

Civil Society

JACKFRUIT BUSINESS



How Sri Lanka grew a thriving agro-industry



'SHANGHAI IS A FOOT IN THE DOOR'

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JACKFRUIT BUSINESS

Sri Lanka has raised a thriving agro-industry in jackfruit by training vendors, housewives and entrepreneurs in processing technologies. They now make a range of jackfruit products.

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Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

The jackfruit solution

FOR 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.

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

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

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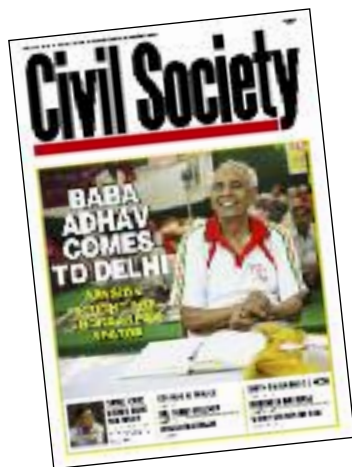


IN THE LIGHT

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 Dibakar Banerjee says his films are 'With *Shanghai* we have got a

Saibal Chatterjee
New Delhi

ON the face of it, writer-director Dibakar Banerjee's *Shanghai*, his fourth feature, is a genre film, a dark political thriller set in a fictional small town called Bharat Nagar. But the subdued thrills it provides are only incidental to its larger purpose – probing the grave anomalies inherent in India's current urban redevelopment model.

Shanghai marks another important step for a new kind of Mumbai cinema that confronts socio-political concerns and weaves stories around real issues of justice and equity facing the nation in an era of rapid globalization.

Shanghai has been adapted from *Z*, a celebrated novel by Greek writer Vassilis Vassilikos, which also yielded the classic 1969 Costa-Gavras thriller of the same name.

Banerjee's film opens with the killing of an activist who is leading a campaign against a proposed business park that threatens to displace people and the investigation into the reasons behind this heinous act.

The inquiry by an upright IAS officer is sought to be scuttled by powerful political forces and big business interests. The cat-and-mouse game that ensues exposes the darkness that lies at the heart of a system loaded against the marginalized and dispossessed.

Dibakar Banerjee talked to *Civil Society* about his film and his own code for cinema.

Would you agree that it is easier today to make and release films set in a socio-political context?

I don't think it is a phenomenon confined to only one kind of cinema. Whether it is *Rowdy Rathore*, *Dabangg* and *Singham* or *3 Idiots* and the *Munnabhai* films, anybody who makes a film reflects contemporary reality. There can be no film that does not spring from the reality of the times. Except screwball comedies, every film in some way reflects social and political reality.

So what is it that separates your kind of cinema from out and out commercial films?

The only thing that separates one kind of cinema from another is the treatment; it is the code that a filmmaker uses to tell his story, to get his point across. India is a highly stratified and hierarchical society. Some films are made for the consumption of the underprivileged segments of the country – these films employ their own codes and idioms to communicate and connect with the target audience. What strata of society a filmmaker speaks to is a choice he makes either consciously or unconsciously. In my case, it is wholly unconscious.

So the choices you make as a filmmaker are com-

pletely unconscious.

Yes, indeed. As I've already said, we get fooled by the treatment into believing that a particular film is political, and another one isn't. The treatment of a film differs; the context essentially remains the same. The script and treatment of *Shanghai* comes unconsciously from what I like and want to see. It comes from within me. It is the kind of film that I want to watch.

Are you saying, then, that you choose to make films that you want to see and simply hope that the audience will like your film?

That's a rather expensive means to make a film. You indeed hope that enough people would want to see the film you make. The trick is to micro-budget, work smart, and use songs to market the film. I make films for an urban consciousness, for

the youth segment, for corporate sector couples, for yuppie viewers, call them what you will. They are the people *Shanghai* is targeted at.

Shanghai does not follow the standard narrative trajectory of a Hindi film. For instance, the film's male protagonist, bureaucrat T.A. Krishnan, played by Abhay Deol, does not revolt against the system and opt out. He stays inside and fights in his own understated way.

The film isn't meant to be a joyride. It doesn't give the audience pocket-sized solutions to carry home with them and feel good about how the film ends. It is a sobering, not uplifting film. It has a huge visceral impact, an emotional impact, but it does not provide any pat solutions.

Even in the scene in which Jogi, the videographer played by Emraan Hashmi, is pursued by political goons, you refrain from turning it into an action set piece, an explosive chase sequence. Doesn't that thwart the expectations of the audience?

Yes, many people have complained that nothing much happens in *Shanghai*. Jogi is on the run. He is desperate to get the CD across to Krishnan. He wants the truth (behind the killing of an activist who is opposed to an urban redevelopment project) to come out. His sense of urgency is conveyed but the chase isn't extended beyond a point. I wanted to avoid anything that could load the film with additional baggage and rob it of its immediate visceral impact.

How is *Shanghai* doing at the box office?

It broke even on Tuesday (the fifth day after its release). It is making money. It won't obviously be a Rs 100-crore blockbuster. It isn't designed to be one. *Shanghai* is aimed at city audiences. It certainly isn't going to work in the smaller towns.

But isn't *Shanghai* essentially about a small town that has big city aspirations?

Yes, Bharat Nagar is a small town. It is like, say, Bareilly, a rapidly growing small town.

Where exactly was *Shanghai* filmed?

It was shot in the representative Indian small towns of Latur and Baramati. The two towns are the home bases of two major Maharashtra politicians (Vilasrao Deshmukh and Sharad Pawar respectively).

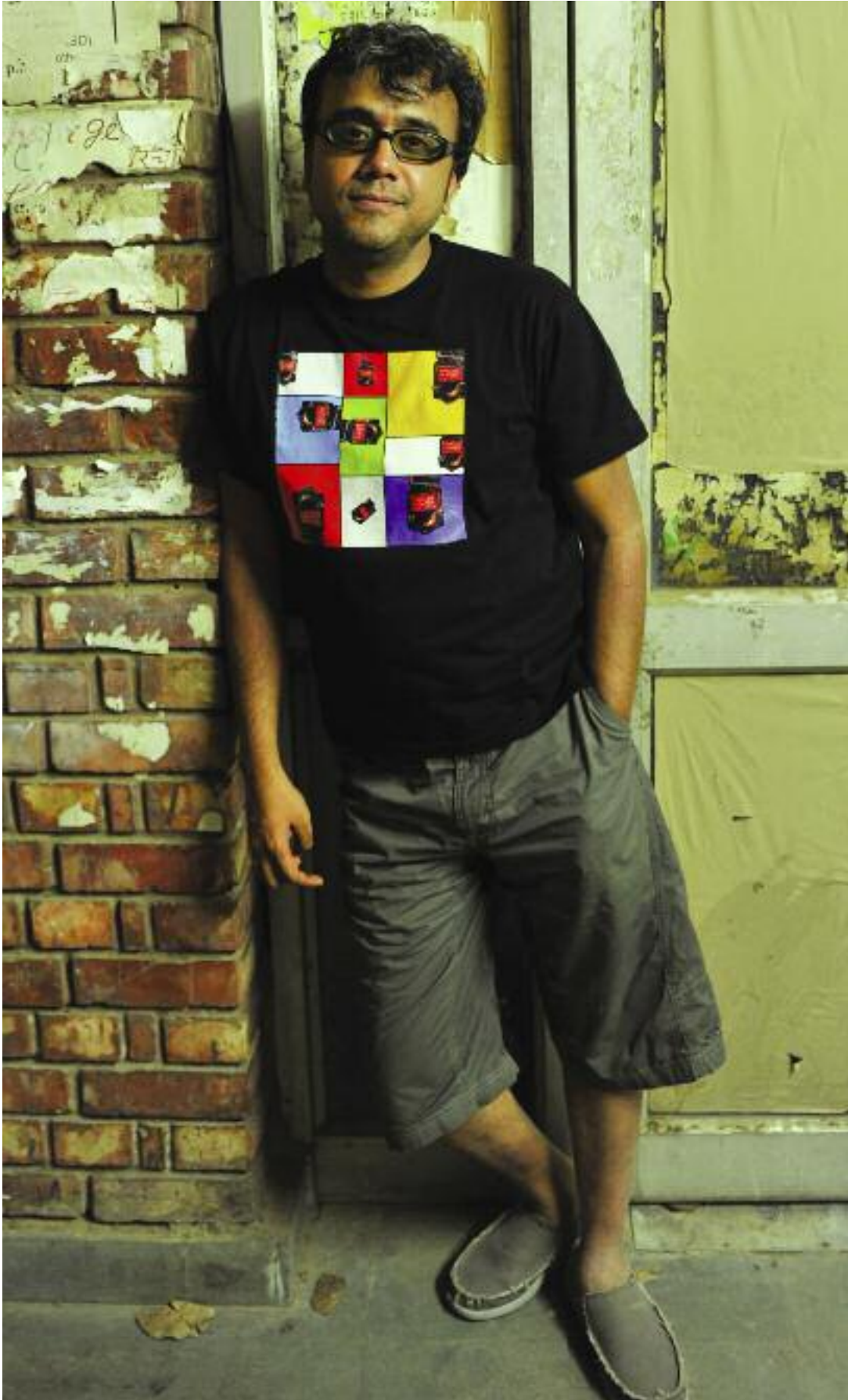
Has the audience for your kind of cinema grown in recent years?

I wouldn't lay my bet on that. Yes, audiences have become more aware of films like these. But it is the enthusiasm of the makers more than anything else that is driving this trend. I don't think the audience would miss *Shanghai* if it wasn't made. But the audience is more receptive to such films when they actually hit the theatres.



'Films employ their own codes and idioms to communicate and connect with the target audience. What strata of society a filmmaker speaks to is a choice he makes.'

for an urban consciousness foot in the door'



Dibakar Banerjee

Has the success of *Shanghai* changed anything for you?

We've got one in. The damage that *Shanghai* has done will stay for a long time. To be honest, I have a cheap sense of elation. *Shanghai* is the mosquito in the room that refuses to be swatted. It will sting, leave a mark and force you to scratch the affected spot. Nobody really wants the mosquito around. You want to eliminate it, but it is here to stay. We have got a foot in the door. How much and how quickly the door will open is difficult to say.

Have you received offers to make another film like *Shanghai*?

Oh yes, I've been getting calls from the very studios that bankroll the big star-driven blockbusters, from totally entrenched commercial film producers. It's not just *Shanghai*. I've been asked to make sequels to my earlier films, too – *Khosla Ka Ghosla*, *Oye Lucky Lucky Oye*, even *Love Sex Aur Dhokha*. The one crucial difference between the eras of Satyajit Ray and Shyam Benegal and the present times is that the money for our films comes from the same mainstream funding sources that back films like *Rowdy Rathore*.

'*Shanghai* is the mosquito in the room that refuses to be swatted. It will sting, leave a mark and force you to scratch the affected spot.'

What kept you from biting the bait?

I cannot make the same film twice. It's boredom that prevents me from making sequels. If I can earn more money by working on new themes than by attempting sequels, why would I want to repeat myself?

Your cinematographer is Greek. How did your partnership with Nikos Andritsakis begin and what did he bring to the table for *Shanghai*?

Nikos was in Mumbai shooting music videos and commercials. For *Love Sex Aur Dhokha*, I needed a particular hurriedly shot video-like texture. Nikos had experience in digital shooting. He gave *LSD* its feel. We hit it off instantly. We wanted *Shanghai* to be an immersive experience, not a two-dimensional one. We wanted to get the camera inside the action. We wanted to make the audience feel that they weren't merely watching from outside but were a part of the action. So we choreographed the camera movements through pans and tracks with minimal cuts. An average Hindi film has 4,000 cuts. *Shanghai* has between 1,000 and 1,200 cuts and yet it has pace.

What, in the ultimate analysis, is the principal strength of *Shanghai*?

The film certainly isn't perfect. It has mistakes. Nobody knows that better than I do. But when people come out of the theatre, most of them are thinking at least for sometime about what they have just seen. *Shanghai* forces introspection. ■

Jarawa buffer zone law is now in force

Zubair Ahmed
Port Blair

FIVE months after the infamous Jarawa video surfaced causing a national uproar, the Union Government has finally acted by approving amendments to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, (ANPATR), 1956.

The infamous video story, broken by an international newspaper, featured scantily clad Jarawa tribal women allegedly dancing for tourists in return for food and money.

The amendments in the ANPATR now create a five kilometre Buffer Zone around the Jarawa tribal settlement in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Those violating government norms for this area would be liable for imprisonment up to seven years.

The regulation also imposes tough penal provisions to deter unauthorized entry, photography, videography, hunting, use of alcohol, inflammable material or biological germs, or even advertisements to attract tourists into the Buffer Zone. Any such violation can attract a prison sentence of three to seven years and a fine of up to ₹10,000.

This step seems to have received wide acceptability. Such regulation, it is felt, will prevent a recurrence of embarrassing incidents such as the Jarawa video. But the amendments are being resented by non-tribal settlers, living in the marked area who fear abuse of such laws.

Every since discussions on the proposed amendments began, the settlers have been spending sleepless nights fretting over the implications of such changes. The issue of the proposed Buffer Zone always took centre stage during meetings organized by the administration.

Soon after the Union Cabinet cleared the proposal, the administration issued a clarification saying that the amendments will in no way affect the peaceful co-existence and the day-to-day activities of villagers settled in the vicinity of the Buffer Zone. The law enforcing authorities have been instructed to be very careful before registering any criminal case so that no innocent settler is harassed. However, the attempts of the administration to convince the general public have not satisfied the settlers.

In 2007, the decision of the Administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a Union Territory, to declare a five-km Buffer Zone around the Jarawa Tribal Reserve in South and Middle Andaman, closing all tourism and commercial activities, was challenged in court. The Calcutta High Court dismissed the notification on the ground that the principal regulation only permitted such notifications for 'reserved areas' and the Regulation had no reference to 'buffer zones'.

But now with the Union Government approving the Buffer Zone, the possibility of the

Supreme Court accepting the new amendments is high. If approved this will alter the lives of thousands of non-tribal islanders living in 31 revenue villages settled by the same Administration shortly after India's Independence in 1947.

The problem lies essentially in the demarcation of the Buffer Zone. Of these 31 villages, there are some that have never witnessed any presence or visit by the Jarawas but fall within the demarcated area. They will also be required to follow the same Regulation. "We are worried about our village. There is a creek separating us from the Jarawa Tribal Reserve. But the Jarawas have never visited our village. Without properly marked boundaries, there are chances of inadvertent harassment," said Kumar, pradhan of Shoal Bay Panchayat.

"As highlighted everywhere the motivation behind the amendments were not very honest," says Debkumar Bhadra, a blogger from the islands. "The point is that the islands have been populated by the Government of India under various colonization and rehabilitation schemes starting from 1949, that is, well before enactment of the original ANPATR in 1956. So it is obvious that any amendment to the ANPATR should have kept in mind the presence of islanders, their needs and aspirations. But what has happened is in stark contrast to the principles of natural justice," he said.

And what about the 'protected' Jarawa tribals sighted with one-litre PET bottles packed with rice grains, and floats made of table-sized thermocol sheets, and tightly capped empty plastic cans in their hands? Do they have a say in the decision being taken on their behalf? Even that has been "banned" as the Administration in a press release directed the Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS) volunteers and officials to tactfully advise Jarawa tribals not to interact with non-tribals, settlers and others.

But in many places the Jarawas venture out of their reserve to barter forest produce in exchange for food items. This routinely takes place in Tirur, a village in the South Andaman district. The Jarawas bring forest produce, crabs, honey and other products for barter. They are, in turn, lured by the offer of tobacco and old clothes, and more interestingly, *pepe*, or cash. If they did all this willingly, then they must be having an opinion on the approval. They are, after all, an intelligent community that has survived thousands of years in seclusion and in complete harmony with their surroundings.

