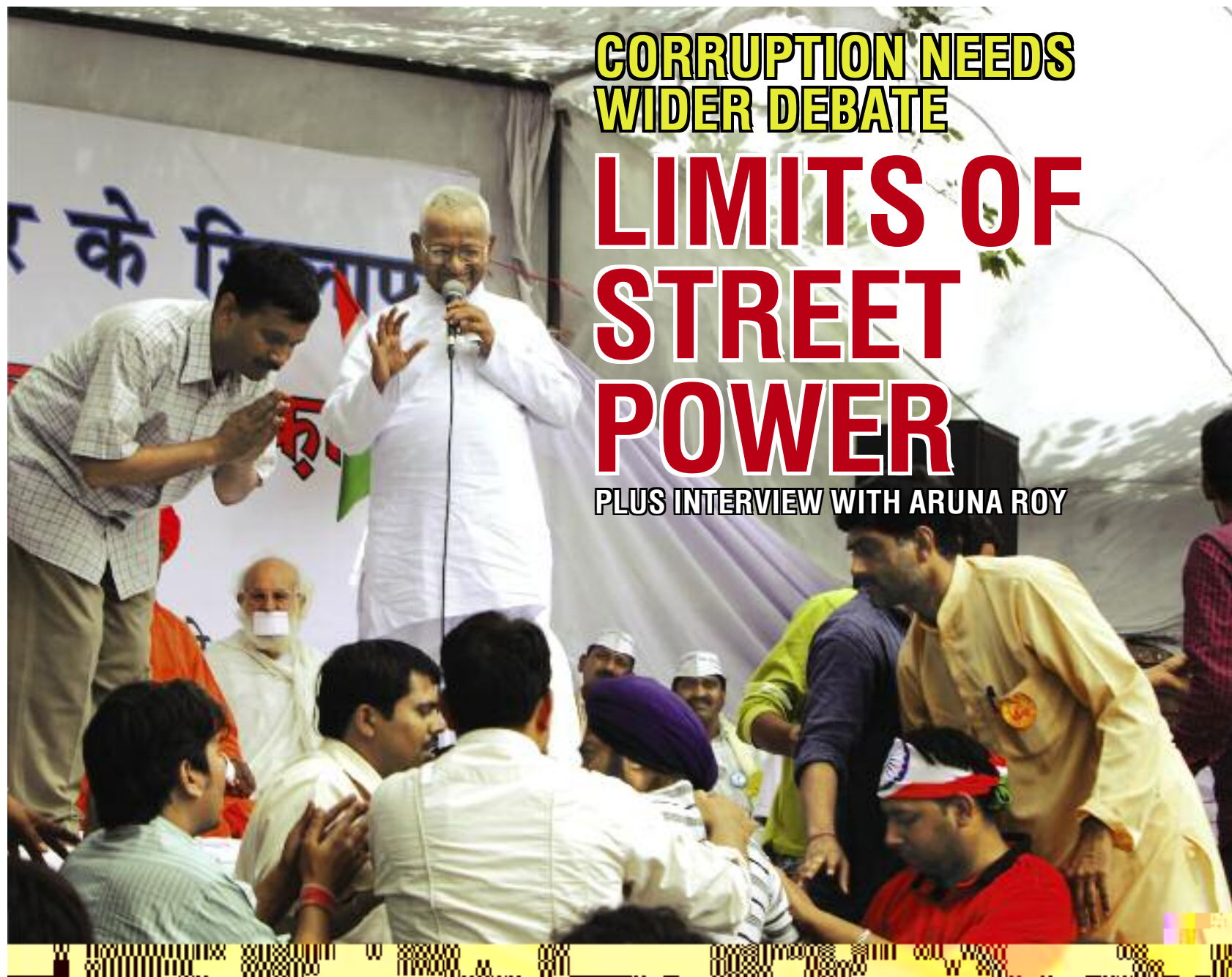


# Civil Society



**CORRUPTION NEEDS WIDER DEBATE**

## LIMITS OF STREET POWER

PLUS INTERVIEW WITH ARUNA ROY



**'COMPANIES SHOULD BE READY TO FACE LAW LIKE RTI'**

B. Muthuraman, president of CII, on making industry more open and accountable

Pages 6-8

**CIVIL SERVICES ATTRACT KASHMIR**

Pages 8-9

**JACKFRUIT IN ALL ITS GLORY**

Pages 10-11

**THE VERY SMALL HOUSING LOAN**

Pages 25-26

**OWN AN ELEPHANT FOR A DAY**

Pages 33-34



## Project Muskaan

# Pumping Excitement into Rural Primary Education

In 2007, we started 'Project Muskaan' with an objective to strengthen the education system in Government Rural Primary Schools through active community participation. Today we run this project in 100 schools in Gajraula (U.P.), Samlaya (Gujarat), Nira (Maharashtra), Nanjangud (Karnataka), Vilayat (Gujarat), Kapasan (Rajasthan), Bhagwanpur (Uttarakhand) in India. Our efforts have resulted in declining dropout rate and improvements in learning.

We found out that in rural areas, lack of good hygiene and shortage of water was a deterrent to young girls attending school. We focused on this issue and developed an innovative yet simple see-saw swing that could pump water to a height while children continued to play on it. 'Khe! Khe! Mein Paan' initiative was thus rolled out at these Primary Schools.

The young students got attracted to this unique 'Fun 'n' Utility exercise brought about by our Muskaan Pump and participated heartily to contribute towards the welfare of their school.

Our efforts in this direction of making education interesting and accessible to school children were appreciated by the Government while UNICEF and CII have recognized 'Project Muskaan' as one of the best practices of CSR in the field of Education.

**With a network of 100 schools 'Project Muskaan' is truly spreading smiles across the young school going children in the areas where Jubilant Bhartia Group runs its manufacturing plants.**

## We are Jubilant.

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation (JBF) is engaged in conceptualizing and implementing the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of the Jubilant Bhartia Group. The foundation's focus areas aimed at community development include primary education, basic healthcare services and vocational training, empowering youth and women. The foundation and its team has been active in supporting communities around manufacturing facilities of Jubilant Life Sciences Limited (Formerly Jubilant Organosys Limited) since 1982. Jubilant Life Sciences Limited, is an integrated Pharmaceutical and Life Sciences company, headquartered in India servicing its customers globally.



[www.jubilantbhartiafoundation.com](http://www.jubilantbhartiafoundation.com)

# CONTENTS



## STREET POWER HAS ITS LIMITS

The agitation against corruption captured the attention of the middle-class by using TV and Internet. But it sputtered when dealing with the serious issues involved.

20

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: LAKSHMAN ANAND

Support for positive children declines ..... 12

Friends of trees ..... 13

Super 7 are on their way ..... 15

Kalsi's electric cows ..... 18

Indian villages online ..... 27

Building Bihar's schools ..... 29

Himachal's serene splendour ..... 35

Enriching India's villages ..... 37

Understand your mind ..... 38

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## Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

### Lokpal logjam: We told you so

THE cover story of our May issue, *Lokpal in a Hurry*, had cautioned that the frenzied search for a superman to fix all corruption in the country would get us nowhere. It is unrealistic to seek a silver bullet to fight corruption. Fasts unto death, impossible deadlines and anger-filled depositions on TV may seem very heroic to those who like such B grade histrionics. But we must ask ourselves whether this is the way we wish to proceed as a democracy.

As we had predicted, the joint committee's discussions on the Jan Lokpal Bill have foundered on the big-ticket issues of the Prime Minister's office, the higher judiciary and the Lokpal's accountability. It also unclear how an elaborate investigative machinery adding up to a staff of 15,000 nationwide will function. How will the CBI and CVC be merged with it?

The reason these issues haven't been resolved is that a law that will affect a billion people can't be debated and crafted in the midst of the hysteria that has become the hallmark of TV discussions. If the entire accountability and investigation system in the country is to be reorganised, then surely the place to discuss this is in Parliament and in the Assemblies where people are democratically represented.

A committee of 10 people, five representing the government and five civil society, working to an arbitrary deadline is not the best way to draft a law. The government was foolish to appoint such a committee in the first place.

But the five individuals – Anna Hazare, Arvind Kejriwal, Prashant Bhushan, Shanti Bhushan and Santosh Hegde – who claim to represent all of civil society in India have a lot more to answer for than the government. They have succeeded in trivialising civil society at a time when it has an enormously creative role to play in taking India forward.

There were innumerable others with contributions to make who were omitted merely because they didn't want to be a part of the extreme behaviour that this agitation represented. Not everyone believes that all judges in the country are corrupt. This is of course not to say that there isn't corruption and lack of accountability in the judiciary. Similarly, there is a lot wrong with our politicians, but we do have a functioning democracy and the freedom to vote out our representatives.

Civil society's role is to strengthen democracy and help improve processes through which better governance is possible. But when a handful of people selectively target an elected government and misuse the power of TV cameras to create hysteria over an issue which should be calmly understood, then we are doing a disservice to the vast majority of Indians.

We bring you in this issue a number of civil society voices which feel strongly about corruption and would like to see it eradicated, but don't necessarily agree with the five people claiming to represent them.

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## IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR



## LETTERS



### Lokpal Bill

As a citizen of India I am a silent spectator of the India Against Corruption movement. This movement is very strongly required in our present times. I see it as the third movement of freedom in India. The first was against the British. The second was against the Emergency. The enemy was clearly visible and outside our society. But in this movement the enemy are

our own brothers. It is easy to fight with outsiders but very difficult to fight with our own brothers.

The success of this movement will depend on the number of people who participate and on the class of participants. If you want to achieve success then you must involve the common man from rural areas like Mahatma Gandhi did through his padyatras to remote villages. At present this movement is 90 per cent city-based.

This movement will take a long time to achieve success because the nexus between the bureaucracy, politicians, judiciary and the media is very strong and based on mutual interest.

The movement can only go forward with the participation of the common man and their good wishes.

**Raj Kumar Mittal**  
Mitco Engineering Works  
Delhi

We are an NGO known as Friends Of Nature Association, (website:www.fonaplanet.org)

We are consistently working for nature and wildlife conservation since the last 13 years.

We are strong supporters of the Jan Lokpal Bill and respect the

efforts of Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal. We had also participated in a supportive hunger-strike at Pune along with Vivek Velankar.

However, we are now a little bit disturbed with the change in the direction of this movement.

We strongly feel that the image of Anna and Baba Ramdev is different for all Indians.

Anna must maintain this difference from Baba Ramdev. The majority of Indians don't believe Baba Ramdev.

**Friends of Nature Association**

Standing for public office is seen as a lucrative way of making money. However, things are changing. The middle-class, which has been indifferent to politics for many years, is waking up and protesting. People in rural areas are also becoming wiser. Aspirations are rising. Competitive politics is gaining ground and citizens have a variety of political parties to choose from. The time is up for corrupt politicians and their acolytes.

