest) with borrowing from the World Bank group. Primarily because they bought into a development model which undervalued social and environmental costs. But corrupt motivations cannot always be ruled out.

Does this matter? The conditionalities applied any way... Yes, it matters. Because if one opposes such conditionalities, action depends how they came to be; if at the point of a gun, war may be needed. If Indian officials voluntarily had them imposed, the public needs to watch them more carefully and try to re-educate them.

My second major complaint about this book is that its blurb promises "ways out of the crisis..." But in the end, the authors admit the issue is too complex. They outline three possible scenarios:

- Business as usual
- Slow transition to sanity
- Rapid transition to sanity

They think the second alternative most likely. Fair enough, it is a difficult and complex crisis. But there are two issues:

If the tipping point is reached sooner than expected, a slow transition could be useless

Concerned persons are given no agency. We just have to watch and do what we can, without enlightenment from Shrivastava and Kothari

If so, I might just choose, as a tycoon on the Titanic reportedly did, to put on my best clothes, listen to my favourite music, sip some delightful beverage, and enjoy the sinking of the ship. Alternatively, I might hope, as Fareed Zakaria did in an address to this year's graduating class at Harvard, for technological breakthroughs that will prolong life as we know it. Shrivastava & Kothari believe the Third Law of Thermodynamics makes the latter impossible. It certainly promises the universe will dissolve into chaos – though not yet.

# Epic morality tale

SWATI CHOPRA

A deluded god, energy fields, a mind-created city, bubbles suspended in time and space, intuitive weapons and horses – Sangeeta Bahadur uses all these and more to weave a compelling tale in her first book, *Jaal*. This is also the first in a trilogy called 'Kaal', and introduces central characters and the universe in which their destinies will play out in the books to come.

The story is, at its core, a morality tale of the conflict between good and evil – oft-repeated yet one that rarely fails to capture our imagination. A cosmic being – Lord of Maya – turns rogue and is imprisoned by his divine siblings in a world of dreams to keep him from overturning the balance of the created universe. Many millennia later, he is beginning to awaken, aided by his human followers. Simultaneously, a Taarak (saviour) has been born and needs to be raised and groomed to face the epitome of evil in a future that will occur beyond this book.



**JAAL: BOOK I OF THE KAAL TRILOGY**

Sangeeta Bahadur  
Pan Macmillan

₹ 299

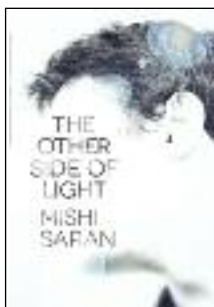
Epic confrontations between good and evil, whether it is in the Harry Potter books or in Spiderman and other superheroes' tales, requires a villain that is of a stature equal to the hero. Or, preferably greater, adding an edge of suspense to how the conflict eventually plays out. Bahadur achieves this feat by making the villain into an omnipresent and omniscient god, who might be debilitated for the moment, but whose awakening is heralded as the book closes.

The 'hero', on the other hand, is a mere boy of 15 when the book opens, tall and gangly but possessed of traits that point to unusual abilities. How he discovers his true identity as Devanam Priya, 'beloved of the gods', and is taught the fine points of using time-space and the energy of the Divine Feminine in war, along with the more conventional skills, is the terrain covered by this book.

Bahadur skilfully brings together elements from mythology, Vedic history and folklore to imagine a world that will resonate with the Indian reader much more readily than Pottermore or Twiverse. She relies on Sanskrit terminology to power the magic and mystery of her 'Kaal-verse', as also the metaphysics of Shakta Tantra and the philosophy of Vedanta. Her ability to weave insights about the nature of reality and truth impart a depth of understanding to the book that saves it from becoming a maudlin reproduction of well-loved epics, or a country cousin to other famous books in the genre of fantasy fiction.

*Jaal* ends, like good makers of serialised features know, on a note of suspense. The malevolent deity has arisen, and the young challenger has been groomed. What next? ■

## Life's twists and turns



**THE OTHER SIDE OF LIGHT**

Mishi Saran  
HarperCollins India

₹ 250

ing while covering the Bombay bombings of 1993 as a photojournalist.

Though the author confesses to never having lived in Delhi, she manages to convey a sense of what it was like to grow up in the city at a certain time in its history, through Asha and her gang of girls from college, whose lives are peripherally linked with hers and who appear at different stages in Asha's life. An almost heroic act, of going against her parents' wishes to study photography in a Swiss village, proves to be a turning point for Asha, and hands her a creative tool with which she will hitherto make sense of the world around her.