Without sincere efforts to protect the reserve from plunderers, there is little hope for the Jarawas. The lack of proper mechanisms to implement even the existing regulation is being cited as a major reason why the new amendments too will fail. "More than the Jarawas it is their land and their resources which need protection," said a tribal rights activist. ■

Charkha Features

Water tanks

Bharat Dogra
Bundelkhand

WATER tanks and ponds built under the rural employment scheme are lying empty in parched Bundelkhand because they have been poorly designed.

Local villagers say they didn't get involved because powerful construction lobbies kept them out. Had they been consulted they would have shared their expertise on terrain which is so important for defining a catchment and harvesting water.

Making the tanks dysfunctional seems to suit local contractors who want to take up bigger engineering works like canals from which they would make big money. Therefore, despite generous allocations for water conservation and irrigation, villages here complain bitterly about lack of water.

On a scorching day this writer went to the Naraini block of Banda district. A string of water tanks had been constructed under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). There was not a drop of water inside because the catchment area of the tanks had been completely neglected. Neither had any plan been put in place for diverting water from other catchment areas.

This sordid scenario repeated itself in numerous villages and panchayats. Tank upon tank was lying empty. There was Model Tank in Sahbajpur, Moharcha Tank in Chandrapura and other tanks in Ragauli Bhattapura, Bilharka, Panchampur, Garha, Naugawan, Sarha, Parsahar, Katra-Kalinjar. Each one was bone dry.

The NREGS was a golden opportunity to achieve water security in villages prone to drought. Some of these tanks cost on an average

Mountain states

Vivek S. Ghatani
Gangtok

THE second summit of the Indian Mountain Initiative (IMI) discussed sustainable development and climate change in hill and mountain states. The two-day meeting held in Gangtok, Sikkim, at the end of May, concluded with a Gangtok Declaration.

The IMI is a conglomeration of mountain and hill states from north to northeast. Its objective is to discuss the unique problems that hilly states face, evolve a consensus and formulate an action plan. IMI's inaugural meeting was held at Nainital in Uttarakhand last year. Its next meeting will take place in Kohima, Nagaland next year.

More than 250 delegates, from Jammu and

sabotaged so canals can be built

BHARAT DOGRA



Catchment areas have not been tended to

between ₹15 and ₹20 lakhs. A huge amount of money has gone down the drain.

Some villagers, standing near Sahbajpur's Model Tank, said the tank is yielding a continuous stream of money to the corrupt. A little work is done and a bill is drawn up. Then again some more work is done and more money withdrawn.

The same story is repeated in the construction of check dams. After spending ₹13 lakhs a check dam constructed on Farari Nullah in Bar Block of Lalitpur district is able to conserve a puddle of water. People point out that just constructing two gates of an earlier project would have harvested more water and cost only ₹5,000.

Why is money being blatantly wasted? The rea-

son is that the powerful construction lobby – consisting of engineers, officials, contractors and politicians – wants to pocket money.

Perhaps the most glaring example of this unashamed loot is the Kachnauda dam being constructed on the Sajnam river in Lalitpur district.

In 2007, the cost of the project was pegged at ₹89 crore. In 2009, a revised estimate raised the cost to a whopping ₹425 crore – four to five times higher than the 2007 figure.

The 2007 version of the project aimed at diverting canal water to an existing dry canal of an earlier project lying disused. The site was appropriate and the project would have had minimal adverse effects. But, the 2009 revised version proposes

constructing an elevated canal stretching over a long distance running parallel to the dry canal.

There is absolutely no need for the extra, elevated canal since the dry canal of the previous project already exists. What is equally shocking is that the alignment of the proposed canal takes it to a height of over 25 feet and has the potential to destroy nearby villages. People have complained about this lengthy, elevated canal in one voice.

The people of Bamhori Sehna village, in Block Bar, Bhailoni Lodh panchayat including elected panchayat representatives said they had not been informed earlier that the canal would be an elevated one higher than their *kutchha* homes. They point out that seepage from the elevated canal will destroy their houses and fields. The wall will create a barrier dividing fields and temples on one side and houses on the other. The canal will block drainage channels resulting in waterlogging, flooding and will eventually ruin agriculture in all the villages adjacent to the elevated canal.

"We are convinced that this project will ruin our village if allowed to go ahead. We want the old 2007 version to be implemented which will not adversely affect our villages," says Karan Singh, a farmer of Bamhori Sena village.

Even partial construction of the canal has led to waterlogging in a Dalit basti. The soil dug out for the elevated construction will destroy fertile fields. A very important tank, about a century old, will also be destroyed due to huge trenches being dug to obtain soil by using heavy machines.

People of about six villages in Bar block with a total population of about 10,000 will be adversely affected. These villages include Bamhori Sehna, Bhailoni Lodh, Bar, Motikhera, Dasrara, Bachravni and parts of Turka village. ■

meet in Gangtok, get their act together

Kashmir in the north to Nagaland in the north-east, attended the IMI meeting.

Chaired by the Speaker of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, KT Gyaltzen, the summit was organized by the Ecotourism & Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS) in association with the Central Himalayan Environment Association (CHEA).

Parliamentarians and legislators from Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Meghalaya along with experts, deliberated on: 'Climate change and the need for legislation'. They made suggestions on how India's 11 Himalayan states could work together to address climate change and sustainable development.

"We shared thoughts on the National Action Plan on Climate Change and discussed issues spe-

cific to mountain states. We also discussed whether there is need to have legislation in future to address climate change and its related issues," said P.D. Rai, convener of the summit and MP from Sikkim.

Thomas A. Sangma, MP from Meghalaya said he would campaign for the IMI along with P.D. Rai at the national level. "I have been raising issues concerning Meghalaya in Parliament and speaking for the promotion of tourism in the northeast. We will try to convince our fellow parliamentarians to join the IMI," said Sangma.

"Meghalaya has suffered so much environmental damage that I hesitate to invite tourists. Unscientific and unregulated coal mining are taking a huge toll on our environment," he said. Sangma pointed out that two types of migration

were happening in Meghalaya. "Our youth are migrating to cities for education and livelihood. And environmental refugees from Bangladesh with whom we share a 500 km border are migrating into our hill districts," he said.

The 'Gangtok Declaration' announced by P.D. Rai said that for the next 20 years the people and environment of hill and mountain regions should be given 'greater focus and emphasis'.

Member states adopted 10 mandates. These include spreading awareness of sustainable development, helping people with technology to adapt to climate change and boosting livelihoods. The role of women in livelihood generation and environment protection was recognized. The IMI would reach out to the youth to take its agenda forward and set up an institutional mechanism. ■

SAGGERE RADHAKRISHNA



Vittal Mallya Road

For a perfect road

Subir Roy
Bangalore

A small but key stretch of Vittal Mallya Road in Bangalore is today a showpiece. Instead of the car, the pedestrian has been placed at the centre of the urban space. The idea is to build a walking city.

It was the Bangalore City Connect Foundation (BCCF) which played a key role in redesigning and redoing this part of the road. BCCF has among its leading lights people from firms like Infosys, Biocon, Wipro and Bosch.

While doing this small stretch, BCCF realized that there are no standard specifications and procedures for building urban roads of quality, unlike those that have evolved for highways through the execution of the Golden Quadrilateral.

So BCCF got down to figuring it all out. It has now produced a rather smart looking book called *Tender Sure*, which lays down a manual for designing and building urban roads, something that didn't exist before within convenient covers. An accompanying volume explains contract agreements to guide municipalities in preparing urban road contracts and requests for proposals. It is a template for designing urban roads of the right quality and durability.

"The dream is that at the end of it all Bangalore will become a walking city," explains V. Ravichandar, a trustee of BCCF.

Tender Sure creates a critical new hierarchy of road users – pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and private transport – in that order. Whenever it becomes necessary to choose between alternative claimants, this hierarchy will provide the answer.

Secondly, *Tender Sure* aims to create roads which will last 20 to 25 years. Part of the planning will consist of building ducts under the road for electricity cables, optic fibre (telecommunications), water mains and sewers. This way, roads will not have to be dug up ever so often to either repair or add to any of these. Thirdly, the second

volume details the responsibilities of the contractors and those supervising them.

The *Sure* in *Tender Sure* stands for "specifications in urban roads execution" and the book carries the joint imprint of BCCF and India Urban Space Foundation, led by Swati Ramanathan. The book was put together under the leadership of Swati who, along with Ramesh Ramanathan, is a trustee of BCCF. Janaagraha, the well-known NGO that Ramesh and Swati lead, is a co-founder of BCCF.

The book, replete with drawings that look like engineers' blueprints, has been developed in cooperation with various government agencies and as a result its contents and approach are set to become mainstream in actual government execution.

In the 2012 Karnataka state budget, ₹265 crore has been earmarked for two Bangalore road projects which will follow the specifications laid down in *Tender Sure*. A key road – MG Road to Byapanhalli – which coincides with Reach One of the Bangalore Metro has been allocated ₹65 crore. Forty five other roads totaling 70 km have been allocated Rs 200 crore.

Under this programme BCCF will initially prepare the detailed project reports (DPR) out of its own funding and the state and city municipal government will take care of the implementation. After doing the DPR for the Reach One roads and 12 other roads, BCCF will, with the help of six design firms, set up capacity within the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike for making the project reports for the other roads which will use the *Tender Sure* specifications. This will address the key deficit of technical expertise in the government in making roads that last.

The tender for Reach One will be issued by July and those for the rest by September. The aim will be to move away from the current practice of breaking up tenders for road projects into small bits and creating assets that last. ■

Contact: ravi@feedbackconsulting.com

'Vizag Steel Growth without

Civil Society News
New Delhi

JUST days after the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant came third in an environmental rating of the steel industry, a huge fire at the plant claimed 16 lives. The disaster at Vizag raises questions about standards in the steel industry. If health and safety are so poorly managed in one of the top three plants in the country, what does it say about the others?

There are also questions about green ratings. What do they really tell us? Have they become self-serving exercises which are more cosmetic than real? The Green Rating Project (GRP) of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) was launched some 15 years ago to look at certain core industries in two-year cycles. Through independent assessment, the GRP seeks to identify the gap between regulatory standards and actual performance.

But the big question is whether an independent rating can be a substitute for efficient regulation. Civil society pressure does make industry more accountable, but can it ever hope to enforce the standards that government should be insisting on?

Very simply, would lives have been lost at the Vizag Steel Plant had government agencies responsible for monitoring health and safety been doing their job? The GRP has found the Indian steel industry as a whole to be way below global standards in waste disposal, air pollution, energy efficiency and health and safety.

The two top scorers were Ispat Industries, Raigad, and Essar Steel, Hazira, which got a score of 40 per cent or so when judged against the best in the world.

The GRP seeks to raise awareness in companies and encourage them to aspire to higher technological standards. It also gets buy-ins from industry, government and stakeholders. It assesses how communities view plants. All this makes the GRP a platform for diverse interests in the hope of achieving a consensus that can lead to improvements.

There have been successes. Two ratings of the paper industry have convinced companies to raise their standards. It was a long haul but there were results. The steel industry could similarly benefit from listening to some bad news.

Civil Society spoke to Chandra Bhushan, Deputy Director of CSE, on how GRP works and what it can deliver.

The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has seen a huge fire and a number of deaths. You have just completed rating the steel industry. What do you have to say?

We expect these kinds of things to happen in any plant in the Indian steel industry. In our two-year assessment of the steel sector we found that close to 50 people die each year in the big plants. There must be hundreds more in the smaller plants. As far as health and safety at the Vizag Steel Plant

was forewarned by us'

norms is cause for concern

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Chandra Bhushan

goes it was at the bottom of the 13 companies which participated in our study. At our meeting with the management as late as May 2012 we pointed this out. So, we are not surprised. Our assessment is that the health and safety system in Indian steel plants is not working or may even be non-existent in many plants.

But the Vizag Steel Plant was placed third in your green rating. The tragedy followed them getting an award in Delhi. Has the ratings business become ceremonial and self-serving – in a sense delinked from realities?

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

'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 than the worst.'

better than the worst. The green rating uses 150 parameters and health and safety has only 7.5 per cent weightage.

But that begs the question....

We are recognizing a better plant from a set of plants. Vizag is one plant which is meeting air pollution norms. Our rating system is such that it recognizes both positive and negative and then aggregates the score. It is so realistic that it captured the poor health and safety aspect of the Vizag Steel Plant as no one else had captured it. In fact you can say we had forewarned them about the disaster.

But what is the point of a rating system which can't avert disasters? It is worthless isn't it?

The green rating is an audit by civil society to push government and industry. Our attempt is to put all information in the public domain so that various stakeholders can use this information and act on it.

Your study has many critical things to say about the steel industry as a whole. Why do you think it is as lax as you say it is?

The steel industry has been pampered. In its race to expand and grow it has put health safety, environmental and social concerns on the backburner.

What expansion? Much more expansion is needed to meet the needs of a growing economy.

In the last 10 years, production has doubled. Attention is needed on how the steel industry needs to grow rather than the growth itself. The way it is growing right now is completely unacceptable and unsustainable.

Would you say the lack of governance and regulation is the real issue?

Yes it has played its part. But the lack of responsible behaviour by industry has played a bigger part. If the biggest companies in India say they are not meeting norms and do nothing about it, we are in deep trouble as an economy.

Would you agree that all this results from inadequate regulation?

If there is anything that the steel sector has taught us it is that the work which remains to be done by civil society on the environment is far greater than what it was in the past and will be even more so in the future.

So this is the failure of civil society as well?

It will have to work much harder. If today there is awareness it is because of the local community, activists and so on. But much more is needed.

Would you agree that there is a need for a national consensus on how to move forward? How can we do without producing steel and mining minerals? These are needed surely if the economy is to grow. The green rating project is exactly for that dialogue. It brings industry, government, media on one platform to discuss the issues. The idea is to have a national dialogue.

So why isn't it working.

It is. We have rated the paper industry twice and there have been tremendous improvements. ■

Learning the natural way



Children rehearsing for a play

Rakesh Agrawal
Anjanisain (Uttarakhand)

THE Ashram Paryavaran Vidyala (APV) is a small experimental school run by an NGO, the Sri Bhuvaneshwari Mahila Ashram (SBMA) in Anjanisain village in Tehri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. The emphasis here is on music, meditation, self-learning and community living. Competition is not encouraged. Yet the children are doing well in their studies.

Anand Mani Dwedi, the inventive educationist behind this venture, believes the aim of education is to establish a better, more just society. He says music and meditation create 'mindfulness' that leads to creative thinking. It helps children to think independently and do what they dream of doing without seeking the approval of adults.

"It reduces useless thoughts, helps us to control anger and to focus on learning," says Jyoti Pant, a student of the school.

Report cards always point out the good things that children do and gently advise them to do better in subjects they haven't come to terms with.

"My report card says that I am intelligent and my drawing and writing skills are good. But I must work hard to understand lessons in English. That I will do," says Abhijit who is in Class 3. Pips up Asmita Rawat who has just joined Class 5: "My report card says that my drawings are very good and I take part in plays wholeheartedly. But, I must pay attention to Hindi grammar."

Dwedi's methodology has demystified science, math, computers and social studies. Children are completely at ease talking about what they are learning. Bereft of the burden of marks and competition, children excel in drawing, painting, math and science. Older children teach younger children



Music helps creativity

and sometimes their own teachers! So students of Class 5 teach math, science and computers to students of Class 3.

"When we teach, our knowledge about that subject gets refreshed," says Manoj Thapa. "Learning and teaching are two sides of the same coin that continues all our lives," says Ritu Kumari. "We imbibe knowledge. We use beads, paper cuttings and strings to learn math. It makes the subject a whole lot of fun," says Archana Dwedi of Class 7.

Environment is an important part of the syllabus. Children are taken hiking many times in the year to

nearby lakes, meadows and forests. As they walk, they learn all about biodiversity and wildlife. They can talk about the characteristics of birds, animals, trees and plants with ease.

"We realised while hiking that many creatures will die and we'll also be threatened if biodiversity is lost," says Sampa Thampa, a student of Class 7. "I spotted *monal*, the state bird of Uttarakhand," says Naresh Panwar, excitedly.