**Asha Narain**

The government has too much power. Even petty officials are vested with enough authority to make a

citizen's life miserable. We can do nothing. Public officials are also rude to people who approach them for services. There has to be a mechanism to report cases of corruption and misconduct. For instance, one can report cases of disproportionate assets to the Income Tax department. Also, in villages, the social audit is a good way of assessing if development money has been properly spent. More power to the people and better processes is the answer.

**Shanti Malhar**

### Agro-industry

There is a real need for the government to frame agro-processing policies which would favour small, local producers. They are most inventive and produce wholesome food products. We will also spread wealth instead of concentrating it in the hands of a few big food companies. Give more people the chance to run small businesses and earn money. Spread health and wealth.

**S Sivasankar**

Have a point of view? Write to  
editor@civilsocietyonline.com

**INTERVIEW** Anybody should be able to question a company,

# 'Companies should be ready to face a law like RTI'

**Umesh Anand**  
Mumbai

THE corporate sector has begun looking closely at ways in which it can be more transparent and accountable. A committee appointed by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is drafting a code of conduct for its member-companies to follow. It is also seeking to benchmark itself to international standards of whistle-blowing.

"There is much that the government needs to do. But even as we wait for that to happen it is important that we take a critical look at ourselves," says B. Muthuraman, the newly appointed president of CII.

Muthuraman says industry is concerned about corruption and would like to see it eradicated. It is a good thing, in his view, that people have been sent to jail because now a message has gone out. He welcomes the recent upsurge in activism. These are voices that will be raised as the Indian economy matures and seeks greater openness.

Companies should prepare themselves for closer involvement with societal processes. There is no alternative to being engaged – whether it is in fighting corruption or giving people just and fair compensation for their land.

Muthuraman presided over one of India's finest resettlement efforts at Gopalpur in Orissa where Tata Steel aborted its plans for a greenfield plant but had to resettle displaced people. He is currently the vice-chairman of Tata Steel and chairman of Tata International. Excerpts from an interview:

**There has been an upsurge in civil society activism. How does industry perceive this?**

I see it as a process of learning. India is in a developing mode. India is several centuries old but liberalized India is only two decades old. It was from the 1990s that we started thinking about rules, regulations and processes. I see this upsurge as a demonstration of civil society wanting to be heard. If civil society voices or concerns are not taken into account there will be protests, anger...these are things by which the country will learn.

We must also appreciate that this will get into a more mature process of conversation with civil society. It is not as if everything civil society says is correct and people must succumb to its pressure. There must be meaningful conversation

with information, data and a long-term perspective. What is happening now is short-term. For example, take corruption. It seems to be more about who will take the credit for bringing the issue of corruption to the fore – a political party, an individual, or some organized civil society set-up? But I see it as a process of learning.

**So you welcome it?**

Yes, I do. It is part of a maturing economy.

**Does industry need a different orientation? Does it need to be more involved with issues of national concern? For instance, the Lokpal Bill is being formulated.**

I am happy to see that many of us are getting involved or at least the process of our involvement has started. In the past, the private sector was absent from the formulation of the nation's plans for the future. Now, we have been involved

**'Industry is very concerned about corruption. But we must first do something ourselves. In CII we are working on a code of conduct for industry. It will be ready soon.'**

in the Planning Commission's steering committee on formulating the manufacturing policy which deals with issues of land, water, technology etc. I think industry can contribute to the deliberations on the Lokpal Bill.

I would like to see private sector participation. You have a variety of stakeholders in this country – government, private sector, NGOs, civil society – you need to put together a collection of people so that there are enough inputs for a bill of this type.

**Has CII or the private sector been consulted on the Lokpal Bill?**

No.

**And you would like to be part of it?**

We would definitely like to be consulted and I believe CII and FICCI have a very meaningful role in contributing to the development of such important regulation for the country. I would like to see us participate.

**How concerned is industry about corruption?**

It's a big issue for the nation as a whole and industry is very concerned about it. For the last few months we in CII have been talking about this subject. We have formed a committee to start working on the subject. We said first we must do something ourselves. If you point a finger at someone then three fingers are pointing back at you.

Of course there is a lot for government to do. For instance there is a need for electoral reforms. The way election campaigns are funded is probably at the root of a lot of the corruption that is happening in this country. In government, there are many rules and procedures which need to be simplified. These are all in the government's hands.

But while we are awaiting all this, it is also necessary for industry to adopt a certain code of conduct. CII is currently working on a code of conduct for industry. We have had two or three meetings. I am hopeful it will be ready soon.

**Industry, politicians and the bureaucracy are all, in the popular mind, regarded as being on one page. Do you see this perception changing?**

It is not going to change overnight. It needs a cultural change. You know the ambience in this country is completely vitiated and I am not talking only about government or industry, school-children, the poor who pay for electricity and then have to bribe to get a receipt or to get their normal dues. Even among youngsters there is this feeling you cannot get anything done without giving something. It is almost as if it is a rule in life. It is extremely deep-rooted and prevalent in all sections of society. To root it out is going to be a major task. It will take some years, but we can at least start by having simple laws. You know, the minute you begin to see success without having to bribe, more people will get on to the bandwagon.

We need to prove by example. Take the media for instance. Who will they put on the cover page in terms of industry? It will be someone who has

## says B. Muthuraman



**B. Muthuraman**

done this and that. What we celebrate is also important. Should we be celebrating a professor in a college who is straightforward or do we just celebrate the rich and the famous?

We have to do something about corruption and that something has to be done by many, including industry. We have to reward people who are honest and really punish people who are dishonest.

The negative side of what is happening today is that India is getting a bad name and investments are slowing down. Everybody is watching.

But the huge positive is that now there is a realization that this country is willing to unravel things which had been put on the backburner. That is very positive. I would like to see more investigations done, more culprits brought to book. This is a process of cleaning up the system which is going on right now. We must enact laws. In my view, a giver of bribes is as much at fault as a taker of bribes. We need to cleanse the system.

**What would you like industry to do in the near-term to change its image?**

One, industry must adopt a code of conduct. Secondly, it must implement the code of conduct in companies. It must be visible and extend to all levels of the organization. In other countries I have seen the agency to which you blow the whistle is not even in the company. It is independent and finds out who is at fault, who has given what etc.

**'I would like to see more investigations done, more culprits brought to book. This is a process of cleaning up the system which is going on right now. We must enact laws.'**

**So you need more sophistication in this?**

Far more sophistication in whistle-blowing, in independence of directors, in audit committees questioning the actions of the management, questioning the actions taken by the CEO himself, or the senior directors of the company. So we need to graduate to a system of better governance and transparency.

And, I tell you, this is not easy. We have to start a big movement in this country. It is from that perspective that what is happening today is creating a consciousness that people can be punished and sent to Tihar Jail. These are good things which are happening.

**How much support is there in industry for what you are talking about?**

There is support. We formed this task force (on a code of conduct for industry) sometime in the month of April. We have held three meetings. We brought in an agency from Britain which helps companies with better governance practices and took some advice from it. I see a general appreciation that this needs to be done. But I also sense a feeling among some that this is too big a problem to tackle. There are people who will say we can do it, but what about government? So we say, let's clean up our system first. Let's ensure we have a code of conduct and then we will also go to the government.

There is a lot that the government needs to do to make things simpler and more transparent. But we have to do a lot in terms of making the internal working of companies declarable and open.

**The right to information (RTI) law so far applies only to government. But government is shrinking. At some point industry will have to face up to these trends. Are you prepared for that today?**

We should be prepared. In many countries, like the US, UK, and so on things get done with ease when compared to what happens here. These countries have evolved over time. Why won't we be able to do that?

*Continued on next page*

Continued from previous page

## Right now companies would not agree to be under RTI?

We should be able to do that. Look, in terms of corruption two things are important. One is internal discipline: this is what I will do and this is what I will not do. Second is the external questioning. A law like RTI is important and should be applicable (to companies). I am absolutely in favour of it. A company is a social entity. It runs on the money of several people. There are millions of shareholders who put their money and their faith in a company. So, while a company may be run by a few people, it is a societal creature and it must be accessible to the society. And it must be open to the RTI Act. Anybody should be able to question a company.

**‘Land belongs to the people and has an emotional value. Often it is the last asset to be sold. We must understand that mindset. What does a sharecropper do when land has been acquired.’**

## Is there a need for industry to show greater patience with our transition?

Of course India is a developing country. But we must also realize that patience has some limits. This globalization which has happened of Indian companies going abroad has two dimensions. On the one hand companies are genuinely finding opportunities in the true spirit of globalization. This is positive news for India. On the other hand, companies tire of waiting for licences, infrastructure and so on and look overseas where processes are simpler and more transparent. That is the negative part of India's overall growth story.

## What is your view on land acquisition?

Land belongs to the people and has an emotional value. Often it is the last asset to be sold only when you are in dire straits. We must understand that mindset.

I won't say the entire private sector understands. Only people who have really gone to villages, talked to people, like some of us have done, know what is going on in the minds of the people when you ask them for their land.

Land is important for industry but there is a process of acquiring it and paying compensation which is not just paying the current value but also taking into account the future value. What does a sharecropper do with his life after land has been acquired? Is industry prepared to train the person? Is he trainable? Does he want to be trained? Even if you give him a house, what kind of house does he want to live in? Are you taking into account the cultural aspects of that person's life? A certain neighbourhood existed, are we

retaining it? All this is important.

There is a need for the private sector to play a part in understanding these issues. Industry and agriculture have to co-exist. Land has a different meaning here. For a guy living in the village money is not the only issue affecting him.

## CII has a position on land....

Let me tell you India has sufficient land for agriculture, industry, domestic purposes and infrastructure. India is actually well endowed with land for economic prosperity unlike Japan or South Korea or even China which has got a bigger area than India and a marginally higher population. A large part of its land is mountainous with which one can't do much. Arable land in India is more than in China.

It is another matter how well you use it. There is a feeling in India that you have to rob agriculture to give land to industry. But if we use land well then there is enough land.

Agricultural productivity in India is bad and we can increase it by five or six times from what we are producing today. Then you don't need the kind of land which is being occupied by agriculture today. Industry's use of land can also be more efficient. If you create industry in clusters you need less land because you will use common infrastructure like power lines, water facilities and so on. So, there is a way in which industry needs to be thought about (to plan for) 50- 60 years ahead.

There is a need for zoning. There is a need for formation of clusters. There is a need for identification before use of various tracts of land for various purposes. After you have done that the land must be acquired by the government, not by the individual investor. The moment you say have industry in clusters you require tracts of land in one place. For each company in the cluster to buy land for itself is actually impractical. Even if a company buys a slightly larger tract of land, say a couple of 100 acres, the size of the land holdings are extremely small. By the time you go and negotiate with one person and fix a price for the land, the value of the adjacent piece of land goes up. You go negotiate with him and the third adjoining piece of land goes up. So the land has to be acquired in one lot.