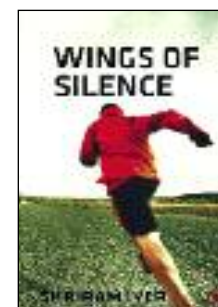
Her loss of the love of her life – the young and idealistic Kabir – to an anonymous bullet on a tea-estate in Assam, leads to some of the most poignantly written sections of the book. Grief is evoked so palpably that the reader cannot help but suffer through it with the protagonist. As she recovers from the shock, Asha finds employment with a news magazine, and one imagines Saran's own experience as a journalist helped her create the atmospherics of a pre-television media world.

Also adroitly done are descriptions of Asha's handling of her camera, her viewing the world through its lens, and finding her own unique narrative through its enabling agency. It is this alchemy between woman and camera that gives rise to some of the most interesting insights in the book.

Ultimately, Asha does find her redemption, and quite surprisingly, her bliss too. The inner growth and journey that makes it possible is described by the author with a finesse and fineness of touch that makes for meaningful, and not just entertaining, reading. ■

www.swatichopra.com

## Life's twists and turns



**WINGS OF SILENCE**

Shriram Iyer  
Silverfish/Westland

₹ 199

THIS is a tender story of love between Saurav Sethi, the apple of his father's eye and his elder brother, Raj, hearing impaired, awkward and an embarrassment for his father.

The father, a tough, blustering army man, ignores Raj and humiliates him in every way. For smart Saurav, the world is at his feet. His brother doesn't occupy his mind space very much. But Raj sinks into depression. He nurses quiet ambitions of running a marathon at the Olympics.

Saurav is a promising tennis star. But his girlfriend senses Raj's despair and shares her fears with Saurav who decides to help Raj fulfill his ambition. A feisty aunt who was blacklisted by the family step in during troubled times.

Will they succeed?

This is a gentle, touching story with a nice ending. It has a good pace and doesn't bore the reader. ■



caption

# How Malana rules itself

*BOM is a film about village democracy*

**Kavita Charanji**  
Shimla (HP)

AMLAN Datta first heard of Malana village in Himachal Pradesh's Kulu Valley when he was a student at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune from 1994 to 1996.

This ancient village, he was told, was world famous for its cannabis, known as Malana crème, its distinctive democracy, beautiful women and reticent people. Datta got very curious. He wanted to know more.

Datta became an independent filmmaker in 1997. But it took him 10 long years to finally get to Malana. An initial attempt in 2006, while he was holidaying in Himachal with his wife, failed. Locals warned him to keep off Malana as people "disappeared there". What's more the roads were cut off by snow.

Finally, in 2007 while on a shooting assignment with the Election Commission (EC) in Himachal, he came to Malana with the EC team. And he stayed.

Datta's fascination with Malana has culminated in a two-hour documentary titled, "BOM/One Day Ahead of Democracy". The film was judged the Best Ethnographic Film at the 59th Indian National Film Awards.

The controversial film was screened recently in Shimla's historic Gaiety Theatre. The viewers were sparse and the film's detractors many but Datta was unfazed. He is confident that his "well researched" film will slowly make waves in



caption

Himachal and encourage debate and discussion in other parts of the country. True, films have been made on Malana before, but BOM, says Datta confidently, is a cut above the rest.

To start with there is its title, BOM. "In Indian philosophy the universe is made up of five basic elements – Kshiti (earth), Aap (water), Tej (energy), Marut (air) and Bom. Bom stands for the celestial void where it all ends and also the universal unity from where creation begins. Bom is also the nad (sound) to address Lord Shiva whom we see as the creator and the destroyer of the universe. Bom for me represents a cycle from celestial void to eternal unity. Bom also relates to cannabis. Phonetically, it creates curiosity. Consider it to be an intuitive decision of a filmmaker," says the Datta who is based in Kolkata and has spent four years filming BOM.

The subject of the film too is unusual. "The soul of the film is democracy and its heart is cannabis," explains Datta. The villagers speak of their unique model of democracy that dates back thousands of years. Malana is considered to be the oldest democracy in the world with a well-organised parliamentary system.

Villagers speak frankly to Datta about what they believe is an ideal system of governance. Malana has a village council or 'God's Court' that takes decisions unanimously. The film highlights the working of the council, which has an Upper Court and a Lower House akin to a bicameral Parliament. The 12-member Upper Court has four permanent members – the head priest who presides over the court, a second priest, a 'god's' minister and his deputy. The other eight are chosen through consensus. The Lower House comprises the head of each family in the village.