The school has also tried to break the gender divide in hill society. APV is a co-educational school, a rarity in the hills. The school has bought a few cycles for the girls and boys. The cycles are so popular that children fight over them. It isn't that easy to ride cycles in rough terrain. But if the children fall down they are doubly keen to get on the cycle again. "Even if one falls, one can ride for half an hour," says young Arvind Kumar, confidently.

The school is only till Class 8. Its history goes back to the early 1980s when SBMA started a *balwadi* or a daycare centre for children. The centre rapidly expanded into an English medium senior secondary school. "But we realized the education we were giving was not suitable for a small Himalayan hamlet. Our aim was to nurture saplings which would grow into trees. So we scaled the school down to an environment school up to Class 8," says Cyril Rafael, chief advisor of SBMA.

Rafael met Dwedi, an idealistic educationist who wasn't keen to join a mainstream school. The offer to run a small environment school appealed to him. Vlad Kuperman, born in Ukraine, raised in the US, finds solace in teaching here. "The school's philosophy is to liberate knowledge," he says. Vlad had taught in schools in South Africa earlier.

So instead of expanding the school, SBMA actually shrank it. Parents began removing their children. From 350 students, the school now has 150. Angry teachers accused the school of promoting song and dance. Parents too were unhappy that their children were no longer learning by rote. But SBMA stood its ground.

The school now has eight teachers who don't get a salary but all their needs – food, shelter, clothing – are taken care of. They live as a community. There is a common kitchen, residence and an entertainment centre. "We don't have long working hours or tension about money," says Shanti Mangain, one of the teachers. "We share, we meditate," says Naresh Panwar, another teacher.

Parents who decided to keep their children here are happy. "My children understand things by actually doing. There is no rote learning going on," says Beena Kaintholi, a parent. "Dance, music and meditation build a lifelong relationship between children and teachers," says Rukma Nautiyal, another parent.

Children join the formal system after Class 8. But they return to seek out their teachers. Sharfan Nisha, an ex-student says she wants to become an architect. She hopes to pass the Open School exam with good marks. That's why she has approached her former teachers for classes. ■

Listen to the children sing at www.civilsocietyonline.com

Smiles that tell a thousand tales!

In our operations, we are blessed to bond with some very special people. People not daunted by odds, but with the passion and perseverance to overcome them. In doing so, they allow us to work with them to support livelihood generation and environment protection, to create education and health infrastructure.

Above all, they help us fulfill our goal to be a committed corporate citizen. True to the tradition of the Tata Group.

Mrs. Sonal Natarbhai, from the Virpura Village in Sanand, Gujarat. Sonal used to sit on the floor and study. Today she and more than 250 other students benefit from the classroom facility upgradation initiative of Tata Motors. The Company has a holistic approach to improving the access to and quality of education. The company supplements its infrastructural support to schools with training of teachers and extra-curricular activities of students.



Mr. Sujit Soren of Gopalpur village in East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. He was the first in the village to adopt water conservation techniques of the Gram Vikas Kendra society of Tata Motors. Today, the village boasts of perennial irrigation for about 100 acres and about 10,000 fruit and timber generating trees.



Mrs. Rohini Bhanudas Wadkar of Pune in Maharashtra. A widow with three children, she was trained to become self-dependent with technical skills by Tata Motors' Grihini Social Welfare Society.



Mr. Jowhar Ram Paswan of Baranidahi Mohalla of Chaibasa district in Jharkhand. Today, he is an employee of Nav Jagat Manav Samaj. It became possible when the Nav Jagat Manav Samaj, supported by Tata Motors, intervened to manage his leprosy and found him a job with a permanent income. Today, Mr. Paswan intervenes to bring comfort to others.

Mr. Man Singh Murmu of Bajnathdih village in East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand. With mostly infertile land holdings, Mr. Murmu and other residents found meeting both ends difficult. Tata Motors helped him lead change by beginning a tree plantation drive. Today, Bajnathdih has a forest of income-generating trees, and a Forest Protection Group to nurture its economic turnaround.



Mr. Vinod Pachpute of Vasuli village in Pune district of Maharashtra. A diploma holder in mechanical engineering, he is also a trustee and an alumnus of the Bhamchandra High School in the village – the only one in the vicinity covering seven villages. Tata Motors helped set up the school and continues to support it. About 600 students have passed through its portals till date.

Tata Motors' Sustainability Programme. Striving for Sustainable Change.

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Special curtains keep the sun out



Work stations enjoy natural light

Palash Krishna Mehrotra
Gurgaon

EVEN from the outside, the IRRAD building gives you the feeling of tranquillity. Its dull reddish-brown façade looks like it has yachts sailing across it, except they are all upside down. Later I would find out that the sails of these 'yachts' are actually triangular curtains, specially designed to keep the summer sun out and let the winter sun in, one of several key features that makes this a 'green building.'

The moment you enter, you know that this is a very different office space, a category unto itself. We are familiar with two kinds of institutional spaces – the dingy Soviet-style ones which house our nationalized banks and government offices, and the snazzy new MNC types, which came post-liberalisation, and which dominate the Gurgaon skyline. The latter, though happier-looking than their socialist-era counterparts, have a mass-produced factory feel to them.

The Institute of Rural Research and Development (IRRAD), set up under the S.M. Sehgal Foundation, has done extensive work in underdeveloped areas like Mewat. Their headquarters is one of only three green buildings in Gurgaon. It's among the few in the country that meet the Platinum rating requirements of LEEDS (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) – a globally accepted standard.

Green buildings aim to reduce our footprint on natural resources. Local and recycled materials are used as much as possible, for the further the materials come from, the more fuel that is consumed in transportation.

Each aspect of the building has been thought over carefully. Photovoltaic solar panels on the rooftop generate electricity, sufficient to run lights, fans and computers. Insulated double glazed windows reduce transmission of heat from outside to inside and vice versa. Internal courtyards ensure plenty of natural light and good ventilation. I can sense the difference this makes: the claustrophobia and stuffiness that closed air-con-

Green building has surplus power

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Jaali work and lots of green

ditioned spaces often invoke is missing here. Special features, like the reflective glass used in the inner atrium, allow indirect natural light into workspaces and reduce the use of artificial lights. The light inside has a special filtered quality; there's no glare or heat and yet it's not dingy. The light fittings are equipped with regulation sensors that control the amount of artificial light required to aid natural light.

Green buildings cut down on waste. Water is scarce in Gurgaon. The Aravallis have been sucked dry by the indiscriminate boring of tube wells. The water table, which was at about 90 feet in 2004, has now dropped to an alarming 200. In this green building, used water is treated and recycled for horticulture and for flushing WCs. The urinals

are waterless, while an underground storage tank harvests 400,000 litres of water, which is used in the cooling tower of the giant air-conditioning system. Because of the special insulation, the air-conditioner only needs to be run for a couple of hours in the morning and the afternoon, thus cutting electricity bills.

Keeping in mind the costs of environmental degradation, no aluminium has been used in construction. Ramesh Kapahi, director of finance at IRRAD, tells me they've used more wood, but of a different kind. "We've gone in for packing case wood, as well as wood that comes from rapidly renewable plants like bamboo. We got the teak from accredited forests in Nagpur where for every tree that goes down, they plant another two. Every tree comes with its requisite papers: the date it was cut, the day on which it was brought to the *mandi* for auction."

Some of the materials used were by-products of the construction process and freely available on the site. Conventionally, they would have been discarded but here they have been recycled. The pared shavings that come from planing wood have been used to beautify the reception wall, while excavated earth was deployed in making bricks on site.

Since the IRRAD has done substantive work in rural areas, I'm beginning to wonder if there has been give and take between the city and the vil-

LAKSHMAN ANAND



LAKSHMAN ANAND



The courtyard

lage. Have they borrowed practices from rural areas? Have they taken some of the technologies used in the construction of the green building into the villages? Pooja Murada, director of communications, explains: "Yes, most certainly. In the village, they don't cover the ground outside with cement. This allows the rainwater to seep in. We too have used clay tiles and open grid pavers. This allows the water to be absorbed, and reduces the run-off. On our part, we've introduced the villages to solar electricity and water harvesting. Now, many of the villages have solar-powered street lights, and schoolchildren don't have to travel long distances to fetch drinking water." This has had an indirect positive impact on their attendance. Earlier, they'd wander off on the pretext of finding drinking water and bunk school. Now, since there is water in the school, there's no excuse to play hookey!

What is it like to work in an environment like this? While walking around, I catch a glimpse of an employee in one of the courtyards. She is sitting on a bench with her laptop. Her body language is

relaxed; she seems at home here, surrounded by ferns, the diffused natural light and the cool air. She seems fully absorbed in her work, but not stressed out. Jane Schukoske, the soft-spoken CEO of IRRAD agrees: "The employees feel inspired here which adds to their productivity. It's a calm and quiet environment which supports creativity."

One of the difficulties faced in putting up green buildings in India is training labourers and contractors. They are used to conventional techniques; it takes them time to change gears. Kapahi says: "There would be times when we'd say we want this done this way, and they'd argue, 'Nahin saheb, ye aise nahin hota hai.' We've had to break down walls because they didn't do it right." IRRAD also followed all the prescribed safety norms for labourers during construction, though sometimes with comical results. For example, instead of putting the helmets on their heads, many preferred to use them as containers to store food.

There is also very little government support at the moment. The IRRAD building produces elec-

tricity (35 KWP) in excess of its needs (12 KWP). It asked HUDA if it could feed it into the grid or sell it to the neighbouring offices. HUDA didn't know what to do. They don't have a policy yet. So they said no.

In America, green buildings have been on an upswing even during the economic downturn. The shift there is from green offices (like the Bank of America tower in NYC) and green museums (California Academy of Sciences), to the hardcore commercial sector: new hospitals, hotels and shopping centres in major cities are all going the green way.

A rapidly developing India is going to be one of the biggest energy guzzlers this century, and green buildings should be factored in as one of the pivotal components of environment-friendly growth. The IRRAD building is a step in that direction. The employees here speak of it as a model or a lab from which people can learn. As Kapahi says, "We wanted to show that it's possible to do this, and we have." Now it's for the others to follow. ■

(The writer's new book The Butterfly Generation was published recently)

SAMITA'S WORLD

by SAMITA RATHOR



Farm to table in Srinagar

Jehangir Rashid
Srinagar

A farmers' market has been started on Boulevard Road in Srinagar by Jyoti Singh, daughter of Dr Karan Singh. Jyoti has chosen weekends to attract shoppers. The first market was held on 27 May and the second on 3 June. Boulevard Road attracts tourists. Jyoti plans to make the farmers' market a regular feature.

"I noticed that farmers' markets are very popular in the US and Australia. So I decided to start one in Srinagar too," explains Jyoti, a staunch supporter of the organic movement.

Small and marginal farmers arrived with bagfuls of organic vegetables. Peas, knol-khol, turnip and garlic were visible. On both weekends, sales were brisk.

"The farmers' market has been introduced to stop the exploitation of small and marginal farmers at the hands of middlemen and big dealers. Farmers get an opportunity to meet customers. The interface helps each to understand the other," said Jyoti.

Shoppers were greeted warmly with green tea and a *shirmali*. The market looked more like a picnic spot, friendly and happy with people socializing with each other.

Jyoti has a doctorate in philosophy from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. She taught for seven years at the Lady Shri Ram College in the capital before deciding to give it up and pursue her passion.

Small producers also displayed their wares. Traditional handicrafts, lavender oil, jams and pickles were some of the products on sale.

Some of Kashmir's well known farmers were present at the market. There was Abdul Ahad Mir, Kashmir's 'strawberry man'. "This year has been great for strawberry and cherry production. I have sold all my stocks. It is encouraging to note that people relish strawberries and cherries here. In fact, farmers' markets can boost farmers' cooperatives," said Abdul Ahad.

Ahad's village, Gasoo, on the outskirts of the Hazratbal area, is called 'strawberry village' since nearly all farmers grow strawberries there.

Also spotted was Mohammad Saqlain, a young entrepreneur who grows lavender and rosemary. He was busy informing people about the benefits of using lavender, rosemary and almond oil.

Stoles, scarves and shawls made by Kashmir Loom were on display. The Shehjaar group sold spices and pickles. Anosh sold strawberry jam and homemade pickle. ■

Maya's parks come with

Faiz
Noida (UP)

WITH Uttar Pradesh firmly under the youthful fist of the Samajwadi Party (SP), and everything back to how everything always was, the question is what happens now to Mayawati's controversial parks strewn with statues? Now that contractors and lower level officials have bolted, the future of that magnificent ode to Mayawati is under a dark cloud.

Those in the know – 'sources close to', 'an aide' – say that the UP government, despite all its bluster, is not in a position to actually take down those wonderful monuments that represent everything that can go wrong with power and with those who hold it.

Unfortunately, not in the possession of the sort of political capital required to be part of those in the know, I set out using more orthodox ways of finding out.

I went to the Rashtriya Dalit Smarak in Noida – the great big park built by Mayawati. Worth a visit I must say. I got there nice and early and started scouting around for the local staff eventually settling upon Gangaram.

Why? Well he came across as courteous, industrious and still managed to scare me off the lawn when he came cleaning. Gangaram the Gardener and his name sounded wonderful and fitted the story in my head.

No, he hadn't bolted at the first sign of trouble. He was tending to the lawns with ferocious

intensity. I managed to strike up an exchange and convinced him I was a true blue curious cat who just wanted an opinion from somebody who was involved with the structures and who possibly could be affected by any decisions around their future. He asked that we meet in the evening and agreed to have a drink with me.

"*Kahan bhaiya. Yeh kaahe milat ho, ee maja kharab kar dis hai* (What brother? You using that to mix your drink? It'll spoil the whole thing)," said Gangaram as I jostled with the evening swell at the local wine shop, alarmed that I wanted to have Coke with what looked and smelled like battery acid.

Not that it mattered. If I had to have whatever that concoction was, I would like to have it with Coke. Argument settled, we scurried back to

Gangaram's 'office'.

There's little in this world that is truly wondrous. And I cannot describe how sweeping greenery, resplendent despite the summer heat, felt as the sun set. In this light, it was beautiful, and majestic. That, however, is my gripe. And turns out, Gangaram's too.

As we settled I asked him, "So what do you think brother? Will the government bring these statues down?"

And then something curious happened. Gangaram turned and asked me what I thought and why.

I explained they would, it was excessive, and how the land could be used for various develop-

DOUBLE SCOOP

No water, health or jobs

Bharat Dogra
Bhopal

TWENTY-seven years after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, its survivors continue to lead a nightmarish existence. Their painful health conditions impede their ability to earn a livelihood. Interviews with several of these families living in Bhopal's JP Nagar revealed that they don't know whom to turn to.

For Shamshad Bi, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 2 December 1982, is a dark, vivid memory. "People were foaming at the mouth. Some were vomiting. There were so many dead bodies. Those alive were running for their lives. We also ran but only for a while. Then my six-year-old son Raja died. I can't tell you what a handsome little boy he was. My mother-in-law also died. After this how could we run?" she says.

Shamshad and her husband Mohammad Saeed

suffer from breathlessness, burning eyes and stomach pain constantly. After some years her husband's health deteriorated rapidly. His feet got so swollen that they looked scary. The doctors at the government hospital refused to treat him. Then he died a painful death.

On the day of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Shamshad Bi's daughter Shanno was seven, Taslim, three and Tabassum just six months old. They have lived, but in poor health. Tasleem's ovaries are badly damaged. Tabassum has serious lung problems. After the gas tragedy one child was stillborn. Another daughter, Guriya, is also mostly sick.

The only saving grace for Shamshad was that she could construct a new house with the compensation money she received, some of which was shared with her daughters' families. Her main burden is fetching drinking water. The staircase to her house is lined with pots of

elephants and 3,000 workers



Mayawati's elephants are not likely to be wrapped up

ment projects that UP so badly needs – hospitals, housing, education, and I went on and on. And to his credit he didn't interrupt me till I asserted, "Forget everything else, it's just wrong." At this point he started laughing and started to nod his head.

"It's wrong, but brother who does right by you in this age? Which politician? Mayawati gave me a job, what more could I ask for? Now, you tell me, they say that I have to leave this job and become a cleaner or sanitation worker," he said.