What is required first is proper zoning, digitization of land records, creation of land corporations in each state which will actually acquire the land and take up the compensation for those who are losing land – for both today and may be over a period of 25-30-50 years on the basis of an annuity. The owner who is giving up the land needs to participate. What he and his family would have earned over the next 30-40 years should be the fundamental principle of compensation.

All costs can be recovered from industry. We know of situations where industry has come up and 20-30 years later people have not been compensated. Industry has a responsibility to share that increased prosperity with the original land owner.

Look, I come from a background which has always believed that industry has a responsibility towards society. And that responsibility must be discharged on a continual basis. Society is a stakeholder even though it may not be a shareholder. It is a non-financial shareholder.

# Civil services



**Many young people in rural Kashmir aspire to join the IAS**  
**Syed Basharat**  
Srinagar

**T**ILL just a few years ago, the youth of Jammu and Kashmir had negligible presence in the civil services examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Few would appear and hardly anyone would qualify. From 2003 to 2008, only one candidate from the state passed this coveted exam every year on an average and made it to the prestigious Indian civil services.

Things improved in 2008 when suddenly six candidates qualified, thereby breaking the ice for other aspirants. But the watershed year was 2010. Five candidates qualified and one of them, Shah Feisal, topped the exam. Kashmir broke out into ecstatic celebrations. Faesal's success gave a huge psychological boost to young people in Kashmir who wanted to crack this three-tier exam.

This year the winning streak continued. Seven candidates from the state made it. And one of them is Ovesa Iqbal, 25, the first Muslim woman from Jammu and Kashmir to qualify for the Indian civil services.

What is common among these successful candidates is that most of them come from far-flung villages and small towns and belong to humble families. While Shah Faesal is from Kupwara, the most backward border district of the state, Ovesa Iqbal belongs to the Ladakh region some 470 km



# attract rural Kashmir



from Srinagar. Mohammad Aijaz, 25, belongs to a village five km from the Line of Control in Poonch district.

Gulzar Ahmad Wani, 23, the youngest of the six who passed the exam, comes from a small village, Darwa, in Baramulla district of the Kashmir Valley. "We have seen real life very closely. We are abreast of the problems of villages. Since 70 per cent of our population lives in villages, I think village youth can prove to be better administrators," says Wani.

Umair Mir, 33, who also qualified this year, believes that awareness about the civil services is rising in the state. "We are witnessing a defining moment with respect to the civil services exam. In the coming years, our state will see more and more students passing this tough examination," says Mir who is from a village in Budgam district which is over 30 km from Srinagar.

Ovessa Iqbal agrees that awareness about the exam is increasing among young people living in far-flung places.

"May be these candidates have more patience and work more consistently. But ultimately it is their hard work which helps them get through this exam which is a long-drawn process," she told *Civil Society*.

Ovessa holds a Bachelor's degree in chemical engineering. She says engineering motivated her to do something more significant with her life.

And that is how she decided to sit for the civil services exam. "I did engineering by default. After I completed the course I was mature enough to decide what I wanted to do," Ovessa says with confidence. She qualified for the civil services in her second attempt. Before that she had passed the state level civil services examination and was undergoing training.

Mohammad Aijaz who lives in a village near the Line of Control in Poonch district says although he had already passed the Kashmir Administrative Service examination he was keen to opt for the civil services. "Qualifying for this exam provides you an opportunity to have direct impact on your society. Candidates from rural and remote areas are excelling. Although they have less exposure, they have better educational opportunities. I think after Shah Faesal topped the exam last year a kind of social transformation has taken place in Jammu and Kashmir," he says.

Rayees Ahmad Bhat, 27, passed the civil services exam in 2009 and is now training at the National Police Academy. He is from Hutmura in the Anantnag district of Kashmir. Bhat believes that since more and more candidates from Jammu and Kashmir are appearing for the exam, more are getting through. "Otherwise, avenues and exposure levels are higher in urban areas than in rural areas," he adds.



Ovessa Iqbal



Rayees Ahmad Bhat



Mohammad Aijaz

# Delhi still unfriendly to disabled

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

THE National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) is deeply worried. There are just two months left for its major workshop on disabilities but the city of Delhi is hardly ready to host around 150 to 200 disabled people from the Asia-Pacific countries. Despite huge amounts being spent on building infrastructure for the Commonwealth Games, the city is not disabled friendly.

"This meet is the biggest in the country in terms of the number of disabled people in the world coming together. We have met government officials and told them about our concerns over basic issues. Take transport. How will we bring these delegates from the airport? Then, there is accommodation. Most hotels in the city have just a single room allotted for the disabled. If our delegates want to go sight seeing, most historic places and markets are not at all disabled-friendly. What kind of an impression will we convey of our nation?" asks a worried Javed Abidi, chairperson of NCPEDP.

The workshop will be held from 18 to 21 August. Delegates will discuss how to promote the human rights of people with disabilities and integrate them economically and socially. It is being organized under the aegis of Disabled People's International (DPI), a global movement for equality for the disabled. Its motto is: "Nothing About Us, Without Us." Abidi is Secretary-General of DPI in India.

"The issues still remain the same like accessibility, transportation, accommodation, a separate ministry for the disabled population, especially in India. There are similar problems in other countries. The government comes up with temporary solutions. It seems like we are not on their radar," says Abidi.

The estimated number of disabled in India is 70 million, around six to seven per cent of India's population. The workshop will come out with a Delhi Action Plan to 'Make the Right Real'.

With just two months left for the meet, disability groups are trying to check if the city can be somehow made ready.

"We don't want grants or money from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. We have just two months to prepare ourselves for the meet. We expect Delhi to be hospitable and inviting to our guests," says Abidi.

The Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit has promised some low-floor buses.

# Jackfruit in all its glory

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHREE PADRE

**Shree Padre**  
Thiruvananthapuram

FOR many people a festival on jackfruit would seem like an event for a few crazy people. But the first National Jackfruit Festival, held at Thiruvananthapuram in early June, attracted millions of visitors.

The jackfruit has a mega appeal. There were stalls laden with all kinds of pioneering products made from jackfruit. There was jackfruit payasam, jackfruit cutlet, jackfruit sandwich, jackfruit dosa and jackfruit halwa, hot from the stove. There was also a novel jackfruit ice cream.

You could choose from hundreds of packaged recipes and scores of other jackfruit products with a long shelf-life.

These innovative products were not made by big manufacturers and multinationals but by small producers – farmers, self-help groups (SHGs), housewives, cooperatives and local companies.

The instant reaction of visitors to this splendid jackfruit display was one of utter disbelief. "I never imagined that so many products could be made from jackfruit," they exclaimed.

## MISSION JACKFRUIT

Since the past five years several peoples' groups have been making strenuous efforts to bring the jackfruit into the limelight. (See *Civil Society*, August 2010).

They have been doing this by holding jackfruit fairs. Three NGOs, Uravu in Wayanad in Kerala, and BIRD in Tiptur as well as the Kadamba Marketing Souharda Sahakari Ltd in Sirsi, Karnataka, have organised annual jackfruit fairs. So has the University of Agriculture Sciences in Bangalore. So far, more than three dozen jackfruit fairs have been held in Kerala and Karnataka.

These smaller fairs finally culminated in the National Jackfruit Festival which succeeded in bringing jackfruit farmers, activists, scientists, NGOs and government organizations from Kerala and Karnataka on a single platform. Ken Love, President of the Hawaii Fruit Growers Association, who came all the way to participate in the festival, became a star attraction at the event.

"Jackfruit is the key for local food security. But we have to put in more effort to ensure that it provides security to small farmers and discourages them from selling farms out of frustration," he says.

Jackfruit is a real *Kalpavriksh* (divine wish-fulfilling tree). It can mitigate the hunger of an entire family. All its parts are very useful. But sadly, though India is one of the top producers of jackfruit, nearly 60 percent of it is allowed to go waste. For us, jackfruit is a forgotten *Kalpavriksh*. On the contrary, see what a Sri Lankan horticulture officer proudly says: "Sri Lanka will never starve since we have about 50,000 hectares of jackfruit cultivation scattered everywhere in the island."

Paradoxically, we in India, have just about a dozen companies manufacturing branded jack-



Dr Meera Suresh with her jackfruit products



Anna's ready-to-cook tender jackfruit

**Innovative jackfruit products are being made by small producers – farmers, SHGs, housewives, cooperatives.**

fruit products. Many universities and research organizations are claiming that that have standardized a few value-added products. But none so far has been commercialized!

Against this dismal performance, the efforts of the Krishi Vijnan Kendra, (KVK), Pathnamthitta, Kerala stands out. Their stall in the festival had more than 20 jackfruit products for sale. The Kendra has recently started a community preservation centre. It is giving training in jackfruit value addition and has helped some women's groups in product development, labelling, packaging and branding.

## INNOVATORS AND PRODUCERS

Dr Meera Suresh, one such successful trainee, is manufacturing a few jackfruit products in her spare time under the brand name, 'Yummy.' Her products like jackfruit wrapped in wild cinnamon leaves and fruit bulbs in honey have very good demand.

The Group Rural Agricultural Marketing Association, (GRAMA), an SHG from Kottayam



CARD KVK's stall displayed over 20 jackfruit products

has been producing over 30 jackfruit products which it sells at local fairs and festivals. A small percentage is bought by dealers and exporters.

"Products should consist of a fairly good portion of jackfruit. Instead of transporting the ingredients and end products to far off places, we should be able to sell them easily," says Joseph Lukose, president of GRAMA.

James P. Mathew is a farmer from Palakkad whose family has been striving to put jackfruits to better use since the last nine years. His dehydrated unripe flakes and unripe jack flour was used as ingredients to make dishes for seminar participants and was widely appreciated. The moot point is that farmers themselves are converting jackfruit into food products for local use.

"Jack flake flour and jack seed flour will have an export market because they are gluten free, nutritious and a variety of breakfast items like dosas and desserts can be made from them," says Ken Love.

Kamath's of Natural Ice-Cream, Mumbai, have pioneered jackfruit ice-cream. They personally served their prime ice-cream to all the seminar participants. Smaller manufacturers have also

started making jackfruit ice-cream. Milma, Kerala's cooperative giant, has been inspired to launch its own version of jackfruit ice-cream.

Dr R.B. Tiwari, research scientist from the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research, made a presentation on osmo-dehydration, a technology which could be useful for farmers, SHGs and small producers. "You can convert jackfruit into high-concentrated, low volume products. It is important to select the right type of fruits for this technology."

A trendsetter product has just been launched by Sara Spices, a unit of the Anna Group of companies in Kerala. Their ready-to-cook tender jackfruit packed neatly in aluminum foil is produced with technology from the Defence Food Research Laboratory in Mysore. The product has one year's shelf life without use of preservatives.