"The council members are chosen by the Malana villagers through a process of unanimous selection not through an election," says Datta. "All decisions are taken unanimously. Every individual's opinion is considered, unlike the present form of democracy that leads to a dictatorship of the majority. And the secret of their civilisation is trust, the democracy of trust."

The cornerstone of the film is the relationship of mutual trust that Datta was able to build with the simple villagers of Malana. Soon after he arrived he shot the first ever video in the village of a local wedding. That endeared him to the villagers. He was warmly accepted into the community. Datta has acquired a godmother and a godbrother, Hemraj. He has become part of a family of five brothers and four sisters with a room for himself in their house. Hemraj and Shanta whose wedding video he filmed became the protagonists for his film.

With acceptance came involvement. "I shared their emotions. Their pain became mine, my voice theirs. Now my film is their story," says Datta.

BOM is the story of an idyllic village now in transition, an ancient civilisation threatened by modern day democracy. The changes are apparent all around – cannabis, an integral part of the villagers' lives is now illegal, goat pastures are being replaced by a dam and the region's beautiful mountains are being gashed by roads.

Cannabis was traditionally used to produce footwear and as a medicine. But it has now become a lucrative business for the "foreign drug mafia" and subsequently for "the local mafia and political strongmen", says Datta.

The villagers tell him that experiments with alternative crops such as peas and kidney beans have failed miserably. In his film through the voices of locals and political personalities like Virbhadr Singh, Datta makes a strong case for the decriminalisation of cannabis.

Of course puritans would balk at scenes showing intoxicated Malana men blithely smoking cannabis or young children rubbing cannabis so that it turns into the world famous 'Malana crème'.

But ultimately, BOM is an anthropological film and there lies its strength. National recognition for the film is a victory not just for Datta but for the simple people of Malana. ■

# Healing cracked feet

Dr G. G. GANGADHARAN

## GREEN CURES



It is our feet that bear most of our body weight. Yet they get the least attention. Feet that are well protected promise you a long and healthy life as the nerve endings, which make a U-turn at the feet are responsible for your energy balance. In chronic diabetics these nerve endings get inflamed and become so soft that the affected person is unable to keep his leg on the floor, leave alone stand on it.

Cracked feet is a common trait and predominantly seen in Vata prakruti people. Walking barefoot on rough surfaces or excessive exposure of bare feet to the sun, wind or water causes heels and soles to crack, apart from aggravating the Pitta and Vata doshas that cause dryness and roughness of the feet.

We begin taking care of our feet only when these cracks cut deep and start bleeding. And then we try to find quick-fix solutions through soothing gels or creams.

**Remedies:** • Jeevanthyadi Yamakam • Madanadi Lepa: Available in Ayurvedic shops, both are ideal applications for cracked feet.

**Home remedies:** • Mix one teaspoon of sesame oil in three tablespoons of beeswax. Warm the mix a little and apply on the affected areas.

- Use warm sesame oil or ghee on cracked feet.
- Apply a mixture of 1 teaspoon of mango tree sap and 1 tablespoon of water to the broken skin.
- A daily routine of cleaning and moisturizing will help. Before going to bed, soak your feet in warm soapy water for 15 minutes. Wash and dry. Then, take one teaspoon of Vaseline. Add the juice of one lemon to it. Rub this mixture into the cracked heels and other areas of the feet till it is thoroughly absorbed.
- A mixture of glycerine and rosewater too, if applied regularly, helps to soothe and cure cracked feet.
- After washing feet thoroughly, coat the cracks with hydrogenated vegetable oil. Wear thick socks and keep overnight. Repeat the treatment for a few days. It fetches rewarding results.
- Apply the pulp of ripe banana on the cracks. Rinse after 10 minutes.
- Blend glycerine and rose water and apply on cracked feet to soothe and heal the fissures.
- Combine the juice of one slice or one quarter of a lemon, one-fourth cup of milk, one-fourth cup of water, 2 tablespoons of olive oil and a pinch of cinnamon. Pour the mixture into a basin and soak your feet in it. This alleviates dryness, softens feet and heals the cracks.
- Add chopped parsley into a basin of water and soak your feet in it. This kills bacteria, improves blood circulation and cures cracked feet.
- Boil 5 litres of water and let it cool. Add 2 or 3 drops of lavender oil and a cup of Epsom salt to the water and soak your feet in it. This softens feet and helps to get rid of the cracks.
- Blend melted paraffin and mustard oil and apply on feet.
- Scrape feet with pumice stone. This removes scales and exfoliates the feet making them soft and supple.