"What do they mean? Again do the same jobs and suffer the same humiliation? So why

should I say anything to Mayawati? And I'm not cleaner or sanitation worker. I'm now a gardener. Forget moving the park and memorials, I defy the government to move me, they won't be able to even do that. If that happens we will agitate and there will be unrest. And not just I, all the people here with me will join in."

Some more background. After Mayawati constructed these edifices, she arranged for over 3,000 workers to man these memorials, maintain them and do all such matters that a Chief Minister really ought to get to grips with. Now, proposals saying these may have to come down

are being construed as attacks on Dalits. The veracity of this statement is not for me to decide. What is evident is that Gangaram will not go willingly. In a country where government jobs, from the railways to the foreign services, are seen as the goldenest of geese, and threats of violence usually the way to gain your point, it is not surprising Gangaram is so calm about suggesting violent unrest.

He believes, and rightly in my mind, that these huge parks will not just be abandoned. They may be re-adapted for new schemes. Whatever the incumbent UP government decides, Gangaram isn't one to give up his job.

As he said: "Brother, if the UP government desires, we'll make cycle monuments."

The question is: how do you juxtapose a cycle onto an elephant without people noticing?

More pressing for Mayawati though may be the allegations of massive government corruption increasingly dogging her despite having made the move to Lutyen's herself.

Did she move so as to be able to be closer to the shadowy figures in certain parts of Race Course Road and Akbar Galli who control, if rumours and 'sources close to' are to be believed, the investigative agencies?

Or is it that the 'aides' are correct and she will be cornered but instructions for her to be acquitted have been issued on the understanding that she sacrifices enough of her erstwhile lieutenants?

Whatever happens, Chinese whispers suggest Mayawati 'may start to live in monumental times'. ■

Twitter: @Multibility

for Bhopal victims

water.

Bhopal's groundwater is badly contaminated. "I can't do anything else after fetching all this water," she says. With no income and a daughter to care for, Shamshad has a tough time. All she gets is a pension of ₹200 every month.

Nannu Lal, who lost his two-year-old son Bunty in the gas tragedy, says that health problems like loss of breath and impairment of vision have persisted for his entire family. "These problems won't go away as long as I am alive," he says with resignation.

What's more his family spends a tidy sum every month on private medical care since the government hospital does not provide much attention.

"Last month alone our family medical bill came to about ₹8,000," he says. "How long are we going to survive like this?" His son Shubham has inherited his persistent health problems.

Mohammad Rashid, 55, says, "Although our seven-member family did not lose their lives in the gas leak, we all suffer from severe health problems. Surviving in the midst of all this after receiving a compensation of just ₹25,000 has been very difficult."

Rashid has chronic pain, chronic cough, frequent bouts of fever and gets into fits of sudden anger. "Fortunately our children have grown up understanding all this so they tolerate it, otherwise life would have been even more difficult particularly after I had to undergo surgery."

Rashid feels badly let down by the huge and corrupt medical infrastructure that has been created in the name of providing services to the people affected by the gas tragedy. Hardly any relief is provided in reality and people are forced to go to private practitioners despite all the government investment. His colony is dirty and lacks sanitation which in turn causes more health problems

among the already debilitated residents.

Bilkis Bi, 65, was the proud mother of four children at the time of the gas tragedy. One by one she lost three children. They all succumbed to the multiple health problems they faced after the gas leak. The remaining fourth child, Nazma, also faces persistent pain and burning in her stomach. She often feels dizzy and lapses into unconsciousness for short periods. "My fourth child is also dying," says Bilkis Bi sadly.

What is even sadder for Nazma is that health problems including stunted growth and mental health, have been passed on to her children. Imran Ali, her son, shares the same fate.

Bilkis has been treated for serious health problems relating to her heart, lungs and kidneys. After 27 years of battling ill health Bilkis is almost confined to her bed. Even a little effort leaves her exhausted. But she keeps worrying about her children and grandchildren.

Saeed Khan, who was once famous for his tailoring skills and presided over a big family, has lost four children since the gas tragedy. Two children were still-born. All family members suffer from breathlessness, burning sensation in the eyes and chest, difficulty in walking and doing any manual work. ■



Frank Gastner with his unique football team



Teaching a tribal girl to kick a football

Soccer succour

Rina Mukherjee
Ranchi

FRANK Gastner came to India to work for the corporate sector, but found play far more fulfilling. A former Youth Ambassador at the UN, he signed up with a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) committee on corporate social responsibility (CSR) that sent him to Jharkhand.

Gastner found the bureaucracy suffocating. He moved out of his official accommodation at the Ranchi Gymkhana into a mud house in Hutup village. He began teaching English to the children in a local government school as well as at a commu-

nity hall. Gastner went on to sponsor eight of his students before he left for the US. This scholarship got them all into private schools.

In February 2009, he moved back to Jharkhand, and in keeping with the wishes of 12-year-old Suman, one of his sponsored students, Gastner set up Yuwa to teach football.

Initially, Yuwa planned to coach an equal number of boys and girls. It soon became clear the girls were keen on mastering the game. The boys, on the other hand, hardly cared. The very first week saw a mere couple of boys turn up as against a large number of girls. Further investigation into the social dynamics of the village and the region convinced Gastner of the need to provide an outlet for those saddled with housework and domestic chores. A typical routine for a girl meant getting up at the crack of dawn, filling up water for the daily needs of the household, sweeping the home, cooking and then leaving for school. Once home, she had to again attend to the kitchen, wash, clean and study after completing the housework.

Realizing that girls like Suman were keen to learn and excel in sport, he resolved to teach them the basics of football. The fact that "it's a pretty simple game, cheap, and safe, and can bring huge numbers of girls together at once," was, of course, another major factor. Yuwa came into being in 2009, as a youth organization aimed at facilitating vertical mobility through football.

Once Gastner embarked on coaching the schoolgirls, attendance improved by leaps and bounds at the Hutup government school. Many measures were hence initiated to ensure regular attendance in school, and make the children a lot more responsible towards becoming independent. For one, uniforms are given only if attendance is regular over four months. Secondly, the children save their own money to purchase their boots.

Take the case of Meena Kumari Mahato. Her father, a cook, was killed by dacoits four years ago. Meena attends school and spends her spare time working in the fields to earn money to buy her football boots.

Where attendance is concerned, the children elect their own team leaders, who, in turn, keep a tab on their attendance. In short, it is peer group effort that keeps the teams together. It has also got them to be judicious in their use of time.

Of course, this applies equally well to the boys. Amit Sharma, Vijay Kumar Mahato and Jeet Kumar Mahato are currently working hard to get selected in the national Under16 team. After having failed to qualify in the final selections last year, Amit is hoping to make it this year. The boys are also aiming their sights at the Tata Football Academy in Jamshedpur, where they can take advantage of some coveted coaching facilities.

Currently, there are 50 boys and 200 girls training here. The three years they have spent there have made a huge difference. Soni Kumari Munda and Kalavati Kumari Munda have played in both the Under17 and Under19 Jharkhand teams. Seema Toppo has played in the Jharkhand Under 16 team, putting up a stellar performance at a recent match in Uttarakhand. Sunita Kumari Munda has played in the Jharkhand Under 19 team, while several others like Sunita Oraon have been selected for the coaches training in Delhi.

In 2010, 15 girls from Yuwa were selected for a week-long training camp at the Tata Football Academy in Jamshedpur.

Today, the Yuwa team is well known in sports circles in Jharkhand. The teams are regularly invited to Hazaribagh and Ranchi for friendly matches, and have played in Arunachal Pradesh and Sri Lanka.

But there are dark clouds on the horizon. Yuwa's four-acre practice ground is being cut in half with a private party buying it off. For the sake of Indian football and youngsters on the verge of tasting fulfillment and emancipation, one hopes that Yuwa is soon rewarded with a field of its own. ■

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Essen Communications is organising a one-day seminar on 'The Great Outdoors' highlighting the potential of adventure sports, outdoor activities and sustainable tourism on August 5th, 2012, in Bangalore.

The symposium will have interesting panel discussions and presentations by renowned field experts. Topics to be discussed are: the need for sustainable tourism, Incredible Antarctica, Kenneth Anderson Trails, Safety Standard Guidelines in Adventure Sports, Outbound Training and Impact of Wildlife Tourism in National Parks besides exhibits of destinations and activities by outdoor outfits.

Other highlights include a display of adventure gear and a photo gallery presenting varied outdoor activities. The event will witness the participation of nature and adventure enthusiasts, travel agents, tour operators, corporate executives, educational institutions, management institutes, Karnataka Tourism officials, stakeholders in tourism and outdoor tour operators and promoters.

For registration, contact: Essen Communications at 094483 63336 or email essencom@yahoo.co.in

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Leadership with Trust

JACKFRUIT

How Sri Lanka grew a thriving agro-industry

Shree Padre
Colombo

ANULA Sirisena is a Sri Lankan housewife from a poor family. She lives in a village near Kandy. Anula has seven jackfruit trees on her piece of land. But her jackfruits used to go waste since she didn't know how to earn money from trees.

About seven years ago Anula's life changed for the better. She enrolled at the Horticulture Crop Research and Development Institute (HORDI) run by the Sri Lankan government's Ministry of Agriculture. HORDI taught her to make sambal, chutney and pickle from tender jackfruit, called *polos* in Sinhala. All three are staple additives in Sinhalese meals.

Anula now runs a microenterprise in jackfruit products under the Samanala brand name. Samanala means butterfly. Her husband, Sirisena, helps her or she hires an extra hand, if needed. Her neatly packaged and labelled products are retailed at the Ministry of Agriculture's sales centre in Peradeniya. Anula produces a few other processed foodstuffs too. Her family now earns 50,000 Sri Lankan rupees a year.

Historically, the jackfruit has always enjoyed the status of a holy tree in Sri Lanka. Named *baat gasa* or 'rice tree' it is said to have saved Lankans from hunger in a crisis. Jackfruit has social and religious connotations in Sri Lanka too. In recent years it is the economic significance of jackfruit that has grown. Since the past 10 years HORDI, funded by the International Centre for Underutilized Crops (ICUC), has trained free of cost, street vendors, housewives and entrepreneurs in minimal processing, dehydration, and bottling technologies. The institute's ex-students now manufacture a range of jackfruit products for the domestic and export market. So the jackfruit not only staves hunger, it yields jobs and money.

It isn't HORDI alone that is training people. Around 14 institutions have pitched in. NGOs and others charge a fee. The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) has in the last 20 years organized 200 workshops and trained 2,000 people in minimal processing of jackfruit.

As a result, Sri Lanka has become the world leader in making jackfruit the key to food security and raising the incomes of the poor. Short duration training and support have empowered rural families. Each household has a few jackfruit trees that the family can't wholly consume. They now know how to convert their jackfruits into products for sale in urban markets.

Most jackfruit enterprises on the island are not high-end companies but medium scale operators and home industries. This strategy has made jackfruit products affordable for everyone.

According to Dr Subha Heenkenda, Research Officer at HORDI, the total area under jackfruit on the island is 50,000 hectares. "So our country will never starve," says Dr Subha proudly. On an average, each tree bears 35 fruits of 20 kg each. According to HORDI's estimates, the island's total annual production of jackfruit is 1400,000 tonnes.

STREETS AND MARKETS: "Minimal processing is the easiest business to start," says Senarath Ekanayake, Research Officer, Food Research Unit in



Antony's roadside cart unit on Malay Street, Colombo

HORDI, the key person behind training in jackfruit value addition and minimal processing. "You don't need any heavy investment or machinery. You can start at 3 am, pack your products by 6 am and send your consignment off in the first bus. You don't make any losses even if you don't produce anything for a day or two. Unlike pickle, jam or jelly, you don't have to wait for months."

Take Manel Sriyani, who trained at HORDI. Manel and her family have been producing four varieties of ready-to-cook products from tender jackfruit (*polos*) and unripe jackfruit (*kos*). They sell around 120 packets per day. A 250-gm pack is priced at ₹25. Her packets sell in local shops and at the agriculture department's sales counter. She also supplies to three supermarkets in Kandy.

"We are happy because this is a business we can manage ourselves with occasional help from outside," says Manel Sriyani. "One of our requirements is a machine to chop the peeled tender jackfruits. This part of our work requires three hours and a lot of energy." Their small old house is now being remodeled into a concrete home, indicative of the money they have finally managed to earn thanks to minimal processing of jackfruit.

Sri Lanka has around 70 units today which produce ready-to-cook jackfruit

BUSINESS

PICTURES BY SHREE PADRE



Packaged jackfruit which is ready to eat



Manel Sriyani assisted by her children packing cut jackfruit for the day

after minimal processing. These packets are sold to vegetable shops and supermarkets. Then, there are hundreds of street vendors who cut jackfruit in front of their customers or sell pre-packed jackfruit. "Vissa, vissa!" you hear vendors shouting in Kandy's busy market. Vissa means 'cheap' and it is freshly cut jackfruit that is on offer.

The jackfruit is cut into three different shapes for three different curries. The cube shape – exclusively meant for *polos* curry – is the most popular. For *polos mellum*, tender jackfruit is chopped into small bits. Very few vendors sell jackfruit in large pieces for making cutlets or dunking into biryani.

Antony, 47, who sells freshly cut jackfruit on a cart in Colombo's Malay Street says this is his family business. He joined his father about 35 years ago. Antony's team of four begins cutting jackfruit at 5 am. They sell till noon. A kilo of freshly cut jackfruit is priced at ₹60. On an average they sell around a quintal. Antony also sells *waraka*, a fruity jackfruit and *tambili*, a large coconut variety for which Sri Lanka is famous. He closes business at noon and begins



once again at 3 pm continuing till sunset.

DRIED JACKFRUIT: Sri Lanka has also been very successful in training poorer communities in dehydration, a technology that extends the shelf life of vegetables and fruits up to six months at least. Menike Wijekoon from Rajawella is a recent entrant into the jackfruit value addition business. She used to work at a dolomite factory. Menike decided to switch careers and enrolled for a four-day training programme on dehydration of fruits and vegetables at the Vidhatha Centre run by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Technology.

After training she invested in a 25 kg capacity drier. Today, her flagship product is dehydrated unripe jackfruit. She also produces dehydrated bitter gourd, brinjal, curry leaves, kohila and ladyfingers. Neatly packed under her brand name,

Pradeepa, Menike's products are also sold at the Peradeniya Sales Centre.

A 200 gm packet of dehydrated unripe jackfruit is priced at ₹145. This jackfruit can be used to make curry after soaking the dried chunks in water for

RECIPES

Kos kotthu

Unripe jack carpels: 2 kg
Fish: 250 gm
Cabbage: 200 gm
Leeks (tender): 200 gm
Beans: 200 gm
Carrots: 200 gm
Green chillies: 10 g

Pepper powder: 3 gm
Garlic: 25 gm
Crushed chillies: A few
Curry leaves: A few
Onions: 50 gm
Rice: 200 gm (optional)
Salt: To taste

Method: Chop the jackfruit carpels into small pieces. Steam carpels for about four to five minutes. Keep this separately. Next steam finely chopped cabbage, bean, leeks and carrots for two minutes. The vegetables have to be steamed separately.



Deep fry the fish and cut into small pieces. Add salt and pepper and keep aside.

Heat a little oil in the pan. When the oil is hot add garlic, curry leaves and onions. Once it turns golden brown strain into a pan and add crushed chillies.

Now add pepper powder and salt to the steamed vegetables. If required, add 250 grams of boiled rice.

Finally, add all the ingredients to the boiled jack carpels and mix thoroughly without breaking the pieces. Add the boiled rice as well. Kotthu is now ready.

**Aggala**

Jack seed flour: 750 g
Rice flour: 250 g
Sugar: 750 g
Pepper powder: 2 g
Salt: To taste

Method: Heat the jack seed powder in a dry pan on a low fire for a few minutes until it

turns light brown. Heat the rice flour too separately in the same manner. Boil the sugar with four cups of water until it melts completely. Remove from the fire, add a little powdered pepper and salt and keep aside a little syrup.