"You can make many types of curries with this product. We are looking for good dealers outside Kerala too," says Santhosh who is the export manager of the Anna Group. The company sells around 200,000 packets of jackfruit *varatty* (*halwa*) and jackfruit *ada* (cake) every year. Some of it is exported to countries in the Gulf.

## JACKFRUIT FLIPSIDE

It is the lack of organized marketing and the absence of a reliable supply chain that is preventing farmers from getting a fair price for jackfruit. Panruti is the only exception where farmers are getting a market and assured returns for jackfruit.

Till such arrangements are built up, value addition seems to be the only way of getting better returns. Ken Love demonstrated a simple way to produce jackfruit preserve in bottles without using chemical preservatives. "This can be kept at room temperatures for years altogether and can be sold easily," he says.

"Don't be afraid to talk to big persons," he advised farmers. "Go, approach five-star hotel chefs and suggest that they use jackfruit in their menu. If that happens, slowly but steadily, it will open up an altogether new door for you. You will be able to market jackfruit to high-income customers."

The jackfruit festival was organised by Santhigram, an NGO in Thiruvanthapuram along with three dozen private and government organizations including the National Horticulture Mission and NABARD.

"What we have realized is that people have a lot of hope in jackfruit. No doubt it is a forgotten *Kalpavriksha* but if we remind them about its importance, they will accept the fruit with more enthusiasm," says L.Pankajakshan, director, Santhigram. "While hosting this mega event we got so involved with jackfruit that we simply can't forget about it after the festival," he says. "We are lobbying with the government to organize jackfruit festivals in one panchayat of each district every year. There is this whimsical order that prevents anybody from planting jackfruit and mango trees on roadsides and public places. We will try to influence the administration to change this order and to plant jackfruit trees on environment day on a large scale."

A website, [www.jackfruitfest.org](http://www.jackfruitfest.org), launched during the festival will now be used for jackfruit development. Professor K.V. Thomas, Minister of State for Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, in his inaugural speech said he would be organizing a jackfruit festival in New Delhi very soon.

L. Pankajakshan, director, Santhigram: 0471-2269780  
jackfruitfestkerala@gmail.com

## SAMITA'S WORLD

by SAMITA RATHOR

SHE DOESN'T CARE MUCH FOR A MAN'S COMPANY...UNLESS HE OWNS IT!



SAMITA

SHAMIK BANERJEE



Children at Naz Foundation's care home

# Support for positive children declines

**Sugandha Pathak**  
New Delhi

**S**TANDING on top of a sofa, Sameer poses as Spiderman. "If anyone dares to tickle me, I will show them my Spiderman powers," he announces cheerfully. Sameer, an HIV positive child, is four years and six months old. He will soon be adopted and leave Naz Foundation's care home in Delhi. Out of the 27 HIV positive children living here, who are between four and 18 years old, Sameer is only the second to be adopted.

"Hopefully by the end of the year he will go to Sweden. A single parent has adopted him," says Anjali Gopalan, founder, Naz Foundation. "Meetu, who was two years and three months old, was recently adopted by another single parent in Sweden."

Naz Foundation raises awareness of HIV/AIDS and provides support to those affected by the illness. Their care home is equipped with a clinic and has a huge kitchen. A dietician ensures that food for the children is cooked keeping their nutrition quotient in mind.

"We get orphans from various orphanages. Sometimes the police hand over children affected by HIV to us if they find the child has nobody to

look after him or her. Meetu, for example, came to us when she was just 11 months old," says Gopalan.

According to a UNAIDS report, India has around 200,000 children affected by HIV/AIDS. NGOs say a cash crunch is looming which could severely hamper their work. Recently, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, funders of Project Avahan, pulled out. NGOs say this could have a ripple effect and other international donors could withdraw too. The Government of India could fill this void. But its National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) sits on plenty of money which it doesn't spend on positive children.

The Naz Foundation soldiers on all the same. Recently, a six year old boy's extended family called up the foundation and asked them to take the child away. "He is very quiet, trying to understand his new surroundings," says Madhulika Masih, coordinator at Naz. "The little boy is very mature for his age. He saw his parents' death very early in life."

Three girls and three boys living in the care home are less than six years old. They share a dorm with older girls. The older boys stay in a separate dorm. Two of the children have disabilities. They smile and talk to you unselfconsciously. The walls here are as bright as the children.

"All the children go to English medium schools except one who has never been to school before so we admitted the child to a Hindi medium school. Once they turn 10 we tell them that they are HIV/AIDS affected. We start preparing them early in life. There has been no case yet of a child taking this news negatively," says Masih.

A few of the children are sponsored, says Anuradha Mukherjee, project manager of Naz. Hospital check-ups, education and other expenses of a single child add up to quite a lot.

Different types of sponsorship models are available. Sponsorship for a child for one year works out to ₹48,000. The money can be paid in monthly installments of ₹4,000. You can also sponsor medications, hospital visits and tests for a child for one year for ₹12,000. Here too payments can be made in monthly installments of ₹1,000. Sponsoring a single meal at the care home works out to ₹2,000. You can even sponsor an outing of your choice for all the children for ₹5,000. Outings may be a picnic and playtime in a local park, a trip to the movies or any other creative idea you may have.

"Apart from sponsors we have to constantly raise money as there is no help from anywhere else," says Mukherjee. Now funds appear to be drying up. NGOs working for positive people point out that existing international and domestic funds are not being efficiently spent.

"India has close to a billion plus resources to spend on HIV/AIDS related projects. But as per my sources some ₹240 million has not been spent yet. In fact, NACO is known for not ensuring accountability, transparency and governance. NACO still does not have a clear cut programme solely for children," says Ashok Rau, executive trustee and CEO of Freedom Foundation, an NGO based in Bangalore.

A 2009 UNAIDS report estimates that India has been given \$1.19 billion to spend on HIV/AIDS related projects. NACO has spent only \$295 million. The bulk of this spend has been from international sources. India is spending only 15 per cent of its own money. Nearly 85 per cent of expenditure on HIV/AIDS projects is from international funding.

"Even this 15 per cent is not only for HIV/AIDS related projects but for the health sector in its entirety in the country," says Rau. According to Gopalan, funds have been decreasing as most of the HIV/AIDS related funds in India are coming from the international organizations.

"Although the World Bank is loaning us a huge amount of money, we have to return it sooner or later," says Gopalan.

NACO claims that the numbers of those affected by the illness is declining but NGOs say that 2,400,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS in India and their numbers are increasing.

While NACO does nothing for children affected by HIV/AIDS, the NAZ Foundation shoulders the entire responsibility of its children supporting them from its own resources whenever required.

"After a child turns 18 as per Indian law he or she cannot stay in a care home. We are sending our eldest boy for vocational training courses so that he is able to fend for himself. But he has grown up here, he is family and we will take each child's responsibility as a lifetime commitment," says Mukherjee.

# Friends of Doon's trees

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Dehradun

**D**EHRADUN city has a unique helpline for people living in its fast emerging concrete jungle. Just dial 09410355997 and a bunch of enthusiastic youngsters will turn up at your doorstep armed with saplings. They will plant indigenous trees all around your home to perk up your grey surroundings.

changed. It is much hotter than it used to be," says Priti Sharma of Kash, another undergraduate student.

Within a year they planted 2,000 saplings of mostly fruit bearing trees and local species such as *jamun*, *amla*, bamboo and *behad*. They are now a group of 40 students planting trees by spending money from their own pocket.

"We have two vehicles equipped with a pizza delivery box. We keep saplings in it, not pizzas. If

whelmed. "I never thought of spending my pocket money this way when I was a student," she said.

In Vasant Vihar, a posh colony in Dehradun, they planted 10 saplings of *jamun* and mango recently. "We have a problem though. We don't have funds to buy tree guards. Each tree guard costs ₹500. Very few people take care of these saplings after we leave," says Sharma.

Despite this the survival rate of saplings they

have planted is good. At Mahavir Enclave in Majra, a colony in central Dehradun, they planted about 50 saplings. When they went to recheck after three months, they found that 50 per cent of their saplings had survived whereas hardly 10 saplings of the Forest Department were still standing.

RS Sharma of Mahavir Enclave's Residents' Welfare Association (RWA) says: "Since we appreciated the efforts of these youngsters we also chipped in to take care of the saplings that they planted after they left."

Another person who has extended a helping hand to Kash is Sadhna Sharma, president of the Uttarakhand Mahila Association. At one of Kash's tree-planting drives, she was the chief guest. "This morning is a

new dawn for our environment," she said poetically. "The future of our country is safe in these young hands."

On 5 June, World Environment Day, Kash planted 51 saplings of *amla*, *jamun*, *kanak*, *champa* and *pangar* at the Manak Sidh temple in Dehradun. Citizens who were at the temple wholeheartedly supported their efforts. "They are a role model for us," said Mahavir Panyuli, the principal of Lakshya Public School. "I would like to invite them to my school."

This public support has greatly encouraged the Kash team. "We have decided to plant 5,000 saplings by the end of this year," said Shrey.

But the state administration has provided no support or encouragement to Kash. They have been turned away by almost every official and minister. The Forest Department has refused to provide them free saplings though a single sapling costs only Rs 1 and is no loss to the department. In fact, Kash seems to be doing the Forest Department's job with much greater commitment.

Phone Kash at: 094 10355997.



Kash volunteers at work

Named Kash, this inimitable group's dream is to revive the greenery of the Doon Valley. They have 40 pairs of hands, a lot of determination and very little money. They spend their pocket money buying saplings and planting them all over Dehradun city and its hinterland.

"Kash was born in 2010. In Hindi, it means a dream, a wish. We too have a dream, the dream of a better world," says Shrey Sharma, 21, who is president of this newly established group.

"Dehradun was once famous for its litchi orchards and rolling green fields," he says nostalgically. "But ever since it became the capital of Uttarakhand all its lush greenery began turning into concrete. It pained us and we wanted to do something."

Sharma was doing a Bachelor's in Spanish from Bangalore when he decided he wanted to improve his city's tree line. He met other students and they made up their minds to do something to reverse the disappearance of greenery from Dehradun.

They hit upon the idea of planting tree saplings in parks and colonies. It is their enthusiasm and vigour which has kept them going for a year as an informal group. Then, they realised that it was necessary to institutionalize their efforts and Kash was born.

Its primary goal is afforestation. "After Dehradun became the capital, there was this massive felling of trees. As a result, the climate has

you call us we will arrive at your place with tools. We dig the earth ourselves and plant the trees," says Anand Shan, a Kash member who is studying for a post graduate degree.

They have planted tree saplings on request at many places. In Chanakypuram, a locality on the outskirts of the city, they planted 500 saplings in July 2010 in the presence of Usha Devi, the gram pradhan of Mohakampur Khurd village. She appreciated their efforts. "Wherever there are more trees, there will be less pollution," she said.

In July 2010, Kash members travelled to Nisanio and Naugaon villages in Pauri district with 1,000 saplings. Villagers welcomed them and extended all help. Saplings of *amla*, blackberry, oak and bamboo were planted.