The above home remedies are helpful if the problem is at the initial stages. But for severe cases, it is better to consult a physician who may prescribe the following treatments.

**Snehapana:** This is an unction (lubrication by oil massage etc.) treatment. The affected parts are anointed with unctuous substance like beeswax and so on. Since Vata is predominant in cracks, it causes severe roughness. The cracked skin can be glued back to its normal contour with the application of unctuous (lubricants) substances which act as binders.

**Svedana:** Svedana is the final treatment. The feet are fomented – either by washing with warm, salted water for 20 minutes or by application of warm poultice/pastes) – for smooth binding, thereby aiding the absorption of the applied medicine.

The feet are then immersed in warm, salted water for about 15 minutes and the dead skin and dirt are removed by scrubbing. Then the feet are wiped with a soft towel and the unctuous substance or the medicine is applied.

**Daily regime:** Daily Padabhyanga or oil massage of the feet with warm salted gingelly oil is a very good method of preventing cracked feet.

Eat food that is easily digestible, unctuous and Vata alleviating like warm rice with ghee and plenty of vegetables, fruits and nuts. Such foods help to balance Vata in the body.

We should take care of our feet as much as we take care of our head and eyes. Feet bear the weight of our body. They tread on dirt to keep the rest of the body hygienic. The age-old Indian practice of washing your feet before entering the house makes a lot of sense. Take good care of your feet – from heel to sole to the tip of your toes. ■

vaidya.ganga@frlht.org

## WONDER PLANT

# Versatile Vacha

In many Indian homes, Vacha or the 'Sweet Flag' plant is given with honey in minute quantities to infants on the 11th and 21st day of their birth. It is believed that this practice makes the child mentally agile and talkative.

Vacha is also extensively used in Ayurveda and other traditional systems of medicine for mother and child care due to its ability to enhance intellect. It acts as an anti-pyretic, as an immuno-modulator and has nerve tonic actions. It increases memory and controls hyperactivity in children.

Sweet flag has a rich history of medicinal use in Indian and Chinese cultures. It was also widely traded for its aromatic properties and has been used as a substitute for ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg in several parts of the globe. This suggests the pleasantness of the plant's aromatic constituents and its positive medicinal attributes.

**Location:** Vacha or *Acorus Calamus* is a semi-aquatic plant found in temperate and sub-temperate regions. It is a native of eastern countries and is indigenous to marshes in the mountains of India. It is cultivated throughout the country up to an altitude of about 2,200 metres. Vacha is also found in the marshy tracts of Kashmir, Sirmour in Himachal Pradesh and in parts of Manipur and the Naga Hills. It is regularly cultivated in the Koratgere taluk of Karnataka.



**Planting:** Although Vacha looks like a grass it isn't. The herb has its own family that is closely related to aroids. But gardeners can use it as an ornamental grass in a shady or partly sunny area with average to high soil moisture.

Vacha grows best near a pond or as part of an aquatic garden. It grows luxuriously in clay soil, under shady sunlight with adequate water supply. Above the ground, its leaves arise from underground rhizomes which grow up to 45 to 180 cm long. Its aromatic leaves, beautiful small, light brown flowers and their extensive medicinal applications are value addition to your garden.

Vacha was initially distributed from its native range through trade and commerce. The rhizome was subsequently cultivated and the plant spread by vegetative means. Vacha can be grown in your garden by vegetative means through rhizomes. The ideal months are from February to May. A sprouting percentage of 80 to 100 per cent is easily attainable. Flowering occurs from July to September.

**Properties:** Vacha has many uses apart from being an intellect enhancer and immuno-mod-



ulator. In high doses, it induces vomiting. It also stimulates the nervous system.

This herb works as a carminative. It helps those suffering from habitual constipation, diarrhea, flatulence, dyspepsia, gastritis and colic pain. It is a good remedy for severe sore throat, earache, laryngitis, nasal congestion, sinusitis, cough and asthma. Vacha is also used for epilepsy, inflammation, arthritis, neuralgia, rheumatism and nervous affectations, dysmenorrhea, shock, gum diseases, wounds and ulcers.

Some classic Ayurvedic formulation like Sarswatarishta and Sarswata churna, where Vacha is used as the chief ingredient, promote memory and help in the treatment of psychiatric problems.