Now mix the jack seed flour and the rice flour keeping aside a small amount. Gradually add the mixed flour to the syrup little by little. Add the syrup left aside as well to make a mixture of thick consistency. Shape into several balls by placing a handful of the mix on the palm and cover each ball with the left-over flour. Aggala is ready for consumption.

Jack seed flour: Wash the jack seeds and then dry them. Heat the seeds in a pot on a low fire. When the seeds are hot their outer covering should be removed. This needs to be done carefully so that the bran of the seeds is not removed. The seeds should then be powdered with a mortar and pestle or any other apparatus. Two kilos of the seeds yield two kilos of flour. The flour thus obtained should be kept on a low fire for about one hour, stirring continuously.

Recipes documented by: Savistri, Colombo
Resource Persons: Nanda Udaththawa, Vanitha Srama Nikethanaya
Assistance: K.P. Somalatha, Savisthri

'Thai companies are giving us stiff competition in products like tender jackfruit in brine since labour is cheaper there. We are able to retain our market only in our traditional products like *polos* curry and *polos mellum*.'



Nimal Jayasuriya

30 minutes. But since fresh vegetables are available at a cheaper price, Menike's clientele consists mainly of non-resident Sri Lankans who pick up her products to take them back to the country they work in. So Menike could say her business is mainly export-oriented.

One of her interesting products is jack seed powder, globally recognized as a very nutritious food. Sri Lankans use it to make a crispy snack called *murukku*. A 200 gm packet of Menike's jack seed powder costs ₹60. Although sales are not that brisk, Menike says she manages to sell about 50 kg a year of jack seed powder.

The leader in popularizing dehydration technology is the Rural Enterprises Network (REN) started in 2002. REN emerged from a micro-enterprise project of Practical Action, a poverty eradication programme started by the Intermediate Technology Development Group. REN develops micro and small-scale rural enterprises by helping them with a range of business development services. It promotes processed agro-produce under a common brand name, nationally and in global markets.

REN is a pioneer in unripe jackfruit dehydration. Practical Action did a lot of R&D with different types of driers. They have developed low cost driers that run on firewood and sawdust. Electric driers are very expensive. "Jackfruit is one of our products," clarifies Nilantha Athapattu, a manager with REN. "We have large production units with 200 kg capacity driers and 45 small-scale driers that can dry 20 kg in a batch. Jackfruit dehydration goes on for about eight months."

People are trained in batches. Each unit consists of five or eight people. Another two or three trainees are responsible for raw material collection. In fact, ordinary village women now produce dehydrated jackfruit and other products at quality acceptable to supermarkets. This is an enviable achievement for REN.

According to Nilantha, each unit procures jackfruit from around 50 households. This means REN must be helping more than 1,500 families earn more from their jackfruit. "There are families who earn between 3,000 and 4,000 rupees a month," says Nilantha.

Since the last three years, REN has diversified into bottling jackfruit products. There is a training course. Five groups are manufacturing on an average 1,000 bottles per month of *polos* curry, *kos* in brine, tender jackfruit in brine, *polos mellum* and *polos sambal*.

Unlike REN, Vista Natural Products in Aranayake near Kandy, is trying to sell its dehydrated unripe jackfruit in local markets. This three-year-old unit run by Dr Jagath Elvitigala produces three types of dehydrated jackfruit to match three kinds of *kos* curries – *Kiri Kos*, *Kos Thambuma* and *Kos Melluma*.

Dr Elvitigala's unit employs four women and works for three days a week. Freshly peeled jackfruit bulbs are bought thus avoiding the bother of employing labour to do this at the unit. "Marketing is our biggest bottleneck," says B.M. Ariyaratna, who is the unit's manager. "In supermarkets they ask us for discounts up to 30 per cent and demand extended credit. We are selling to a few restaurants too."

But the adventurous doctor, who has settled in this village from Colombo, is not ready to give up. He has planted selected grafts of jackfruit on five acres. These trees have now started to yield fruits. "I want to set up the industry here. This way we can achieve quality with our own raw material and hopefully improve our market base."

LOCAL TO GLOBAL: Companies have not lagged behind. Sri Lanka has about 10 to 12 big companies who have been producing and marketing jackfruit products for over a decade. These are exported to 10 to 15 countries. Their customers are Sri Lankans living and working abroad.

There is no domestic demand for canned or bottled jackfruit products even in local supermarkets. Fresh jackfruit is available at a lower price in local markets.

"When we started our first factory in 1989, we gave priority to jackfruit products. At that time there was huge demand from Asians living abroad," says Nimal Jayasuriya, managing director of Foreconns Canneries.

But now, he says, the industry is facing two major challenges. "Bottles and tins are very expensive here since they have to be mainly imported. Thai companies are giving us stiff competition in products like tender jackfruit in brine since labour is cheaper there. We are able to retain our market only in our traditional products like *polos* curry and *polos mellum*," says Nimal.

Australia has emerged as a major market for Araliya Exports based in Colombo. "When we started a decade ago, only one or two companies were making jackfruit products. Today that number has increased to more than 10," says Mailvaganam Rajkumar, managing director of Araliya Exports. "Jackfruit products are very easy to produce and convenient for Western consumers. You just need to heat and eat."

Araliya's jackfruit products are exported to Canada, the US, Switzerland and Male Island. Every year exports increase by five to 10 per cent. Their most recent importer is China which is buying *polos* curry. "There is good scope for market expansion. But what is lacking is awareness of the nutritional value of jackfruit in the West."

Interestingly, *polos* curry is so popular in Sri Lanka that it almost seems to be a 'national dish.' Everybody, from roadside restaurants to five star hotels,

However, training people in minimal processing, dehydration and bottling technologies has yet to reach far-flung villages, says Padma Pushpakanthi, national secretary of Savisthri, a women's NGO working for jackfruit development. She says in her village, Walapola in Kegalle district, jackfruit which is not consumed by the family just goes waste. "These simple technologies of drying or minimal processing have not reached my village," she says.

According to Dr Heenkenda, Sri Lanka consumes about 25 to 30 per cent of its tender jackfruit as a vegetable. The minimal processing enterprises – both trained and untrained vendors – have increased the consumption of jackfruit by 10 per cent. This is not a small achievement. "But all said and done," he says. "Our total consumption will not surpass a paltry 25 per cent." Wasantha Wijewardane, on the other hand, says probably around 50 per cent of Sri Lanka's jackfruit is consumed domestically.

Another drawback is that jackfruit is not popular as a fruit. Efforts to do so have been relegated to the backseat. With its considerable inflow of tourists and mushrooming supermarkets, Sri Lanka could make fresh bulb sales popular. Sweets like jackfruit *varatty* which Kerala is famous for, or jackfruit *papad* and sweet *papad* are unknown in Sri Lanka. Preservation of jackfruit



Anula Sirisena with her jackfruit chutney and pickle



Agnes Fernando, scientist at ITI, with her jackfruit products

serves it. Explains an elderly Sri Lankan gentleman: "You place *polos* curry on the table with other non-vegetarian curries. Your guests will first have *polos* curry and then the fish or chicken curries."

Another curry gaining popularity in Australia is *Kallu Pol Maluwa*. This dish is made with jack seed powder and fried coconut. Like *polos* curry, it is a traditional Sri Lankan recipe.

It is generally agreed that the commercial *polos* curries don't match up to the traditionally made dish. "The taste of the traditional curry made in a few villages is much better. It takes two entire days to prepare *polos* curry. And it has to be cooked in an earthen pot on a low flame," says Senarath Ekanayake.

THEN AND NOW: Sri Lanka's jackfruit journey has come a long way since freshly cut jackfruit was first introduced on streets and in markets after 1977, when the economy began to liberalise. Now, according to Wasantha Wijewardane, a social activist, "Jackfruit attracts more urban consumers because it is very safe unlike other pesticide ridden vegetables. It is slowly attaining the status of a money-spinning crop. It is not uncommon for a jackfruit weighing a kg to sell for ₹100 in Colombo. Many people now want to plant jackfruit."

Twenty-five years ago the jackfruit scenario was bleak here. Lorry loads of jackfruit brought from Ratnapura or Badulla were offloaded cheap in the markets of Colombo.

Now farmers have realized that jackfruit fetches money. If one jackfruit is sold in Colombo for ₹100, the farmer probably makes only ₹10. But it is still bringing in an income so cutting of jackfruit trees has decreased.

in sugar syrup is somewhat popular.

It is also surprising that Sri Lanka's processed jackfruit products have not made any inroads into the Indian market. Both in south and north India, Sri Lanka's *polos* curry, tender jack in brine, jack seed curry etc would attract buyers.

Today, tender jackfruit and ripe jackfruit are available in Colombo throughout the year. The minimal processing units produce ready-to-cook tender jackfruit for 10 months. They take a two-month gap not because raw material is not available but because it turns out to be expensive.

"There used to be two jackfruit seasons here," says Sarananda Hewage, a senior horticulture officer. "The *yala* season from March to August and the *maha* season from November to January. But now we get jackfruit through the year in Colombo."

Sunil, a roadside vendor on the Kandy-Colombo highway, doesn't close his shop unless he has some emergency to attend to. He always stocks mature jackfruit, which he personally selects and sources from nearby villages. Perhaps it is time the seasonal tag was removed from jackfruit.

We, in India, can learn a lot from Sri Lanka's experience in using natural resources and doing value addition. It is a tribute to the Sri Lankan spirit that despite internal conflict and turmoil, the island has forged ahead. It has achieved success in the production and marketing of treacle and jaggery, curries from breadfruit and banana flower, jam from wood apple, herbal tea and many other processed products. This is indicative of their enterprising nature and hard work. ■

Business

- Enterprise
- Inclusion
- CSR
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'No policy for inclusive ventures'

Lok Capital looks out for opportunities

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

VISHAL Mehta is CEO and co-founder of Lok Capital, a social venture capital fund of \$87 million that is keen to invest in bottom of the pyramid businesses – a concept promoted by the late Professor C.K. Prahalad. Although the idea that one can run a successful business and also resolve poorer people's problems has caught the imagination of investors, in reality there are just a few sustainable business options for funds to invest in. But, Mehta says his fund is in for the long haul. His own ideas changed while he was doing a Masters in business administration in Michigan, Ann Harbour, in the US, where Professor Prahalad taught. Mehta spoke to *Civil Society* about the problems of inclusive investing and what his fund is looking for.

How did Lok Capital happen?

Aravind Srinivasan, the ophthalmologist who currently heads the Aravind Eye Hospital, was my senior in Michigan. We worked with Professor Prahalad to replicate the Aravind model of low-cost eye care in Kenya. Till then I was a middle-class engineering graduate who had taken a student loan and wanted to get into strategic consulting. Once I paid off my loan I was willing to get into any area of development – health, environment or HIV/AIDs. I joined Population Services International (PSI) and was ready to move to Tanzania. Then in 2002 I got a cold call from Rajiv Lall, who was at that time a very senior professional at Warburg Pincus. He wanted to start a social investment fund in India and was looking for someone who wanted to head back. He said we would raise money. My education came about at CDC Capital in India where I was located for a few years. Donald Peck, the then head of CDC Capital, is also a co-founder of Lok Capital.

How did you raise funds?

We were first going to raise funds from individuals.



Vishal Mehta

But we soon discovered that for high net worth individuals of Indian origin, philanthropy through investment was too ahead of its time. They were happy giving us say a cheque of ₹50,000. Microfinance, where we would charge interest, was out of the question. International Finance Corporation (IFC) was our first investor. Most of our other investors are multilateral institutions like FMO, KFW etc. We have two funds. The first is a \$ 22 million fund. The second fund, which we raised in early 2008, is a \$ 65 million fund. We tried getting pension funds and so on in that round but after the recession these funds disappeared.

Your initial mandate was to invest in microfinance. What happened?

That was the only investible sector available then. Microfinance is capital intensive. Scaling up is necessary to grow. A good way is to go public to raise money. But was it marketed correctly? Was it really gold at the bottom of the pyramid? If we were in California that would have got us an award – for solving the world's problems and making lots of money in the bargain. That would never go down well in India. We ignored our environment. The deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on record that MFIs are not ready for IPOs. We were a four per cent investor in Spandana, run by

LAKSHMAN ANAND

Padmaja Reddy, an excellent entrepreneur with great execution skills. We could not control the situation with such a small holding and so we made a profitable exit by selling out.

The industry said it would make eight per cent return on assets and continue to make it and scale forever. That is not sustainable. Growth became the only mantra. There was over-lending and not responsible lending. We had no other social goals or personal relationships with the customer. We ignored the fact that politicians work with people at the bottom of the pyramid.

Wasn't the Andhra Pradesh government encouraging microfinance institutions (MFIs)?

No, they were competing. The bureaucrats were against them. They had a state programme where the government, backed by the World Bank, lent to self-help groups (SHGs) at three per cent. They said MFIs lending at 30 per cent was not sustainable. How is a loan at three per cent sustainable? That is pure subsidy. The bureaucrats were administering this large showpiece programme. When President George W Bush visited, this was the programme he was shown.

But the MFIs also misbehaved while collecting loans...

The story on the ground is quite different. Police officers would ask for bribes from officers of Spandana and SKS. I was on the board of Basix. Once we got a call from an MLA that unless we gave him ₹8,000, they would close down the branch.

Look at the situation. The MFIs were the ones offering a service. So the people should have stood by them. But they had not spent time building a relationship by providing other services. If they had, the people would have told the politicians off. This is also a complex issue. The people were used to loan waivers in the past. So when the politicians decided to gain mileage and asked them not to repay, they just did what they did earlier.

How has the government dealt with the issue?

The way the government dealt with it was quite undemocratic. They issued a 28 per cent cap on microfinance. It was coming down anyways because of competition. Now because of tight margins, funds don't train thousands of credit officers. That was the core of the problem.

There was no innovation. They had one single product. We needed micro-insurance, housing and many others. Size is important in this industry. Banks have stopped lending. The small ones have collapsed. This was the country's largest financial inclusion programme and we did not clean it in a logical manner.

Now we have a ridiculous situation where they lend to MFIs at 16 per cent and have a return on assets of four per cent whereas the MFIs have a return on assets of one per cent. The banks do nothing for this high return and have no cap on interest rates even though this is part of their rural lending. MFIs have high administration costs and low returns.

The good thing is, if anyone wants to be in microfinance now, he has to be mad enough to want to be in it badly. He has to have a social cause in mind. We have two investments in this sector – Satin and Ujjivan. We believe they are committed. Satin survived because it is lucky not

to have been in Andhra Pradesh.

Your second fund is going to be in other inclusive businesses...

In this fund we will invest in critical bottom of the pyramid services. People need assets, employment services, education and health care. In employment services, we have invested in a rural BPO called Rural Shores.

Micro-housing is emerging as a very interesting sector. There are housing projects that cost between ₹7 lakhs to ₹15 lakhs in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Pune. We are talking to a company that finances SMEs for between ₹4 lakhs to ₹5 lakhs. They lend to a company that runs power looms in Karnataka, a *poha* making unit and some small restaurants. We undertake field visits to see their clients. Currently, we found a restaurant employing children. Hopefully we will be able to change that. This takes time. We will have to educate the finance company and put this in as part of social performance management in the term-sheet.

What about education?

The good news is that the poor are willing to pay for education. But the Right to Education (RTE) law has made affordable private schools very difficult to run. We have invested in Hippocampus because it does not come under the purview of primary or secondary schooling. It is a rural library chain that encourages reading and offers post-school services. The government should create a policy for private participation in inclusive businesses, but it does not seem to take this seriously.

I have come across a school which is willing to give more than 25 per cent quota for economically weaker sections and comply with all RTE requirements like a playground and Pay Commission salaries for teachers. The price point for the paying students will then be ₹1,200. But that is steep. Many private schools were doing this at price points of ₹200, ₹300 etc. They subsidized students who could not pay.

What about health care?

The ethics in that industry is so low and bad systems are so entrenched. For example, there is a hospital that is trying to remove the referral system and they told me no doctor will stay with them. In diagnostics, if a customer pays ₹8,000 for an MRI, ₹3,000 goes to the doctor who asked for the MRI. What margins are we talking about? We are struggling to change mindsets.