Meanwhile, in Dehradun their efforts continue. In September 2010, the alumni of Saint Joseph's held a plantation drive with the Punjabi Biradari Welfare Society at Aryan School in Malsi which is on the way to Mussoorie. While Kash members were planting saplings, the local MLA, Ganesh Joshi, arrived. "I wish all young people were like you," he said planting a sapling himself. Kash planted bottle brush, *jamun* and *neem* saplings. Sonali Sinha, a resident of Dehradun, was over-



Tree planting in a park

**Kash has started a helpline. If people want to green their colony by getting trees planted, they can phone up Kash.**

# Rajasthan's heroic aged women

**Bharat Dogra**  
Jaipur

**M**ETHI Maa is 65 and lives in Khera village in Kishangarh Block, Ajmer district. She is a Dalit who lost her parents as a child. They were migrant workers who drowned in the Chambal floods. Methi was brought up by a relative addicted to liquor. He sold young Methi to an elderly man for a meagre sum of money. This old man got seriously injured in an accident and became bedridden. Methi looked after him till he died.

Despite her sad life, Methi never allowed tragedy to overwhelm her. Instead, she served her village selflessly and campaigned fervently for the right to information and the employment guarantee scheme.

Her philosophy in life is simple – don't ask what society has given to you, instead think of what you can give to society. Like Methi there are elderly women in Rajasthan who have surmounted all kinds of difficulties to work as change leaders.

Methi learnt a number of skills at the Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) in Tilonia. She trained as a midwife and soon became very skilled. She also learnt how to rig up smokeless *chulhas* and set up several such *chulhas* for women in her village. She played a leading role in organizing women in her village into a group. Soon she overcame caste boundaries. More people in her village began to support her and she was elected as a ward member in the panchayat.

When a big fight broke out between two related families in a village and they were on the verge of coming to blows, Methi courageously walked right into their homes and said with folded hands, "Just think before you turn violent that you'll be harming your own near and dear ones." The sincerity with which she spoke had such an impact that the two feuding families stepped back and finally a compromise was worked out.

A liquor vend set up in the village was creating problems especially for women and children. Methi played a leading role in mobilising women so that this liquor vend could be evicted.

Then, a woman from a poor family was declared a witch by an influential family and beaten up. Methi mobilized women against this injustice till the offenders apologised and the stigma against the targeted woman was removed.

In most cases Dalit women are able to get elected only in seats reserved for them. But Methi had so much support, she won the panchayat elections from a general women's seat. She worked hard for the rights of weaker sections and got village roads and a community centre built.

When the SWRC informed her about the importance of RTI and NREGA, Methi readily went to

Delhi, Jaipur, Beawar and Udaipur to participate in dharnas and rallies. She has always been ready to volunteer for a good cause. So she has helped provide relief to fire-ravaged victims of Arampura village and arranged a 'Jaipur foot' for the victim of an attack in Kalidungriya village.

Now forced to use a walking stick after a recent fracture, Methi plays down all her achievements saying it was made possible by the guidance of the SWRC. But she takes some pride in the fact that even the most influential family in the vil-



Galku Maa



Methi

**A poor woman was declared a witch and beaten up. Methi mobilized women against this injustice. The offenders apologised.**

lage invites her to their home. "What is really important is to help reduce the distress of others," says this woman who herself was almost overwhelmed by distress at one time.

Galku Maa, 84, has several grandchildren and great grandchildren. She is a mother figure for simply too many villagers. Her life entered a new phase about 30 years ago when she got involved with a women's group in her village, Paner, in Kishangarh block. She fondly remembers Aruna Roy's guidance in those days. The women in her group requested the SWRC to start a creche in their village and by common consent Galku Maa got the responsibility to implement this work.

One of the first things Galku Maa remembers is the emphasis on not paying any bribes to get any official work done. Questions were repeatedly asked why female workers were being paid less than male workers. A long struggle began to get minimum wages for women and men joined hands with them.

Galku Maa was in the thick of this struggle. Sometimes the women activists were taunted by the men in the village. Still they carried on and, as a result, healthcare for women and education for girls improved in the village. Overall the discrimination against the girl child and women was considerably reduced.

Galku Maa started going to other places where cases of rape and other atrocities were reported to participate in protests and to help. She travelled to

several places in Rajasthan like Neemahera, Bhim and Jaipur to participate in dharnas. In Jaipur she was at an RTI dharna for 53 days at a stretch.

In her village when villagers were not paid for work done, she mobilized them and protested. Special arrangements had to be made by officials to make the payment at night. When the Rajasthan Mazdoor Kisan Morcha was started, she became an active member and participated in its protest actions.

Wasn't she scared? Galku Maa replies, "Those who steal and rob should be scared. The person who fights for justice has no reason to feel scared."

Galku Maa contested ward panchayat elections and won comfortably. She ensured that needy women and the elderly received their entitlements from the government. She also made sure that the poor were given priority for employment and she inspected NREGA work sites for irregularities.

Widowed for the last 20 years and with increasing problems in hearing and seeing, Galku Maa can still mobilise enough strength to support a good cause. Villagers will be only too willing to respond to her call. While children remember the loving care she provided at the creche, elders recall her speeches at dharna sites laced with folksy sayings and

stories. Even passers-by stopped to hear her speeches.

Rukma Maa, 65, is a Dalit woman from Pingun village in Dudu block of Jaipur district. She has been mobilising women for social change for about 30 years ever since she attended a seven-day legal training camp at the SWRC coordinated by Ramkarn. While forming a women's group in her village, she was selected by the women for midwife training. As a trained midwife she could make closer contacts with several other women.

Rukma went to Bhim to participate in a protest fast against denial of minimum wages. After fasting for a few days she and other activists on fast were forcibly carried away by the police from the dharna site.

Soon she was involved in another struggle. A big landlord in her village encroached common land from where rainwater flowed into the village pond. He created a wall to divert the water to his own field. This created a water crisis for villagers who protested and complained to officials. When no action was taken, the women's group went to the SWRC and appealed to other women's groups.

As a result, nearly 2,500 women collected and about 500 of them went to meet officials. The women appealed to them to help. Then they marched to the village and in the presence of officials they tore down the landlord's wall. The free passage of rain water to the pond was then restored.

# Super 7 are on their way

*Second batch of Deepalaya students are off to the US*

SHAMIK BANERJEE



Neha (centre) briefs the second batch

**Sugandha Pathak**  
New Delhi

**S**EVEN young people who finished their schooling from Deepalaya are an excited lot. They can't believe their luck. All seven are set to leave for the United States to study for a year.

They will be doing courses in travel and tourism, business management, IT/software applications, film-editing, music and entertainment.

Deepalaya runs schools in Delhi for underprivileged children. "Last year six Deepalayans were part of this programme. This year, seven have been selected. All of them are from marginalised sections, staying in slums in the Delhi-NCR region. Their diligent work and their capacity to take on life's challenges enabled them to be part of this programme," says TK Mathew, secretary and chief executive of Deepalaya, with great pride.

These seven students have been selected under the Community College Initiative Program, an initiative of the US Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. Out of 15 students selected by the US Embassy this year, seven are from Deepalaya.

The six students who went last year eagerly talk about their experiences to the seven chosen students who are all ears. "The schedules for submitting assignments are pretty strict. You will not be left with any time. So be prepared for a strict routine," says Neha, who went last year.

"We have very different cultures," explains

Ambika, another returnee. "Americans greet you with a hug. Initially I couldn't respond since we are not used to hugging strangers. They would find that rude. They are very friendly people. Be open for interaction. Your initial hesitation will go. The coordinators are very helpful. They will try their best to make you comfortable."

Among the seven students who are leaving for the US is Poonam, 18, the youngest in the group and the only female. She explains that she is the first girl from her village in Uttar Pradesh to have completed schooling. Currently she is studying for a Bachelor's degree in Computer Applications from the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

"In my family girls marry at 17 or 18. My par-

**Among the seven students who are leaving for the US is Poonam, 18, the youngest and the only girl in the group. She explains that she is the first girl from her village in Uttar Pradesh to have completed schooling.**

ents encouraged me to study though my extended family tried very hard to get me married off. Deepalaya's constant support and guidance have made me stronger," says Poonam. She will be studying computer applications in a Northern Virginia community college.

"I thought when I tell my parents that I have been selected, and that I am the only girl to have been chosen, they will refuse to send me without even listening further. But all they said was, they are all your friends, do what you want to do," she says smiling.

Ravi Pahuja, 22, will be studying film-editing and special effects in Winconsin Technical College in Greenbay. Ravi says his mother sent him to Deepalaya since she could not afford a new set of books for both her children every year.

"Animation techniques are very advanced in the US. There are many production houses in California which only handle animation movies. I want to visit them and get an insider's view," explains Ravi who has completed a multimedia course.

Naresh Chunara, 22, is from the hill state of Nainital in Uttarakhand. "I still can't believe it," he says. "After Class 10, I dropped out of school. I faced financial difficulties so I was very sceptical about studying further since I am the sole earning member in my family. My father is a small farmer and hardly earns anything."

Naresh worked for four years. "I worked in McDonald's and with Samsung," he says. "A professional degree is now necessary for me. And then this chance to study abroad has come my way. Life is about to change for me for good." Naresh will be studying business management in Minnesota's Central Lake College.

Anand Prakash, 20, is a musician. He is studying Indian classical music at the Gandharva Mahavidyalya. Anand has opted for a course in music and entertainment at Scotsdale Community College in Arizona. "I want to learn different facets of Western classical music. I will definitely learn the piano. And I would love to perform there," he says.

This group of seven is still dazed by the news of being selected. They are banking on the experience of their seniors who went to the US last year and listen to every word they say. "Vegetarians will find it hard there. So keep packets of read-to-eat food and learn how to cook," advises Neha.

The last batch used their monthly allowance judiciously. "They brought laptops, I-pods and other electronic items. We are very proud of them since from this young age they have got the habit of saving," says Mathew.

# 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.*

*Miss Sonal Natwarbhai, 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 or 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 Wadekar 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. Jowahar Ram Paswan of Baranimdih Mohalla of Chaibasa district in Jharkhand. Today, he is an employee of Nav Jagrat Manav Samaj. It became possible when the Nav Jagrat 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 Baijnathdih 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, Baijnathdih 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 alumni 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.*





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# Kalsi's electric cows

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Dehradun

**T**HE Animal Farm Breeding Centre (AFBC) at Kalsi in the Doon Valley is blessed with round-the-clock electricity thanks to its 400 cows. Not only do the cows produce milk, they produce plenty of dung which generates 6 KW of electricity.

"We run milk-processing, fodder-churning and cow-urine extractor machines. We also produce 10 litres of urine extract in an hour. All our equipment is powered by this electricity. We pay just a small bill," says Dr APS Aswal, Deputy Manager, AFBC.