## Self-help

**For children:** Dried rhizome powder with honey is given to enhance intellect, memory and speech and to prevent fever and pain during teething. Vacha powdered and Yastimadhu (licorice) with honey treats fever, cough and congestion in the chest. An infusion of Vacha rhizome and jeera (cumin seeds) is useful in alleviating colic pain in children.

**For stomach complaints:** Vacha relieves flatulence, colic pain and increasing appetite. The dried rhizome is burnt and mixed with bland oil such as refined coconut oil or a poultice of the rhizome can be applied on the abdomen for stomach complaints. For chronic dysentery, the rhizome infusion can help effectively.

**For common cold:** A small piece of the rhizome is roasted and powdered. A pinch of this powder is mixed with honey and consumed. If the same condition occurs in infants, the paste of Vacha is mixed with breast milk and placed on the child's tongue.

**For fits or epilepsy:** The rhizome is prepared as an amulet and tied to the body of the child preferably the waist.

**Immunity enhancer:** Grind a handful of Vacha leaves and mix 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder to the paste. Apply the paste on the child's body and bathe the child after half an hour to increase immunity.

**For sore throat:** Cover rhizomes with water and boil for 10 minutes. Pour out the water, add fresh water and boil again. Repeat this twice with fresh water each time. Stir 4 cups of sugar into 4 cups of water until dissolved. Add the Vacha and simmer slowly for 10 minutes.

## LOOK GOOD

### Memory power

**Y**OU can improve your memory through memory exercises, healthy eating, physical fitness, stress reduction and brain tonics.

Memory is a process which includes the power of acquisition, retention and recollection. Generally, it is the elderly who face problems related to loss of memory. But children too want a sharp memory to cope with the present education system. Though there are various memory boosting drinks and medicines available in the market, how safe and effective they really are is questionable. Instead of consuming such medicines, if memory-boosting ingredients are included in foods prepared in the kitchen, they will serve the same purpose in a much more effective and safe manner.

#### Boosters:

- You can make Bacopa monnieri (brahmi) tea by soaking brahmi in hot, boiling water. Steep for some time, filter and drink when cold on an empty stomach daily.
- You can also make a chutney of centella asiatica (Manduka parni) leaves. Taking two teaspoonfuls of this leaf juice everyday will be beneficial.
- Soak 4 or 5 Prunus amygdalus (badam) in

water overnight. In the morning remove the skin, grind and then boil the badams in 200 ml of milk. Add a teaspoonful of ghee (clarified butter) and sugar to taste and drink. Consume every day for about a month.

- One teaspoon of Asparagus recemosus (satavari) root powder taken with milk everyday works as an effective memory enhancer.
- Grind 3 or 4 pieces of Piper nigrum (black pepper) and make a paste in a teaspoon of honey. Consume this daily to help improve memory.
- About quarter teaspoon of Cinnamomum Zeylanicum (cinnamon) powder can be mixed with honey and taken every day. Also, cinnamon powder can be consumed in tea or sprinkled over fruits
- Halwa made with pumpkin pulp, ghee, sugar and dry fruits is good for memory.
- A handful of pumpkin seeds consumed every day will give you a daily dose of zinc that will enhance your memory and thinking skills
- The juice of the leaves of Tinospora cordifolia (Guduchi), crushed and extracted, if given regularly will boost memory. ■

*Dr. Shreelatha S, Clinical Research Associate- IAIM*

## ORGANIC CHEF

### Porridge & dosa



#### RICE AND GREEN GRAM

##### Ingredients:

Rice: 1 cup  
Green gram  
Water: 6 cups  
Ginger chopped: ½ tsp  
Asafetida and salt

**Method:** Wash rice and green gram thoroughly. Add ginger, asafetida and salt to it. Mix well. Now add water and cook over a moderate flame till rice and green gram become soft and the water evaporates. Keep stirring in between.

**Benefits:** It is tasty and enhances strength.

**Contra-indications:** Not suitable for those with poor appetite.



#### RICE-CUCUMBER DOSA

##### Ingredients:

Cucumber: Medium size  
Type: Cucumis sativa, the large variety with yellow skin  
Rice: 250 gm  
Salt: To taste

**Method:** Wash the rice properly. Peel the cucumber and then grate it. Put inside a grinder and make a batter of rice and grated cucumber. No need to add water to grind since cucumber contains a lot of moisture. Add salt to taste. Leave overnight. Now the batter is ready. You can make dosas for breakfast. ■

*Dr. Jayanthi S, Research Associate, I-AIM*

## PRODUCTS

LAKSHMAN ANAND

### GREEN STYLE

LOCATED amidst the anarchic medley of fashionable shops in Delhi's ethnic Hauz Khas Village is Green the Gap. This little outlet sells recycled products made by Swechha, an NGO. You can browse at leisure.