On the other hand, there are exceptions. Lifespring in Hyderabad, a maternity chain is one of them. They have been in operation for five years. Ethics are in the DNA of the doctors and nurses there. They are transparent and provide high quality at low cost.

How does transparency translate?

They have a chart that says a normal delivery costs ₹4,000 and a C-section ₹8,000. All services like check-ups and medicines are listed. The price point is very competitive. They also have a five-year track record where the C-section to normal delivery ratio is publicly available. For every delivery, there is a 20-page case sheet.

We will have to watch new industries and create measures to impact social metrics. It takes time to understand and establish practices. ■

The buzz about Buzzaria

Mamta's creative store gets it right

Colin Fernandes
New Delhi

SET incongruously beside a tyre store in a dusty by lane behind the Crescent at the Qutab mall in south Delhi, Buzzaria is a multi-brand retail store that exudes its own air of calm amidst a pot-pourri of products.

Mamta Mamta, the effervescent owner and curator set up shop nine months ago with an agenda to provide a platform for her slew of product lines.

Now with nearly 60 brands under one roof, Buzzaria provides start-ups, NGOs and other creative professionals a common ground to retail from.

"It's been a long, long road," says Mamta. This graduate in textile design from the South Delhi Polytechnic began her career in 1984 while still in her second year of college with Kutir. For 20 years, Mamta ran what was India's first ethnic retail brand till aggressive competition forced her out of her house and company.

Steeped in debt, she says she literally held an open house to pacify her creditors. "I told them all, if you cannot wait for me to pay you back, come and take anything you want from my factory, my store and my house," she says wryly.

With the shreds of whatever was left – strips of cloth, fabric samples and old sewing machines, she migrated to Mumbai in 2003 to try her luck again – this time with Arabic fashion.

This venture too fell through due to paucity of funds. Mamta now resolutely teamed up with interior designer Nihar Mehta to found the iconic Tribal Route store in Versova. However, her losing streak seemed to have followed her there too, eventually forcing her to come home to Delhi and start afresh all over again.

"It was all so surreal how it began again," she says. Mamta's resurgent brand – BluPear (ethnic footwear), was soon joined by HandsOn (hand-crafted jewelry and other products).

With no available commercial space, Mamta held a mini-bazaar in her house with fantastic results – everything sold out. For her next attempt, she got a neighbour to loan her their living room. This sale was again a huge success.

A few weeks later, a chance encounter with a



Mamta in her store at Lado Sarai in Delhi

property dealer in Lado Sarai led to the opening of Buzzaria the store in September 2011 with about 15 brands. Mamta says her personal philosophy is what drives her and her store's credo. She believes in fair trade rather than a competitive atmosphere. "If one designer is producing something of quality that is both innovative and value for money, how can anyone compare them with another similar designer?" she asks.

Mamta's umbrella brand – Blue Lotus, works on the 'Blue Ocean' strategy. "This is essentially the philosophy that you create your own space in the world, you don't take away or replace anyone else's space," she avers. "Primarily, this does away with the concept of competition and grading systems, because when you're creating your own space by doing what you want to do, you're not comparing yourself with anyone or anything. So my whole business is based on this strategy."

She mentors many brands from young designers and helps them find other retail outlets as well. Some of these are Chumbak, CheapSex, DeJainer, EDiOTS, Item Number, Bechain Nagri and Quirk Box.

"I only want to work with start-ups and entrepreneurs," she testifies. "But this is just the beginning," she smiles a trifle wearily, "I still have to pay off my debts from Kutir."

Bangalore-based Chumbak Design may have prominent display space with their kitschy notebooks, posters, cookie cans and more, but it is Mamta's self-designed brand – Mimathyma – that is the hottest seller. Named after the Indian purple emperor butterfly, Mimathyma is a range of varied fashion for women and has been fluttering off the shelves with reassuring regularity.

"After I burnt my fingers in my previous ventures, I decided not to get into manufacturing," says Mamta. "So we design the product and we have vendors or exporters who execute the orders."

Other in-house brands under Blue Lotus are Blu-pear (ethnic footwear), Eco-storey (eco-friend-

ly products), GodBless (candles), MeriJaan (bags and apparel), lamRa (crystals and healing) and the revolutionary Buzzouq concept.

"For many years, the only retail outlet home businesses and hobbyists had were Diwali melas," says Mamta. "Even the flea markets that occur occasionally in Saket have no space for service providers like tarot readers and make-up artistes."

The Buzzouq – a combination of Buzzaria and the Arabic souk (market) is a variant of the Buzzaria idea wherein Mamta and her team hire a club and rent out table space. Charges range from ₹1,500 to ₹2,500 per day from service providers and between ₹3,000 to ₹6,000 from product sellers. The fee includes all marketing and other promotions for the three-day event.

Closer to home and in homage to her beginnings at Buzzaria, Mamta has also initiated the Weekend Buzzaria where they take over living rooms and allow the hosts to play retailers for two days.

Hosts invite family friends and neighbours while Buzzaria sends out pamphlets and advertises locally. "It's fantastic because it's eventually a personalized shopping experience in your own home or neighbourhood," says Mamta. "It is way more fulfilling than your average kitty party," she grins.

"The best part is that the kids get involved in the process teaching them valuable lessons in what goes into creating a product and setting up the whole bazaar. They realise that it's not just a cakewalk. They understand the value of money up hand and at home," she affirms.

Buzzaria has been buzzing around the country this past year too. They were invited to set up a mini-bazaar at the INK Fest Jaipur in December last year, the Goa Ad Fest and the NGO Khushii has also had them create tailor-made shopping experiences at their events.

Named after Bajaria, the local market in Sawai Madhopur, this is one creative hive that intends to keep many an artistic bee buzzing. ■

Insights

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Ganga can be reborn

HIMANSHU THAKKAR

THE Ganga is made of gold and the Yamuna of silver,' (*Sone ki yeh Ganga hai, chandi ki Yamuna*) is the line of a popular song in 1960 that also celebrated the arrival of Nehru's modern temples. Today, for hydropower developers of all hues from local to global, the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers have indeed become the goose that lays the golden egg. The rulers of India, bitten by the economic bug, are very happy with this handling of the Ganga.

This cash-oriented treatment of the Ganga, however, overlooks basic values: democratic governance, which translates into transparency, participation, accountability and institutionalisation of independent scrutiny. Today, when the consciousness to treat the Ganga differently is getting increasing acceptability, there is an urgent need to acknowledge this need and take steps to achieve it.

Once you accept these core values in the governance of the river, formulating specific provisions for bottom up river management would be easier. The principles of democratic decentralisation in governance in general would apply here too. Starting from village level and then going up to sub-basin level (it could be block level where whole or substantial parts of a block are in the same basin or sub basin), to tributary level to state level to basin level.

A lot of people would ask, is that feasible? The trouble is we have not even given it a try. If Panchayati raj can work, why would this not? And the only places where rivers have achieved better fate are places where communities have taken river management into their own hands.

But how can this work at the river basin level with the massive dimensions that the Ganga has? The first issue that strikes us in this regard is that we have made absolutely no attempt at all to seriously try to achieve this. This possibly shows the dishonesty of our decision makers. Possibly they won't do it easily. A strong political push will have to be created. If we never begin, we will never achieve it, is it not?

However, let us see what needs to be done immediately. The first thing that strikes you – if you look at this public discourse closely from the



People and their river

Parliamentary debate to the public debate – is that there is no clear picture as to what is going on in this basin.

There is no clear snapshot as to how many hydropower projects, dams, irrigation projects, diversion structures, how much river flow exists in various tributaries of the river Ganga. There are a plethora of players involved in different aspects.

Even individual states have no idea of how many projects are being taken up in each state. We first and urgently need to do a stock taking exercise that would give us a clear picture about all that is happening in the Ganga River Basin that is affecting the river. That exercise can best be undertaken by the National Ganga River Basin Authority or the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) as these bodies have the necessary role and mandate.

And while we wait for the results of this urgent

exercise, since there is consensus that the Ganga is in pretty bad state and dams are one of the most important factors responsible for this state, no new dams should be taken up for clearance. It would also be better to put a pause on projects under construction in the Ganga basin, meanwhile, except for projects that local communities require for their own water or electricity.

While the NGBRA and the MoEF have the role and the mandate to take this up, their own credibility is today pretty low, considering their track record. For the exercise to have better credibility, it should be taken up by a credible independent body, not a body to be chaired by Planning Commission member B K Chaturvedi, as is being envisaged now. The stock taking exercise will also have the mandate to give directions for future work in the basin, considering the carrying capacity and cumulative

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impact aspects in basin wide context.

Here it should be added that there is an urgent need to issue a notification declaring the 135 km long Bhagirathi stretch upstream of Maneri Bhali I as an 'Eco-sensitive Zone' and restrict activities in this entire stretch to allow only those activities that local communities need for their water and power needs.

Secondly, we already have large river related infrastructure, and we need to urgently see how their role can be made more river friendly. In this context, the order of the Allahabad High Court last year may be pertinent. The court directed that no project can take away from the river more than 50 per cent of the water available in the river at that point of place and time. This needs to be implemented by all existing projects in the basin, particularly in the eight non-monsoon months.

All hydro power projects, all barrages and diversion structures need to be mandated to follow this immediately. During the monsoon too, the rivers require certain flood flows and guidelines will need to be put in place to ensure that. A number of reports have recommended that during the monsoon months, at least 30 per cent of the flows in the river should be released in the downstream area.

Thirdly, we need to understand that the more water we take away from the river, the less water the river will have and more polluted water will return. The river will thus suffer double damage. Therefore, to reduce water extraction from rivers and aquifers, we need to seriously take up a large number of demand side management measures urgently. Pushing and incentivising proper cropping patterns, water efficient cropping methods like the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), application of SRI for wheat, sugar and other crops, disincentives for virtual water exports, pushing and incentivising organic farming are some measures in the agriculture sector that can help a lot in this context.

For urban areas, ensuring that streams, rivers, local water systems and flood plains are protected, rainwater harvesting is given primacy in practice and not in preaching, equity in water supply, reduction in transmission and distribution losses, measures to reuse and recycle the treated sewage, ensuring decentralised sewage treatment and



The Ganga in Uttarakhand

recycling and making water governance democratic are some of the basic steps that can help improve the state of rivers a lot.

If we have decentralised sewage treatment that uses diverse technologies, it would be easier to ensure their proper functioning if their governance is genuinely democratic. This can also help ensure that streams do not become sewers as has happened in the case of Delhi. Participatory governance at ward, resident welfare association level, and the municipal corporation is key, if the state of urban water management is to improve along these lines.

Similarly, in the case of industrial and commercial projects that use water and discharge effluents, we need to create mechanisms with interface involving river based communities, civil society and credible media members to ensure that the basic environmental norms are adhered to by these activities. Without such a mechanism, necessary at the level of each industrial estate, each industrial cluster, for each larger industry, these activities will continue to destroy the rivers.

Next, we need to create layers of participatory

governance in the functioning of pollution control boards at all levels, the NGBRA, National River Conservation Directorate, Ganga Action Plan, Yamuna Action Plan, other river Action Plans, the Expert Appraisal Committee on River Valley Projects and the MoEF in general. Today, there is none. In fact, the most important reason why the Ganga has reached this stage is that the MoEF has abjectly failed to perform its role. Had the ministry done what it was expected to do, the river would not have reached this state. To expect that institution, which has been the reason for the problem, also to be a part of the solution would be to stretch credulity beyond breaking point.

In the end, let us remember what the Nobel prize winning economist Elinor Ostrom, whom we lost recently (June 12, 2012), said: "What I object to is the presumption that government officials have got all the knowledge and locals have none". The officialdom that has acquired immense powers is not going to give up its powers easily. It will require quite a big fight. ■

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

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A few quiet victories

KANCHI KOHLI

In the last few months a number of boats have rocked the judicial, executive and parliamentary arena. Each turbulence requires detailed scrutiny and in-depth analysis. But my attempt here is to sink into brevity while highlighting some instances where active civil society engagement has made an impact in environmental decision-making processes.

The first relates to the resistance of the executive, in this case the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), to make public the report of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), leave alone take ownership of its contents. The WGEEP, headed by Dr. Madhav Gadgil, currently a member of the National Advisory Council (NAC) had a substantive task set forth when the panel was first set up in March 2010 by the then Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh. Amongst other terms, this panel's task was to identify ecologically sensitive areas/zones (ESA/ESZs) in the Western Ghats region and also work out the framework and powers for a Western Ghats Environment Protection Authority (WGEPA).

The WGEEP submitted its report in August 2011 with a range of recommendations which could have a bearing on the future planning and regulation of the Western Ghats ecosystem. The MoEF sent this report to all the state governments through which the Western Ghats' ecosystem traverses and sought their comments. But, for unexplainable reasons, the report did not make it to the public domain which is where most civil society action over the Western Ghats has been located. Even though snippets of what the report contained kept coming out through journalistic writings in national newspapers, there was no open access to this report. Meanwhile, some state governments began responding and objecting to parts of the contentions and recommendations made in the report.

It therefore became even more significant that this report be made public for popular scrutiny by those who had actively engaged with the process and those who would be interested in knowing what its contents were. What was ironic is that the chairperson of the WGEEP had himself wanted the report to be made public. Attempts were also made by groups to use the Right to Information (RTI) route to procure the report from the MoEF to which the response was that the report cannot be provided as it is not final and comments of the relevant state governments are awaited.

It was finally the intervention of the Central Information Commission (CIC) (the apex body before which appeals and complaints related to RTI are decided), that the MoEF has made available the report on its website albeit with a disclaimer which says: "The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel report has not been formally accepted by the Ministry and the report is still being analyzed and considered by the Ministry."

And even as traffic on the MoEF website increases each day to get limited online access of

ance and mobilisation done on the ground by the Adivasi Majdoor Kisan Ekta Sangthan (through Harihar Patel) and Jan Chetna (through its member, Ramesh Agrawal) who had consistently raised concerns over this project despite threats to personal security and harassment. JSPL has now filed for a review of this order before the NGT, the outcome of which hangs in the balance of law.

Another very crucial verdict was the long awaited judgment on six appeals filed against M/s Nagarjuna Construction Company Limited, (NCC),

KANCHI KOHLI



Waterfalls in the Western Ghats

this report, court interventions are being sought to restrain activities and environmental approvals in the Western Ghats till such time as decisions on the WGEEP report are taken by the MoEF. This is especially for the highly sensitive Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1 and 2 as proposed by the WGEEP. Notices were issued by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on 30 May in an appeal filed by two Goa-based organisations, Goa Foundation and Peaceful Society.

This is what brings me to the second part of what has rocked several boats over the last couple of months. The NGT has from April to June set aside a number of environmental clearances based on appeals filed by directly affected people and long-standing activists. For instance, in April 2012, the tribunal set aside the environmental clearance granted to the 4MTPA Coal Mining Project of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) and 4MTPA Coal Washery at Gare IV/6 at Raigarh District, Chhattisgarh on grounds of faulty public hearing. The judgment delivered by Justice C.V Ramulu and Prof. Dr R. Nagendran held that the entire public hearing was a 'farce' and makes a 'mockery of the public hearing process'. This would not have been possible without the resist-

respondent in all the appeals proposed to set-up a coal-based thermal power plant at Golagandi and Baruva villages pertaining to Sompeta Mandal, Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The judgment brought back memories of the July 2010 incident when four people lost their lives in police firing while they were protesting against the construction of the project.

It was only after this incident that the then functional National Environment Appellate Authority (NEAA) and the MoEF stepped in to revoke clearances and begin re-examining the facts. M/s NCC did not give up and sought a review of this decision, and then neither did six appellants against this project. The substantive issues in

the case were heard again by the NGT which in its judgment dated 23 May this year, finally suspended the environment clearance granted to the project in December 2009.