This is believed to be the only biogas plant producing electricity in all of Uttarakhand. Dr Aswal says the idea of generating electricity struck him out of the blue. "I thought when we can use this gas to light a stove, why can't we convert it into electricity," he remarks.

The breeding centre, established in 1962, has Red Sindhi cows which live on its expansive 70 hectare campus. The cows live in four sheds from where their dung and urine is channelized to a biogas plant of 60 cubic metres. Methane and carbon dioxide generated from the gasifier is sent through a pipe to a generator that produces electricity. The micro-electricity generator started operations in 2009. The Uttarakhand Renewable Energy Development Agency (UREDA) gave financial and technical support. The total cost of the plant was ₹140,000.

The biogas plant produces electricity that can light up 60 homes. AFBC has 25 employees who live on the campus. Yet none of them enjoy this facility. "If we supply them free electricity, they will fight amongst themselves for it. To avoid this rivalry, we use the electricity for our office purposes only," says Dr Aswal.

Although AFBC is promoting green technology and saving energy, the Uttarakhand Power Corporation has not given it any incentive for this



**AFBC's biogas plant produces electricity from cowdung**

effort. But individual households, which have installed solar geysers, get a 25 per cent reduction in their electricity bill. Employees of the breeding centre expressed disappointment at this bias. Incentives would help in promoting such green technology, they said.

All the same the AFBC staff are proud of their biogas plant. "We maintain this centre as if it was our home. We see it as an example which others can emulate," says Jai Kumar, a chowkidar. Kumar is right as the centre was spic and span and there was no foul smell.

"When people in my village ask where I work, I don't say I work in the Pashu Kendra (animal breeding centre). I say I work in the powerhouse," says Rajani Yadav, an office assistant.

AFBC produces 1,500 kg of cow dung daily which is used entirely for producing electricity. Not a single ounce of cow dung is wasted. Bio-manure is also produced every day. The AFBC recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Baba Ramdev's Divya Pharmacy in Haridwar for the sale of its cow urine extract.

The breeding centre is doing reasonably well. It sells urine extract for ₹25 a litre, milk for ₹22 a litre, and organic manure for ₹3.50 per kg. It grows enough Napier grass on its campus to feed its cows so it doesn't need to buy fodder from the market. And now its electricity is also virtually free.

The UREDA officials are quite elated about AFBC's biogas plant and want to spread this idea far and wide. "The cost of installing a one kilowatt plant is about ₹2 lakhs. Animal rearing is very common in Uttarakhand. There is no dearth of dung in the state," reckons Manoj Kumar Singh, project officer, UREDA. "We would like to see the spread of such plants. The state government is prepared to give a subsidy of ₹40,000 per kilowatt with a matching amount from the central government." The UREDA will provide technical and financial assistance. Biogas plants can be bought from Shiva Biogas Agency in Lucknow.

But not everyone is so optimistic. People say those with an education don't want to take to cattle rearing. It's messy, laborious and is looked down upon.

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# STREET POWER HAS

## The Lokpal Bill needs wider, calmer debate

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

TWO months after the Union government appointed a committee of five ministers and five activists chosen by Anna Hazare to draft a bill on the institution of a Lokpal to fight corruption, deep differences persisted on what powers should be bestowed on such an ombudsman.

The committee was given a 30 June deadline. But till 20 June it could make little progress on substantive issues. It was agreed to disagree and put up to the Union Cabinet a draft bill with the views of both sides. The government on its part sought an all-party meeting. And Hazare threatened to go on one of his hunger-strikes again if Parliament does not produce a law by 15 August.

But by now thinking people were somewhat weary of such developments. Several questions presented themselves: Is the use of random street power the way to finding solutions to national issues? Did the Hazare group really represent civil society or had many other points of view been left out? Should an arbitrarily chosen committee have been drafting a complex law or should there have been a wider, more inclusive debate with buy-ins from different power centres and shades of opinion?

An agitation which had seemed to work so successfully at Jantar Mantar sputtered when it came to consultation and debate.

The Hazare group – consisting of Arvind Kejriwal, Prashant Bhushan, his father Shanti Bhushan and Santosh Hedge – didn't just have problems with the government. The group's methods and its definition of a hugely empowered Lokpal were not endorsed by a large number of well-intentioned people either.

The result was that the key sticking points remained:

- Should the Prime Minister come under the purview of the Lokpal?
- Should the higher judiciary come under the purview of the Lokpal?
- Would the Hazare group's demand of an elaborate investigative machinery adding up to 15,000 people, including a vigilance officer in every district of the country to report corruption, be a workable mechanism?
- Was concentration of power in the Lokpal's office a safe thing and to whom would it in practical terms be accountable?

**GRANDSTANDING:** The UPA government has to take its share of the blame for the spread of corruption. But there is concern that civil society had been trivialised by demanding instant laws on matters of national concern and seeking to dictate terms to Parliament. The Hazare group wants the Lokpal Bill passed by 16 August. It is felt that the role of civil society is to suggest and influence and be the space in which more voices can be heard. It cannot seek to replace the political class much less Parliament itself.

Any number of ex-judges, lawyers and bureaucrats known for their integrity felt that the Hazare group's suggestions involved changes in the Indian Constitution that would not deliver results and may even do a lot of harm because they sought to disturb the current framework without adequate discussion.

The National Campaign for the People's Right to Information (NCPRI) is drafting a Lokpal Bill. The NCPRI sees the Lokpal dealing with grand corruption. But for the rest it is looking at a basket of measures that include judicial accountability, protection of whistleblowers and so on. The idea is to create



Ashok Chaudhury, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers

“When we meet the government it is to achieve results because our constituency wants us to come back with something. Hazare and his followers have no real constituency except a vacillating middle-class.”



Arvind Kejriwal at the India Against Corruption campaign at Jantar Mantar

# ITS LIMITS



Kavita Srivastava, People's Union for Civil Liberties

“The agitation against corruption has caught the mood of the country, but its leaders have not succeeded in going beyond that. Corruption has to be dealt with at various levels. There can't be any single solution.”



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAKSHMAN ANAND



Nikhil Dey, National Campaign for People's Right to Information

“Nothing is open and shut. You can't cut back on the consultation process. Laws like the ones on RTI and rural employment were passed with a lot of give and take. As activists we didn't always have our way.”



processes which can deal with corruption at various levels by improving existing institutions.

But with the Hazare group holding centre stage and the media hoping to cash in on middle-class sentiments, there has been little room for other voices.

It also didn't go down well that members of the Hazare group berated Parliament and used intemperate language against the government and its ministers. It made many people feel that democracy itself was being dented by such an agitation. After all, the bill would have to be passed by elected representatives in Parliament. The support of the political class was important, particularly in the states.

As expected, an efficient and honest chief minister, Nitish Kumar in Bihar, refused to be part of rushing through a law. Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh told the campaigners to get elected first and then implement their ideas. Sheila Dikshit in Delhi said there was no need for a Lokpal. It would be better to strengthen existing institutions.

**CONSTITUENCY MATTERS:** Part of the problem seemed to be the Hazare group's lack of a well-defined and demanding constituency. Corruption affects everyone. But the Hazare group's support has been from the middle-class, film stars and so on – people who make whimsical choices and have little staying power. There was also support from godmen, the RSS and BJP front organisations. However, none of these elements made up a committed constituency. They either had instructions to be present or were there to enjoy the tamasha.

Ashok Chaudhury of the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPPFW) says the manner in which activists negotiate is determined by the constituency they represent. Activists working with marginalised groups don't have the luxury of returning to their constituency empty handed. The people they represent, who don't have access to health, education, food, jobs or even basic dignity place their faith in them, expect them to at least bring them some relief from Delhi. For them it's a question of survival.

“When we meet the government it is to achieve results because our constituency wants us to come back with something. Hazare and his followers have no real constituency except a vacillating middle-class and upper middle-class. They don't have to show results,” says Chaudhury.

Chaudhury, who worked hard to get the historic Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Workers (Right to Forests) Act, 2006, passed, says negotiations require give and take. There is a need to sit and talk. It is not about confrontation. “When we go to Jantar Mantar in Delhi it is come to an understanding and not to confront and belittle the government,” he says. “When you call everyone, including the Prime Minister corrupt, what space have you left for negotiations.”

The NFFPFW made innumerable presentations to Parliamentarians, lobbied with every political party big and small and did whatever it took to convince them about their draft law which would give land and community forest rights to tribals and forest people. It was not easy. There were powerful interests, like the wildlife lobby and the forest department bureaucracy, working against them.

Ravi Chopra of the People's Science Institute says: "Consultations should take place at the widest feasible level. No one likes to take to the streets. But governments are sometimes so obdurate and unwilling to listen that one is forced to do so. However, convincing people is the critical test."

Chopra played an important role in the campaign that led to the dismantling of dams on the Ganga. Elderly Dr G.D. Agarwal, a venerable environmental scientist, had to go on a hungerstrike during that campaign to make the government take note of the damage the dams would do.

But the hungerstrike would have been of little use if serious efforts hadn't been made to engage with the government and place scientific evidence against the dams before it. Solid research plays an important part in convincing the government.

The central law on right to information (RTI) came out of a long process. Activists examined the working of RTI in the states, collected evidence from the grassroots. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) went through a similar exercise.

Nikhil Dey of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) says: "Nothing is open and shut. You can't cut back on the consultation process. Laws like the ones on right to information and rural employment were passed with a lot of give and take. As activists we didn't always have our way."

Kavita Srivastava, general secretary of the People's Union for Civil Liberties and a right to food activist says: "What the media finds sexy gets projected. Anna Hazare's fast gets coverage but there have been so many fasts which have been ignored. In 2007 when 200,000 people gathered in Jagdalpur to protest against Salwa Judum, there was no one to cover them."

"The agitation against corruption has caught the mood of the country, but its leaders have not succeeded in going beyond that. Corruption has to be dealt with at various levels. There can't be any single solution to it like having a Lokpal. Nor can there be only one point of view. The fight against corruption has to be seen in the larger context of globalisation and privatisation."

Like Chaudhury, she believes the constituency makes a difference: "For the poor, corruption is a right to life issue. But for the middle-class it is not. It is important to have the support of the middle-class on an issue. I work with the middle-class. But the middle-class has to also realise that complex issues don't have simplistic solutions. There is a lot of corruption within the middle-class."

She believes that street power is important. Without it no one listens to you. "But it is simultaneously necessary to create the space for dialogue and negotiation. In the right to food movement we have found that it is not enough to agitate. It is as important to meet MPs and ministers and get one's point of view across."

Ravi Agarwal of Toxics Links says: "There is obviously great anger amongst people about a sense of injustice of having been betrayed by the political establishment for years on end. Those guilty of corruption have hardly ever been punished and carry on regardless. However changing this situation needs a cool head and rational thinking, and not mere television grandstanding."