Designs are smart, young and grunge – perfect for college wear. Look out for sling bags made from old rubber tyres and used fabrics. The sturdy rexin straps add to the durability of the product. These eye catching bags will make your pals green with envy. The bags cost just between ₹600 to ₹800.

Since you have a smart bag, you won't want an awkward wallet to play spoilsport. There are attractive wallets here made from rice sack bags ornamented by old juice tetra packs. Looks unique and young and prices are in the range of ₹350 to ₹450. Printed flower vases made from old wine bottles, floor mats from old rubber tyres and funky T-shirts are also great picks.

Contact: Green the Gap, 24/3  
Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi  
Email: [swechhaindia@gmail.com](mailto:swechhaindia@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.swechha.in](http://www.swechha.in)



### SUNNY MOBILE

GOING on a trek to dark jungles? Camping? Worry not. Light up your life with Dlight's solar light cum mobile charger. Always be in touch with friends and family. This neat product, called S250, illuminates any room as much as a three or five watt incandescent lamp. Since S250 gets its energy from the sun, it is up to five times more energy efficient. It provides 10 times more light than a kerosene lamp. The light can be set according to your needs – high, medium or low. At medium you get six full hours of light.

Moreover, S250 charges the most popular phones on the market whether Nokia, Samsung or Motorola. Pin connectors for popular mobiles are included. If your phone is a rare one, you can buy the connector separately. Phone charge time is just one hour.

S250 is reasonable priced. Light and easy to carry, it bridges the rural-urban divide – perfect for a village hut or an urban apartment stuck in the dark.

Contact: CL House, T-95 Fourth Floor,  
Gautam Nagar, New Delhi-110049  
Phone: 011-43156700  
Email: [dlight-india@dlightdesign.com](mailto:dlight-india@dlightdesign.com)



## *Changing Lives*



### General health care in rural villages by SST

Mrs. Nagama, 70 yrs, a poor widow from Padavedu, has been suffering from headache for months together. Whenever she suffered an episode of headache she was almost blinded, accompanied with vomiting, she used to isolate herself for hours together not able to do any other activities.

Left to fend for herself, she could not find a guardian to take her to any Government hospital, since she had to travel for more than 20 kms, let alone meet the expense of the traveling, She was anguished and helpless. She came to know from some SHG members of the village about the TVS-SST's sub centre in the close vicinity

A routine check up at the hospital revealed that she was

suffering from Hypertension. All other parameters were normal. She was first given a brief account of the nature of her illness and advised about DASH (Dieting Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, and prescribed anti hypertensive.

On following a strict dietary regime (cutting down of salt, intake of fatty foods and increasing the intake of fresh vegetables), and medication, Mrs. Nagama has been relieved of her headache. Now she is full of life. She is continually getting antihypertensive drugs from TVS SST hospital every fortnight. In case she hasn't turn up for her routine check up, SHG members in her local area are alerted by SST. They help her to come for treatment regularly.

**SRINIVASAN SERVICES TRUST  
(CSR Arm of  
TVS Motor Company)**

**TVS MOTOR COMPANY**  
Post Box No. 4, Harita, Hosur  
Tamil Nadu, Pin: 635109  
Ph: 04344-276780 Fax: 04344-276878  
URL: [www.tvsmotor.co.in](http://www.tvsmotor.co.in)



## WHY DID WE ENCOURAGE THIS TRIBAL WOMAN TO REPLACE HER SARI?

Because, unskilled women employees like Asha Hansda are trained to operate heavy vehicles and machinery under Tata Steel's Tejaswini programme.

Because we believe gender should never be a reason not to be.

Because, for us, it doesn't matter where she comes from, but where she can reach.

Because she is one of our own.

Because we can't fly if she crawls.

Because we started thinking of ways to better her life over a hundred years ago.

Because it's not just a company policy, it's an unwavering belief.

Because, each time she confidently smiles, our belief finds strength.

Because however strong our steel may be, our values remain stronger.

# TATA STEEL

Values stronger than steel



**Asha Hansda**  
Beneficiary, Tejaswini Project