But what this judgment also recommended was some additionalities. One of them directed the MoEF to take cognizance of the present day scenario and revise the siting criteria, plus guidelines for setting up of thermal power projects. Further, relying on the principles of sustainable development and the precautionary principle, the NGT has asked the MoEF to clearly spell out Go and No Go areas for locating thermal power plants as an attempt to internalise environmental issues. The new guidelines of the MoEF, to be drafted within three months of this order, need to include the above-mentioned zoning and be presented before the NGT.

But the final outcome of all this turbulent action remains uncertain. In the larger tussle between environment and industrialisation, these actions will be significant markers of people's engagement with law, policy and the environment. ■

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.

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When love defies old age

The best of the Cannes Film Festival

Saibal Chatterjee
Cannes

CANNES, which is bathed in sunshine for over 12 hours on a typical summer day, was sans much of its restorative warmth this May. A couple of days into the 65th edition of the French Riviera town's famed annual film festival, the weather turned rather nasty and the bustling La Croisette's brightness vanished under a dark cloud cover. The unseasonal drizzle lasted for three days straight.

As if that were not enough, on the closing day, some more rain was dumped on Cannes, emptying the beachfront of the sunbathers who are such an integral part of the ambience that generates the 12-day event's carnival-like spirit.

Inside the cavernous Grand Lumiere theatre, the Nanni Moretti-led jury reflected the prevailing mood of the rain gods by bestowing the festival's top prize on Munich-born Austrian writer-director Michael Haneke's austere French-language *Amour* (Love).

Amour is a meticulously crafted, uncompromisingly sparse and heart-wrenching exploration of a deeply-in-love octogenarian couple in the autumn of their lives, grappling with the inevitable process of ageing and dying.

This is Haneke's second Palme d'Or in four years. He won the same award in 2009 for his previous effort, *The White Ribbon*, a black-and-white German film set in a small town under an oppressively authoritarian dispensation in the months leading up to World War I.

He is now one of only six filmmakers who have won the Palme d'Or twice, and only the second director to bag Cannes' big prize with back-to-back



Writer-director Michael Haneke with his actors

films.

In *Amour*, Haneke, himself 70, homes in on a Parisian pair of retired music teachers, Georges and Anne. Their only daughter (played by French cinema legend Isabelle Huppert) lives abroad. They must fend for themselves as life begins to throw new challenges at them.

The couple's relationship is severely tested when the wife suffers a series of strokes that robs her first of speech, then of her motor skills and cognitive powers, and ultimately of life itself. The husband stands firm by the woman's side as all strength gradually ebbs out of her.

Following a night at a concert, Anne suffers a sudden blackout. After one stint in a hospital, she extracts a promise from her husband that she will not be moved out of her home no matter how unwell she is.

The storytelling style here is pure Haneke: bleak and unwaveringly solemn. This intimate human drama, played out primarily within the closed spaces of the aged couple's apartment, is essentially about the agony of loss and the rituals associated with the final act of letting go. But the film is informed with such depth, grace and faith in the power of love to transcend all obstacles that *Amour*



Still from *Horses of God*



Still from *La Pirogue*



Yousry Nasrallah's film, *After the Battle*

eventually becomes a strong affirmation of life.

It is a masterful film by a director at the very peak of his prowess. Haneke orchestrates every movement of the camera down to the last fraction of an inch and employs a subtle sound design to heighten the film's emotional tremors.

But nothing lends the film more power than the incandescent performances from the two lead actors – 81-year-old Jean-Louis Trintignant and 85-year-old Emmanuelle Riva.

Receiving the Palme d'Or, standing alongside his cast, Haneke said, "It's a hard thing to grapple with. It's something that I had to contend with in my own family and that is why I started to make this film." And, then, referring to his wife, the director said: "This film is an illustration of the promise we made to each other, if either of us finds ourselves in the situation described in the film."

Following the press screening of *Amour*, the director and the cast addressed a customary media meet. Answering a question on his film's exquisite sound design, Haneke said: "I hear more with my ears than I see with my eyes. I try to capture emo-

tions and I know that if the voice is right, then the emotion is right too." Trintignant provided corroboration. "I have never worked with a director who is so sensitive to sound."

The official selection of the Cannes Film Festival, as always, straddled a wide spectrum of films, from profoundly moving personal sagas to delightful specimens of cinematic whimsy, from the politically inflected accounts of people in the throes of history-altering change to sensitive studies of the human condition in parts of the world

where everyday life is a constant challenge.

Moroccan director Nabil Ayouch's new film, *Horses of God*, in the festival's Un Certain Regard section, portrays life in the sprawling Casablanca shantytown of Sidi Mamoun, where young men have nothing to look forward to and, therefore, nothing to lose.

This was the fertile hunting ground from where radical Islamists recruited the Casablanca human bombs in the aftermath of 9/11. The narrative terrain that the film traverses has the feel of a docudrama, but the director packs enough soul and energy into the grim canvas to turn it into a riveting fictional feature.

Senegalese director Moussa Toure's *La Pirogue*, another Un Certain Regard film, deals with fishermen, human traffickers and young men desperate to get away from a country where life has hit a dead-end. The mood is downbeat but Toure invests his exploration of the human condition with an epic, if straightforward, vision.

As Toure pointed out before the screening of *La Pirogue* in the Un Certain Regard sidebar, the film is an attempt on an African's part to "enter history", an obvious allusion to former French President Nicolas Sarkozy's infamous statement: "The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has not sufficiently gone down in history." In his film, one of the 30 people on the boat that is heading to Canary Islands says: "I am an African man who has decided to go down in history."

After the Battle, Egyptian veteran Yousry Nasrallah's unflinchingly political film, takes the events of one particular day during the Tahrir Square movement to comment on the social fissures that Egypt is heir to. It is openly critical of the forces that are still out to derail the revolution and hand the nation back on a platter to the army.

Among the more buzzed-about films on show was *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, a harrowing but bewitching story of a six-year-old girl from the southern Delta haunted by her father's deteriorating health, her mother's absence and the fear of an ecological catastrophe. Louisian-based Benh Zeitlin's debut film was a deserving winner of the Camera d'Or.

The film approaches its post-Katrina cautionary message with such unflinching force that it leaves you gasping as much in admiration as with a deep sense of fear. This is dazzling cinema crammed with poetry and visual surprises all the way through. ■

Great park gets back rare goat and more

Susheela Nair
Idukki (Kerala)

ENSCONCED between the high ranges of the Kannan Devan Hills in Idukki District and the Annamalai hills, the Eravikulam National Park encompasses 97 sq. km. Within the park you can experience the breathtaking natural splendour of undulating emerald grasslands interspersed by wooded valleys, shrub land and shola forests, crisscrossed by cold, clear streams.

But the pride of Eravikulam and its mascot, is the incredibly agile Nilgiri Tahr, a highly endangered animal, listed in the IUCN Red Data Book. The park's other claim to fame is the spectacular blooming of the purplish blue flowers of the *neelakurinji* shrub (*phlebophyllum kunthianum*) once in 12 years. Anamudi, the highest peak in South India, which towers 2695m (9884ft), also resides inside this park.

The history of the Eravikulam National Park can be traced to the colonial era when tahrs began to be slaughtered by British settlers. The widespread killing of the Nilgiri Tahr goats started when the army of the Duke of Wellington, who camped here during his offensive against Tipu Sultan, began killing the goat resulting in its population going down drastically.

Tame and friendly, the tahrs unfortunately became a favourite item on the camp menu. The goat was poached into extinction in the 1950s, before an NGO stepped in and ensured their mountainous habitat was declared a sanctuary. The goats learnt to keep aloof from human beings. Salt licks were put out and Clifford Rice, an American biologist, who spent time researching this unique species, succeeded in taming tahrs by enticing them with salt.

You can see a profusion of red rhododendrons, flame of the forest and myriads of orchids and balsams in this shola-grassland ecosystem. An orchid (*Brachycorythis wightii*) that was long thought to be extinct was rediscovered in this part of the park. Once in 12 years, the *neelakurinji* carpets entire hillsides and valleys as far as the eye can see. The next *neelakurinji* 'outburst' is due in the year 2018.

Apart from the Nilgiri Tahr, the park's priceless treasure, other lesser known animals such as the

SUSHEELA NAIR



The gentle Nilgiri Tahr

Nilgiri marten, small clawed otter, ruddy mongoose, dusky striped squirrel and small Indian civet are also found here. The undulating terrain of the park serves as a migratory route for elephants to the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. The park also shelters sambars, gaurs, macaque, the occasional tiger or leopard and wild dogs, the most feared predators of the grasslands.

About 120 varieties of birds have been documented here including endemic species like the black and orange flycatcher, the Nilgiri pitpit, Nilgiri wood pigeon, white bellied shortwing, Nilgiri verditer flycatcher and the Kerala laughing thrush. Around 100 species of butterflies can be spotted including endemic ones confined to the shola-grassland ecosystems like the red bush brown and Palni Four Wing.

Visitors are allowed to go only up to Rajamalai, the tourism zone which is approachable by vehicles. It is a high altitude rocky precipice of the National Park. Rajamalai, as its name suggests, means 'a king among the hills'.

We followed the footsteps of the nimble-footed wild goats which live in herds on the steep black rocky slopes of the Anamalais. It is here in the downs and crags of Rajamalai that we sighted the Nilgiri Tahr, an endemic animal of the Western Ghats. We found these sure-footed animals foraging for grass and the frisky young ones scaling up and down the slopes with such amazing ease and grace that they have been bestowed the title of 'the mountain monarchs'.

Tahrs are brownish and have short, flat horns. The male has a thick mane and can be easily seen around the entrance.

Eravikulam's estimated tahr population is around 800 making it the largest viable population in the world. One-third of the world's population of tahrs reside in these emerald grasslands.

We stopped by at the Interpretation Centre called the 'Story of the Park' which provides valu-

able insights into this ecosystem. Supported by captivating visuals, it is worth a peek. From the Interpretation Centre we took a short stroll along the road through the grasslands. The valley view from the park is stunning. The core and buffer areas are out of bounds for tourists. Even trekking is not permitted in these areas.

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Neelakurinji in bloom

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FACT FILE

Contact: Wildlife Warden's Office

Munnar P.O.-685612

Tel: 04865-2531587

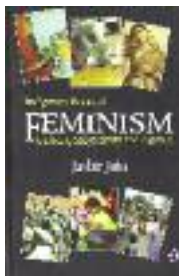
How to get there:

Air: Nearest airport: Kochi- 143 km

Rail: Nearest railhead: Pollachi- 72 km

RANDOM SHELF HELP

A quick selection from the many books that turn up for review

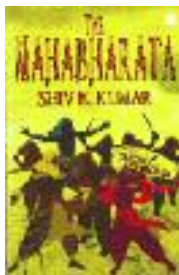


INDIGENOUS ROOTS OF FEMINISM CULTURE, SUBJECTIVITY AND AGENCY

Jasbir Jain
Sage Publications

₹ 695

FEMINISM in India is often seen as a Western construct. Jasbir Jain's book shows this is not so. Her book traces the ups and downs of the women's movement in India going back to Vedic times and connecting the past with the present. As she states, it is culture that influences all aspects of life. And even today, our values are rooted in traditional culture, although a lot has changed. Jain's first chapter examines the formation of patriarchal and religious structures during the ancient period and the female identity it generated. She looks at the depiction of women in the two epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata and analyses the Manusmriti, Natyasastra, the Bhakti movement, the role of women in the freedom struggle and the present resurgence of the feminist movement. ■



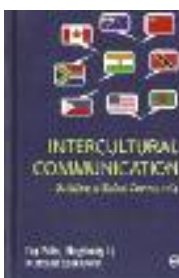
THE MAHABHARATA

Shiv K Kumar
Harper Collins

₹ 399

ANOTHER book on the grand epic, the Mahabharata, but with a difference. The author, Shiv K Kumar relates the story of one of the greatest epics in the world in simple, lucid language. Instead of delving into the intricacies of philosophy and spirituality, he uncovers the human side of the epic. As he puts it, "the Mahabharata is not only a tale of battles and philosophies but also a story about the people who fought those battles and lived those philosophies."

The book is a good read especially for first timers keen to understand the story of this epic. ■



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Building a Global Community
Fay Patel, Mingsheng Li,
Prahalad Sookninan
Sage Publications

₹ 525

THIS is an important book with insights on building a global community. We aspire to

send our children to the best global schools. But what makes them global citizens is their ability to be better people who understand themselves, their own society and overcome their own stereotypes.

The authors write about how to build successful communication bridges across cultures. Theories on global communication norms and ethics are dissected, contemporary socio-cultural issues examined and common ground is identified. Expansion of social organizations, global infrastructure, communication in health, work, environment and education are also covered.

The authors also dissect the idea of 'third culture building'. The idea is to retain our original culture and yet share common ground. Certain values surpass boundaries and create global culture. ■



THE POLITICS OF BELONGING IN THE HIMALAYAS

Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics
Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka &
Gerard Toffin
Sage Publications

₹ 850

IN this book, research papers based on several case studies carried out by anthropologists, political science scholars, historians and geographers analyse what makes people feel like a collective and what binds them together. The regions chosen include Nepal, Uttarakhand, and the northeastern states of Assam and Nagaland. Organised in three parts, the papers delve into the interactions between local forms of belonging within a village community, and new forms of belonging imposed through national integration and global politics. ■



URBANIZING CITIZENSHIP

Contested Spaces in Indian Cities
Edited: Renu Desai &
Romola Sanyal
Sage Publications

₹ 695

SINCE the past two decades India has been experiencing an urban revolution of sorts. Three factors stand out – the spatial expansion of cities, liberalization and democratization. As rural India spills into urban India, spaces become contested. With no legal rights to land or services, the poor contribute their labour but have nowhere to live. The research papers analyse six Indian cities – Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Varanasi and examine notions of citizenship. ■

'With no law

Kishwar Desai's new novel unravels a troubling topic



ORIGINS OF LOVE

Kishwar Desai
Simon & Schuster

₹ 350

Swati Chopra
New Delhi

caught up with Kishwar Desai at the Mountain Echoes Literary Festival in Bhutan at the end of May. She spoke feelingly about her second new book, *Origins of Love*, which is on the billion-dollar surrogacy 'industry' headquartered in India.

The anger she felt at a society that devalues and exploits women catalyzed her into writing both her novels, explained Kishwar. Her first book, *Witness the Night*, won the Costa First Novel Award in 2010. Kishwar has also authored *Darlingji: The True Love Story of Nargis and Sunil Dutt*, which covers 100 years of Hindi cinema's history.

Simran Singh, a character Kishwar created in *Witness the Night*, resurfaces in *Origins of Love*. In both novels, Simran is an unconventional sleuth with a sense of humour. Simran's growing star status among readers has prompted Kishwar to plan a series on her.

Married to economist Lord Meghnad Desai, the attractive and erudite Kishwar lives in London, a city that is central to the plot of her new novel. She says she is keen to put gender back into the debate in India. "I hope these books will help do so," she told *Civil Society*.

***Witness the Night* dealt with female infanticide and foeticide, while *Origins of Love* is on surrogacy. Is this coincidental, or did these issues move you as a woman?**

Witness the Night was something I had wanted to write for a long time, but never got the time. It had been in my head for many years. But *Origins*

surrogacy in India is dangerous'

of Love happened because my publishers and readers wanted to see Simran Singh, the central character (who is a social worker and amateur detective), come back in a book series. They really liked her and responded to her very well.

During my research for the second book, I found the issue of surrogacy interesting and dangerous in a country like India where there are no laws regulating it. But if I really introspect, I think that this may not really be a coincidence because I do actually want to put gender back into the debate in India, and I hope these books will help do so.

You mentioned you were quite angry when you sat down to write both books?

Yes, I was particularly angry when I wrote *Witness the Night*. It appalled me that we could live in a country where baby girls were being selectively killed, and no one was saying anything and no one was being punished for it. Similarly, when I wrote *Origins of Love*, I discovered a whole world where surrogate mothers are usually from extremely poor and deprived backgrounds. They are sometimes subjected to multiple operations and invasive fertility treatments. They are all doing it for money. And there is no law to protect them!

How did the story of *Origins of Love* come to you? Did you decide to weave it around the true stories you came across while researching the book?