"No one disagrees with the need for systemic reform to reduce corruption. The question is how," says Agarwal. "Holding a government to ransom, especially one which we have elected as ours, cannot be the way forward. Tinkering with basic Constitutional checks and balances needs great caution else the consequences can be far too serious. We must broaden the Lokpal debate to include the variety of opinions and expertise which already exists on the issue. It is the only way."

A.V. Balasubramanian of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems in



Slogans and anger

**'India's democracy has done well due to a clear separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary. This arrangement should not be tampered with'**

Chennai agrees. He says one of India's strengths is its political stability – that elections are free and fair and held regularly. It is this stability which has created space for civil society groups and they would do well to look at other countries in the Asian region and value what India has.

"We know that if we don't like a government we can remove it," he says. "Nevertheless street power is justified. It is merely a means of applying pressure so as to bring something to the notice of the government and influence policy. Companies and industry lobbies use advertising to the same end."

**LACK OF DIALOGUE:** Civil society gets its legitimacy from the issues it raises. But it also has to accommodate different shades of opinion and be pragmatic about the ways in which it seeks to connect.

Members of Hazare's group, like Kejriwal and Prashant Bhushan, have instead delivered hammer blow after hammer blow. They have been strident in their views and insisted on their version of the Lokpal Bill.

At a convention held in Delhi by The Foundation for Media Professionals to hear activists' views on the Lokpal, Kejriwal brought along his supporters who cheered as he spoke and left with him even before activists with another point of view had spoken.

However, several substantial points were made. On bringing the judiciary under the Lokpal, Justice AP Shah said the office of ombudsman exists in 129 countries but the judiciary does not come under it. He said it was unfair to say the judiciary is wracked

with corruption. Action against those responsible for the 2G scam has been taken by the Supreme Court. Many notable orders had been issued in other cases too. The judiciary was also sensitive to the issue of corruption in its ranks. He agreed that the judiciary needs to be made accountable but not to the Lokpal. It should be accountable to itself.

He felt that the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill pending in Parliament needed to be strengthened, but bringing the judiciary under the Lokpal was unwise.

Usha Ramanathan, the civil rights lawyer, said India's democracy has done well due to a clear separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary. This arrangement should not be tampered with in any way. There was no absolute certainty that the Lokpal would be completely insulated from the executive or the legislature so it is safer to leave the judiciary out of its purview.

The Hazare group proposes that the judiciary could investigate complaints against the Lokpal. And the Lokpal could order an FIR to be filed against a judge accused of corruption. But Justice Shah said this circuitous arrangement could create a conflict of interest – supposing a judge was called upon to investigate the Lokpal who in turn was giving orders to investigate the very same judge?

On putting the Prime Minister under the Lokpal there has been rough consensus, but this is a sensitive issue. Justice Shah suggested a two-third majority of members in the Lokpal decide if an inquiry should be initiated. The Prime Minister would not need to resign and the President of India should be the person who can give sanction for an investigation. There are other views as well.

The Hazare group wants a Lokpal with 11 people with impeccable reputations found through a search committee. The Lokpal will enforce the Prevention of Corruption Act and have a nation wide staff strength of 15,000. At district level there would be a Vigilance Officer to act against complaints of corruption. Every department will have a Citizens' Charter and if work is not done within a specified time, it will be assumed delays were due to corruption.

Former bureaucrat, Satyananda Mishra, pointed out that it is difficult to get 11 people of unimpeachable character so finding 15,000 people would be even tougher. Who would see to it that this entire staff did their jobs honestly?

The same ills which beset existing institutions could befall this one, it was felt. At the grassroots people face problems in getting their entitlements or may be a ration card or passport. Nobody goes to the police because they are corrupt and they have a stick. "Now we are saying lets give another body a bigger stick and it will sort things out. Will it?" asked Nikhil Dey.

# ‘ Let Lokpal deal with grand corruption ’

LAKSHMAN ANAND

**A**RUNA Roy has been one of the respected social leaders who believes that a strong Lokpal is needed but overburdening the Lokpal with so many responsibilities has serious downsides. A founder member of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), she has been an important voice in the campaign for the right to information and employment guarantee. Roy is a member of the National Advisory Council (NAC).

She spoke to *Civil Society* on the need for systemic improvements to deal with corruption at all levels.

## What are your key points of difference with the Jan Lokpal Bill mooted by the Anna Hazare group?

We support the need for a strong, effective and comprehensive legislation to tackle corruption, misgovernance, and are therefore basically in agreement with the major goals of the draft Jan Lokpal Bill. However, we believe that the Lokpal should be an independent body that has a focused and actionable mandate of dealing with grand corruption, and corruption in the highest echelons of power. This is an urgent need because of the number and scale of scams that are tumbling out, and there is complete impunity for those at the top. Of course there are problems of accountability at almost every level of government. Our major concern is that the Jan Lokpal Bill seeks to place too much power and responsibility in one institution.

Expanding the mandate of the Lokpal to include grievances, misconduct, judicial accountability etc will over burden the Lokpal. In mandating the Lokpal to correct everything, it may end up doing nothing effectively. Equally important, this would concentrate too much power in the Lokpal, not be subject to adequate checks and balances, and might violate the basic constitutional principle of separation of powers.

We felt that it was more useful for us to examine the possibilities of formulating a basket of measures that would create separate institutions to deal with the lack of effective oversight and accountability in each sector. Protection for whistleblowers, misconduct, reform of the CVC, grievance redress, and grand and petty corruption have thrown up unique challenges. Each sector needs its own framework that is appropriate, adequately empowered, independent, and is eventually accountable to the people. That is why we proposed to work on each of these issues separately, while building a campaign for them to come into effect simultaneously.



Aruna Roy

**‘Our major concern is that the Jan Lokpal Bill seeks to place too much power and responsibility in one institution.’**

## Do you think the Lokpal can resolve the problem of corruption from the grassroots upwards?

The current framework of the Lokpal is a top-down structure not just for fighting corruption but also for redress of grievances, providing whistleblower protection and ensuring judicial accountability. This framework is suitable for investigating corruption at the highest levels, but cannot effectively resolve problems at the grassroots. Even in grievances, the role of the people affected is that of mere complainants without any forum for participation for resolution. For instance, grievances in rural areas stem from a range of issues like uncooperative administration, elite capture of government schemes/programmes, faulty implementation, infrastructural deficits etc. Such grievances can be best dealt with by improving the departmental response to these grievances and by infusing transparency and accountability in their functioning. While we feel that there is a need for an independent authority that deals with the outcomes of people's monitoring and complaints, we don't believe that the Lokpal Bill is the best suited legal instrument to do so. Bottom up systemic improvements are needed for effective grievances redress. We feel that the law needs to incorporate processes like social audit, which are reflective of a bottom-up, and people-centred approach to fighting corruption and mal-administration.

## Are you in favour of putting up an alternative draft, which expresses your concerns?

The NCPRI is developing a framework and basic principles for any law/s that seek to address these multiple concerns. This set of principles and framework will be the base for open discussion and public consultations with people and subject matter experts in the coming months.

## How would you like to define civil society in India and what should its role in pre-legislative consultation be?

“Civil society” is amorphous, and the term is used at will to denote any institution or anyone outside the State. There is a risk of assuming universal legitimacy, and subsuming a plurality of views with the arbitrary use of such nomenclature.

The concept needs to be unpacked. The claim of one group or the other to represent civil society becomes dubious and therefore suspect. There will and should be a plurality of views and differing groups in the large population outside the State. It is a sign of a healthy democracy.

Civil society can help ensure that debates take place in the true spirit of democracy, where differing views are aired, respected, and incorporated within the larger picture. Civil society must in fact ensure that people do not fight shy of airing their views. The politics of ideas extends beyond political parties, and civil society must not depoliticize the wider politics of change and reform.

The pre-legislative process is an example of where civil society intervention (of whatever hue) can enrich the process of decision making without stepping on executive or legislative prerogative. If "civil society" denotes "citizens" unattached to a party or government, then the very notion of democracy mandates active participation of the citizenry in all forms of governance. Therefore pre-legislative consultation is an important area for civil society to enlarge spaces for citizens' participation in the framing of law and policy.

**There is concern that civil society groups leading the current agitation against corruption have a political agenda and are seeking to foist solutions upon the country. Would you agree with this?**

Every group is likely to push the solutions it believes in. However if the group becomes part of the formal State apparatus (like the Lokpal Joint Drafting Committee), then it becomes its responsibility to throw open the debate and make it inclusive and transparent. Fighting corruption is part of politics, both in the narrow and the wider sense. Therefore political affiliations with a particular ideology are relevant to contextualize their efforts. In terms of a discussion on specific legislative/systemic changes, there is a need for a robust and vibrant debate that can look beyond party politics and allow open discussion, free of the need to follow the party whip.

**Fighting corruption is in the larger public interest. Do you think politicization of the issue and the strategy being used currently is actually taking us away from a durable solution?**

Corruption is a far more complex issue than is being understood in the current debates. There is a basic politics of power that enables and drives corruption. This needs to be addressed and overcome. Therefore real change will only come about when those relationships of power and issues of injustice are also part of the solution.

On the other hand, corruption is also a convenient political issue to be superficially raised by all mainstream political parties - in particular when they are in opposition. When parties equally steeped in corrupt and unethical practices seek to support and gain mileage from popular movements, the movements are likely to find themselves in the midst of partisan innuendoes, with the search for systemic solutions fading away.

In addition to demanding systemic reform, anti-corruption movements need to identify and demand action on those instances of corruption that exemplify their specific area of concern. This makes it clear that fighting corruption is not merely seeking a legal remedy, but in fact part of a long and sustained campaign where the law is only one part of the solution. Eventually, solutions lie in the socio-political framework.

**You are personally being accused of being pro-government. What is your response?**

As an RTI activist and a member of the MKSS, I do believe that the government has been created to work towards guaranteeing people access to their needs and rights, enshrined in legislation, the Constitution, and in democracy. Government, as commonly understood and used for a variety of institutions and structures, has to be accountable. I am neither pro nor against government per se. It is an institution which must deliver.

As a member of a workers' organization and as believers in democracy, we believe that the government carries with it the onus to protect and deliver constitutional and other legislated rights to the people. It is a powerful protagonist in the lives of common people, regardless of the name or ideology of the political party in power. It is the face of a huge organization created through the vote, where, along with civil servants, a structure has been created to implement promises made to the people. But government has acquired more power than the people who are theoretically the sovereigns of a democratic structure.

Those of us who work with the poor and marginalised, demand transparency and accountability in engaging with the government so that it follows its basic mandate to serve all people, regardless of their political leaning.

The government in India has often been hijacked by classes of people who have selfish and subverted designs on the system to make it deliver to suit their interests. What in old fashioned vocabulary was called 'The Establishment.'