The story came to me after the research, as only then did all the aspects of surrogacy become clear to me. I also understood the many ways in which mistakes can happen and how innocent people can – and do – suffer because of it. But I did not want to be moralistic. So in the novel, I do try to look at the problem from various angles, always keeping the storyline in mind. *Origins of Love* has been described by many as being a 'real page-turner.' I am really thrilled that I have managed to look at a difficult problem and keep my readers engaged at the same time.

How do you personally respond to the issue of surrogacy?

One has to be careful not to be moralistic or judgmental as for many men and women having their own child is a crucial part of their lives. I am sure it is emotionally gut-wrenching for the commissioning parents who cannot carry their own child



Kishwar Desai

'I am sure it is emotionally gut-wrenching for the commissioning parents who cannot carry their own child to full term and the gestational mother who has to carry the child.'

to full term for whatever reason, and the gestational mother who has to carry the child for nine months and then give it up. So, you will find in my book find that I do sympathise with both sides. As I said, this is a grey area but we need

strict laws to monitor surrogacy and make sure no one is exploited.

Legislation is required to regulate fertility treatments, but how can attitudes be changed?

I am not sure if legislation is enough. But we need to have more open debates on these very difficult subjects since fertility levels in both men and women are dropping all over the world, even in India. As science advances, we are going to find more and more so-called 'solutions' to this growing problem. There will be increasing experimentation and all kinds of dubious reasons to use the marginalised and the economically deprived. We need a national fertility monitoring and regulatory authority, as well as a global one.

We have no way of telling if children born of surrogates will be healthy, and we need to keep a track of that. We also need to be sure that the commissioning parents are not going to misuse the child in any way. And we must be prepared to offer psychological support if things go wrong as when children born in this complicated fashion want to meet their gestational mother and the sperm and egg donors who contributed to their birth. We also have to be careful that the 'designer baby syndrome' does not become too compelling for commissioning parents and the medical community.

Simran Singh is a character that stays with one beyond the book.

How did she take form?

I am really happy you liked Simran. She is a combination of so many feisty Indian women I know. Also, it was important for me that she be a normal woman and not annoyingly beautiful and young. So she is middle-aged, loves to drink and smoke and indulge in the occasional affair. She is very independent and not in search of a husband. She is quite happy with her life and lives with her mother and adopted daughter. But she is also a romantic and often falls in love with unsuitable men. However, she wants a more just society and goes out there and fights for causes she really believes in.

As I mentioned earlier, the series evolved quite organically once the first book came out and everyone loved Simran. Wherever I travelled, I was asked, 'So what's Simran going to do next?' And so the next book was written and now I'm working on the third and hopefully there will be a fourth and a fifth. ■

swatchopra1@gmail.com

Tone up your liver

Dr G. G. GANGADHARAN

GREEN CURES



THE liver is the largest glandular organ in the body and has more functions than any other human organ. A person's entire blood supply passes through the liver several times a day. At any given time there is about a pint of blood in your liver.

Ayurveda considers the liver as the seat of 'Pitha' activity. Pitha in Ayurvedic parlance is one of three functional units, Vaata and Kapha being the other two. The liver is responsible for all kinds of assimilation in the body including digestion, the actions of enzymes and your metabolism at tissue level.

The liver has a pivotal role in body metabolism.

- It produces bile which is buffered in the gallbladder and is used to break down and digest fatty acids.
- It produces prothrombin, fibrinogen and heparin that help in preventing blood from clotting within the circulatory system.
- It converts sugar into glycogen which is temporarily stored till the muscles require energy.

- It synthesizes proteins and cholesterol and converts carbohydrates and proteins into fats.
- It also produces blood protein and various other enzymes required for digestion and other body functions.
- It produces urea which it synthesizes from carbon dioxide and ammonia.
- Prominently, it is responsible for detoxifying the body of poisonous substances by transforming and removing toxins and wastes. There are five main sources of body toxins and wastes that the liver deals with: toxins from food (traces of pesticides, preservatives) and alcohol; external toxins (drugs, adulterants, and environmental pollutants); internally produced chemicals, such as hormones, that are no longer needed; nitrogen-containing waste left over from protein re-use; and energy production. These toxins and wastes are converted into less harmful substances by the liver and then eliminated from the body.

Because of the liver's significant role in maintaining our health, we must do all we can to keep it in a healthy state.

The causes of liver disorders are mainly dietary, like eating allergic food that is not suitable to one's constitution, or eating heavy, cold and dry items regularly. Alcohol consumption is also a major cause of liver damage. Viral infections such as hepatitis A to E and G are other causes. Most chemical drugs get detoxified in the liver and may cause liver damage in the long run.

Food for the liver: All leafy steam-cooked vegetables are good for the liver especially ash gourd (green pumpkin) in the form of soup with pepper powder and rock salt.

- Diluted buttermilk cooked with a few pieces of dried and crushed pomegranate fruit cover (hard) with a pinch of turmeric, a few leaves of curry patta and pepper with a little bit of rock salt is a good drink for the liver and tasty too!
- Grapes both dry and fresh in the form of juice or raw are equally good.
- A leafy vegetable curry made out of Kakamachi (solanum nigrum) is very useful for the liver. In southern states, this is a common addition in the diet.

HERBS: Mentioned below are some herbs which are well-known and useful for liver care. Daily intake of these herbs as indicated for a period of 41 days will be useful to tone-up the liver.

- Kakamachi (solanum nigrum)
- *Tinospora cordifolia* (Gudoochi – Amrithaballi)

Take one handful of around 60 gm of matured green stem of *tinospora cordifolia*. Remove the thin, outer skin. Cut into small pieces two or three inches in size. Crush the stems slightly and put them in 120 ml. of boiled hot water at night and cover the pan. Next morning, squeeze the *tinospora cordifolia* and remove it from the water and filter it. Add one tablespoon of honey and drink the liquid on an empty stomach. This can help to rejuvenate the liver and make it function in an optimum manner.

- *Aegle marmelose* (Bhel, Bilwam) and *Eclipta alba*, (Bhringaraja, Karishilam kanni)
- *Eclipta alba*, (Bhringaraja, Karishilam kanni)

Make a paste of the fresh leaves of *Aegle marmelose* (Bhel, Bilwam) and *Eclipta alba*, (Bhringaraja, Karishilam kanni), of five gm each. Add a pinch of turmeric. Consume this paste in the morning on an empty stomach followed by a cup of diluted buttermilk.

- *Phyllanthus amarus* (Bhoomyamalaki- Kizharnelli),

For viral infections of the liver like Hepatitis A, etc. take the following for 14 days:

Take five gms of *Phyllanthus amarus* (Bhoomyamalaki- Kizharnelli), preferably the reddish shaded variety. Make a paste and mix with one glass of fresh unboiled cow's milk or diluted cream free buttermilk. Take this in the morning on an empty stomach and consume the same quantity in the evening at around 6.00 pm. Avoid any oily substances, sour items and salt. This enhances the retro-viral activities in the liver and the person gets relief from all symptoms of jaundice in two weeks time. ■

vaidya.ganga@frlht.org

WONDER PLANT

Useful wild jackfruit

WILD jackfruit occupies an important place in ethnic kitchens. The tree is a relative of our common jackfruit tree. It belongs to the family Moraceae and is botanically known as *Artocarpus hirsutus*.

Wild jackfruit has multifarious uses. Its ripe fruit is edible. Its ripened cooked fruit is used in the kitchen. The leaf, bark, ripe fruit and latex of wild jackfruit are used as medicine. The fresh leaves of this tree are used as fodder for elephants. Wild jack's fallen leaves are reported to be the best organic mulching for the growth of plants. The tree's wood is utilized to construct houses, build boats and make furniture.

The latex from the bark of the wild jackfruit tree has an insect repellent property, and in some places, it is used as a wood coating to prevent insect attacks. The wood, wood peelings, small branches and stumps of the tree can be used as firewood or fuel because of its high calorific value.

Location: Wild jackfruit is endemic to the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. It is found from sea level to 1,300 metres above sea level in semi-evergreen and evergreen forests, especially along rivers. In Chikmagalur district of Karnataka,



it has been sighted in open forests. Because of its rarity and endemic nature, this species has been included in the 'Red Listed Medicinal Plants of India' under the threat category called 'Vulnerable'.

Ayurveda properties: The ripe fruit of wild jack is sweet and is used to reduce body heat. Ripe fruits are recommended in vitiated conditions of vata and pitta and used to treat anorexia. Fruits are also reported to be aphrodisiac. Infusion of the bark is applied to cure pimples and cracks on the skin. The tree's powdered bark is used to heal sores. Its dry leaves are used to treat swelling of the lymph glands.

Planting: Wild jackfruit provides edible fruits and invites a variety of birds, butterflies and other creatures which facilitate the process of pollination in gardens. Wild jack is an evergreen tree. Therefore, it gives endless joy through the year. Its attractive foliage supplies enticingly cool shade in summer. Its curious, lovely fruits are eye catching.

Wild jack's orange-yellow fruits peeping behind shiny green leaves are worth seeing. The tree can be used to provide privacy or to block unsightly views. It is a dazzling patio tree! Planting wild jackfruit in a row with a



spacing of 15 feet will act as a good wind-breaker. To enjoy its real beauty, it should be planted in isolation and not mixed closely with other tree species. Even though its natural population is restricted to the wet zone, it is suitable for almost all climates. It requires little attention to shape up.

Wild jackfruit can be propagated by seeds as well as by vegetative means. Fresh seeds are collected in May and July. Seeds are reported to have viability for only two weeks. Therefore, fresh seeds are sown immediately. Germination starts after a week and continues for two months. About 65 to 70 per cent germination can be expected.

For planting by vegetative means, the base of the stem cuttings are dipped in Rootex powder and planted in a sandy mother bed. They are then covered with a polythene spread sheet to induce humidity. Planting stem cuttings in a mist chamber gives better results in rooting. Rooting is observed in 70 to 80 per cent of stem cuttings. When the rooted cuttings are two months old they are then transplanted.

Self-help

For ringworm itch: One teaspoon of bark powder is mixed with coconut oil and used externally against 'dhobi's itch' and ringworm.

For snakebite and fractures: Rub a piece of the bark, an inch in size on a stone with water to make a paste. Mix this paste in coconut oil and apply it on the snakebite. For domestic animal bone fractures, this paste is mixed with palm sugar and applied as a thick paste on the fracture.

For joint pains: The dried leaves of the wild jackfruit tree can be used to treat joint pains and rigidity. The dried leaves are crushed with turmeric and applied on painful joints. This can also treat chronic haemorrhage with continuous application.

The dried leaves are also used as part of a camphorated poultice for the treatment of the swelling of testicles, originating from contusion. This is a folk medicine from northern Kerala.

For constipation: The seeds of wild jackfruit are roasted with crushed onion fried in curd and inserted rectally to treat constipation. The seed paste is also used as a laxative. ■

NM Ganesh Babu

LOOK GOOD

Healthy mothers

CHILDBIRTH and pregnancy are significant events in a woman's life. A pregnant lady requires complete care and utmost attention by the family. A lot of changes happen and therefore the health of the pregnant woman has to be taken care of. This includes modification in food, lifestyle and exercise.

General tips :

- Always stay calm and happy.
- Cleanliness is a must.
- Wear comfortable and light clothes.
- Sleep sideways instead of on your back.

Things to be avoided:

- Avoid long distance travel.
- Don't carry heavy weights.
- Don't strain your body physically and mentally.
- Never fast during pregnancy.

Diet & lifestyle:

- In the first trimester most expectant mothers suffer from nausea and vomiting so they don't eat proper food. The pregnant lady should drink a lot of milk to avoid sour vomiting and uncomfortable feeling.
- Taking milk with dry grapes, date palm and

cashew is good during the first three months.

- Milk is considered to be a whole food.
- The expectant mother must eat easily digestible food and light food at regular intervals.
- During the second trimester, it is good to take something sweet with milk.
- Eat a bit of butter with food.
- In the fifth month, an oil massage followed by a lukewarm water bath will be relaxing. Remember not to massage till the fifth month.
- Consume fruits and fibrous vegetables. Include ample liquid and nutrition.
- There may be constipation during the seventh month. To avoid that include ghee in the diet. Avoid crisp, deep fried foodstuff. Eat food in smaller quantities and frequently.
- In the eighth month, rice pudding can be added to the diet since it is very nutritious.
- Jeera water can be consumed in the ninth month to reduce pain.
- Oil enema is very beneficial during the ninth month. But it should be used only after consulting an Ayurveda physician.
- Throughout pregnancy, boiled and cooled water should be consumed. ■

Dr. Ashwini V Konnur, BAMS, YIC, CFN.
ashwinivkonnur@gmail.com

ORGANIC CHEF

Juice & soup



COCONUT AND LEMON JUICE

Ingredients:

Tender coconut water: 300ml
Lemon juice: 2 tsp
Sugar: To taste

Method: First dissolve the desired amount of sugar in tender coconut water. Then add lemon juice. Mix well. Now filter the juice through a muslin cloth. It is important to first dissolve the sugar and then add lemon juice.

Benefits: This drink is tasty, increases strength in the body and is suitable for summer. It is especially good for children's health.

Contra-indication: Not suitable for those having diabetes.

HORSEGRAM SOUP

Ingredients:

Horse gram: 2 cups
Tomatoes: 2 chopped
Ginger: 2 tsp chopped
Imli: 1 tbsp tamarind water
Jaggery: 2 tsp grated jaggery
Garlic: 2 tsp chopped garlic
Whole dry red Kashmiri chillies: 2 to 3
Coriander seeds: 1 tsp
Cumin seeds: 1 tsp cumin seeds
Peppercorns: 1 tsp peppercorns
Chopped coriander leaves: One tbsp
Salt: To taste

Method: Clean and wash the horsegram. Combine the horsegram, tomatoes, tamarind water, ginger, jaggery and salt in a pressure cooker and cook it till the gram is tender. In a tava, dry roast red chillies, coriander seeds, cumin seeds and garlic and blend in a mixer along with 2 tbsp cooked gram to a coarse powder. Transfer to a deep pan, add to the cooked gram along with the water and bring to boil. Pass through a sieve and garnish with coriander. Serve hot. The medicinal properties of horse gram are that it reduces vata and kapha, increases pitta, is good for the eyes and it is diuretic.

This soup is especially good for obesity. It reduces weight by its hot potency. ■

Dr. Jayanthi S, Research Associate, I-AIM

PRODUCTS

LAKSHMAN ANAND

SPANISH STYLE GOES DESI

WALK into the Mera Parivar Centre in Gurgaon's Rajeev Nagar and you will realize that Planet Earth is one big family. A group of women are busy making kurtas, dupattas, bracelets, key chains and home décor for sale. The designs are unique for they blend Spanish and Indian styles.

Mera Parivar, an Indian NGO, has partnered Naya Nagar, a Spanish NGO. The two NGOs believe in promoting trade that is based on 'transparency, ethics and self-respect.' Business should promote economics and ethics besides being good for society and the environment, say the two NGOs. So they strive for 'responsible trade.'

To boost the local economy all material is bought locally. And profits are reinvested in projects that benefit poor communities like scholarships for underprivileged children and financial support for the training centre where women are trained and empowered. Many of their children are now recipients of these scholarships.

If you are keen to help or buy products you can get in touch with Neus Gimeno.
Email: info@nayanagar.org,
ngimeno@nayanagar.org
Website: www.nayanagar.org



SHAMIK BANERJEE



NATURAL ART

NANDRAM Bothi and his wife Shanti Bai are Gond artists who paint on papier mache. "Both are eco-friendly techniques," explains Nandram, engrossed in painting a wall hanging. His pictures are engraved with tiny mirrors, making his work look more eclectic. "My forte are religious paintings," he says, pointing to a painting of Goddess Durga with great pride. Gonds, he says, paint to celebrate weddings, festivals or the birth of a child. Each painting sells for around ₹450. Nandram says his art doesn't earn him enough so he works as a labourer to make ends meet.

Contact: Shanti Bai,
09329591329, 09575503721.

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



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

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Asha Hansda
Beneficiary, Tejaswini Project