I have never hesitated in speaking out against decisions or policies that I disagree with. I have opposed positions even while I have been in the NAC, in recent times, policies such as the UID project, the government's stand on non payment of minimum wages to MGNREGA workers, the BPL cap etc, POSCO and many others. Most importantly, I joined the NAC to further the cause of the people I work with - most of whom are poor and marginalised. The stands I have taken have come from my personal convictions and what I perceive to be the impact of a particular policy on the ordinary citizen. That is the tilt I believe in.

**One view is that what we are seeing on the streets today is the result of having an NAC which is being described as having no legitimacy and being extra constitutional. What do you have to say?**

The NAC is only a part of the support structure like many other councils and committees set up for specific purposes, that renders advice to the government on social policy. Members are not from one campaign, ideology, sector or grouping. The members represent varied interests of different marginalized groups, and hence the NAC has to deal with debate and disagreements within its forum. The Chairperson is a part of all the deliberations of the full NAC and in matters where there is a difference of opinion the final decision is taken by the full NAC and the Chairperson.

The NAC is a formal advisory body constituted by the Prime Minister, with the chairperson of the ruling body as its Chairperson. It is purely advisory in nature - where all policy and legislative recommendations merely feed into the deliberative process of the Executive, including the Cabinet, where they are extensively debated and changed. From the Cabinet the draft law goes through the regular Parliamentary process. It is worth noting that no draft of the NAC has been passed by the Cabinet unchanged. Therefore, it cannot be seen as an extra constitutional body, in theory or practice.

The NAC in fact serves as a platform for citizen's engagement with the government, and to that extent furthers democratic processes. It needs to be seen as a new and evolving institution for formal engagement with people who represent varied interests of the poor, but who may not be in a position to find space to impact government. It is one kind of process of legislative consultation, but the concept and fora have to evolve, and more such platforms need to be created. The immediate need is to clearly define NAC processes, and thus make its functioning transparent - the NAC could then serve and evolve as an important platform for participatory democracy.

**What is the consultative process followed within the NAC?**

The NAC has a mandate to serve as the interface between the government and the people potentially affected through its laws/policies. It focuses particularly on social sector laws and their effect on marginalized and disadvantaged communities. The NAC is mandated to hold public consultation of laws before they are forwarded to the government as draft bills. In other words, it attempts to ensure people's participation in the process of drafting law and policy. As part of its procedures, the NAC prepares draft Bills (or framework/basic principles). The NAC procedures lay down a process of consultation to be followed by working groups set up to work intensively on issues. The working groups, draw upon opinion from experts and affected people. The report prepared on the basis of consultations by the working groups are presented for discussion in the full NAC.

After extensive consultations between members, and with considerable engagement with government ministries, these drafts are made public, for comment. The NAC attempts to incorporate the feedback, received till the process of consultation is complete. The NAC then forwards its view to the government as a series of recommendations.



# Business

- Enterprise
- Inclusion
- CSR
- ICT
- Go Green

## The very small housing loan

*Two former bankers show how it is possible*

Civil Society News  
Mumbai

How can, Nimai, a migrant from West Bengal making Chinese food on a street in Malad, find the finance to buy a flat in Virar in the suburbs of Mumbai?

The short answer is that he can't if he goes to the usual sources. Most banks and housing finance companies don't like dealing with customers like him. The paperwork they require is difficult to comply with – coming as Nimai does literally off the street. There are other issues too of assessing his income and being sure that he will make repayments. So, though Nimai may be making a decent living from dishing out plates of chow, as far as the financial system is concerned he is not creditworthy.

But things could be different if he is lucky enough to connect with the Micro Housing Finance Corporation (MHFC), which was launched four years ago by two former investment bankers to help people in the unorganised sector buy their own homes and live respectably.

Madhusudhan Menon, 57, and Rajnish Dhall, 41, spent many years closing private equity deals at American Express. When they quit it was, like most early retirees, to play golf and travel. At least this is what Menon says he did for a while.

But concern over how many people remain excluded from the banking system in India prompted them to reinvent their careers, this time to serve those who had no access to housing finance even though they had decent incomes.

Nimai was in fact their first client. He did get his house in Virar thanks to them and his account



Madhusudhan Menon

**Madhusudhan Menon and his partner Rajnish Dhall found that people on the street were actually making more money now than in the past. But their living conditions had not changed.**

is 21 months old. They now have 750 borrowers, all of them small and vulnerable people whom banks would not touch. More than ₹35 crores have been given out as loans. There hasn't been a single default and by 31 March 2012 they expect to be lending around ₹100 crores.

Menon points out that the demand for affordable housing, flats priced between ₹5 lakhs and ₹7 lakhs, is humungous. It is estimated at 25 million dwelling units nationwide, but the figure could really be closer to 40 million units. The supply, on the other hand, is just 100,000 units based on the projects which are planned.

People who want cheap housing have the capacity to pay back loans, but banks don't know how

*Continued on next page*

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to interface with them. Banks have systems for scrutinising papers and verifying guarantees. But assessing people who do not have a typical profile and asset base requires creativity and insight. Figuring out the cash-flows of a street vendor or a taxi driver requires a different approach to lending.

"If you have a salary certificate showing that you get ₹10,000 a month you can probably get a loan," says Menon. "But if you are a *vada pav* seller making ₹25,000 a month you can't get a loan."

"In so many years of talking of financial inclusion and getting people to open bank accounts and so on we have really achieved very little," explains Menon. "We have come across a whole segment of people who have been ignored by financial institutions."

Menon and his partner Dhall were moved by the fact that even after 60 years of independence people in Indian cities continued to live in appalling conditions. When they took a closer look they found that people on the street were actually making more money now than they would have in the past. But their living conditions had not changed.

It didn't take much to figure out that there was a massive demand for affordable housing and people who needed it could easily pay. But there was no supply and finance was not available.

"You can't expect builders to see this as an opportunity. But we did because we came from a background in finance. The basic constraint was the lack of funds because the need was there, the demand was there. When you or I go to buy a house, we need a loan from a bank. A loan is a very integral component of a real estate transaction," explains Menon.

It was around this time that Menon and Dhall were exposed to a presentation by the Monitor Group on creating a market in affordable housing. Ashish Karamchandani and his colleagues in a team at Monitor have been working on market solutions to development problems. Their work on affordable housing has been inspirational for many. They have prompted some big ticket investments in the sector and have influenced entrepreneurs to look at housing differently.

"After listening to Ashish we were convinced that there was no way affordable housing could take off without tackling the problem of finance," says Menon.

They could see that it was essential for lenders to use new norms. "I keep asking how mobile phone companies started in 1997 and already have 600 million subscribers. They depend on the same documentation as a bank: ID proof and residence proof. They have successfully done that and banks have not. As a result, a lot of people have got left out," says Menon.

Menon and Dhall first put together a list of 100 names, of which 15 were the personal drivers of managers of Axis Bank but could not get loans because they weren't employees of Axis Bank.

They took the list to four banks and didn't meet with any success. They tried to convince the banks that it was a secure arrangement. Even if the customer were to default, the property was

there. It was not like microfinance where the collateral moves around.

The people on the list were also earning enough to pay back a loan. They had a family income of about ₹20,000 and were typically paying rent of around ₹2,500. Giving such people a loan of around ₹5 lakhs with a monthly instalment of ₹6,000 seemed easy enough.

But the banks didn't agree and so Menon and Dhall decided to put up ₹6 crores as capital and become entrepreneurs to lend to the urban poor and use their knowledge of banking to promote financial inclusion.

GAUTAM SINGH



Sheikh Ibrahim, a car mechanic, is an MHFC client

**'If you have a salary certificate showing that you get ₹10,000 a month you can probably get a loan. But if you are a *vada pav* seller making ₹25,000 a month you can't get a loan.'**

They could see the need to innovate to help small borrowers get loans and the shelter they so desperately needed.

"What we know from our customers is that a bank account is not something they find convenient. They often feel overwhelmed by the experience of going to a bank. Now from the bank's point of view, and I've been a banker, a branch system is an expensive way of delivering products to a customer. So you don't want your branch cluttered with a whole lot of roadside vendors. What is therefore needed is a separate delivery mechanism," says Menon.

Setting up MHFC took a year. It meant getting approval from the National Housing Bank (NHB), hiring staff and, most importantly, learning to deal with mortgages. Both Menon and Dhall had been investment bankers. Taking out mortgages involved a different expertise.

Over time the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the India Financial Inclusion Fund took equity in MHFC, making some ₹35 crores available for lending. A refinance line against the existing portfolio has been got from NHB and is being sought from HDFC. This together with the equity capital would put ₹100 crores at MHFC's disposal.

MHFC believes it is creating a new culture in lending money for housing. "We are very, very customer centric. We are not driven by how many loans we do and how much money we make. We want to be as customer friendly as possible. Finally we want to make it possible for the customer to use the cellphone to get information and even trigger payments," says Menon.

MHFC operates in and around Mumbai and Ahmedabad. It lends only to those who can't get finance from elsewhere. A loan of ₹4.7 lakhs repaid over 15 years means the borrower pays back around ₹6,000 a month. This would require a family income of about ₹18,000.

The interest rate varies from 12 to 14 per cent. A borrower is expected to put in at least 20 per cent of the loan amount. If the borrower puts in more, the rate of interest comes down, but it will never be below 12 per cent. MHFC only lends to people who need shelter.

The reason MHFC can lend at these rates is that it gets its money by way of equity from social investors. Out of the 14 per cent, the cost of money is taken at 10 per cent, administrative costs at one per cent, defaults at one per cent and an operating margin at two per cent.

This is based on a simple business plan. But the challenge in affordable housing is to increase supply and build a more active and efficient market so that the cost of money comes down and transactions are done on more real commercial terms.

Customers come to MHFC directly from builders such as Tata Housing or Poddar Developers. Its loan officers are stationed at construction sites where they get to meet buyers directly.

There is also some direct marketing that MHFC does through NGOs and in slums. A growing number of customers come by word of mouth. Other opportunities also present themselves. For instance, MHFC has considered getting Meru taxi drivers as its customers.

Meru takes from its drivers ₹800 a day whether they come to work or not. Anything the drivers earn above that goes to them. MHFC suggested that Meru ask the drivers to pay ₹1,000 or an additional ₹200 a day which could go towards paying back a housing loan of about ₹5 lakhs at ₹6,000 a month.

The idea didn't work because of the shortage in supply. Not all Meru taxi drivers want to live in the same place and there are only a handful of affordable housing projects to choose from in and around Mumbai.

# Indian villages online

**Aarti Gupta**  
New Delhi

IN 2003, when Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya was attending a conference on ICT for Development at Baramati in Maharashtra, he was taken aback when the deputy CEO of a mobile company asserted that rural people will never be able to afford mobility. "Who will they call?" the short-sighted executive had remarked then.

An amused Aditya says he would like to ask that executive who are they now enrolling as subscribers? This was the time when the young development professional realized that there was in fact a huge rural market for IT services and that people would pay. That's because rural people are not just consumers, they are also producers.

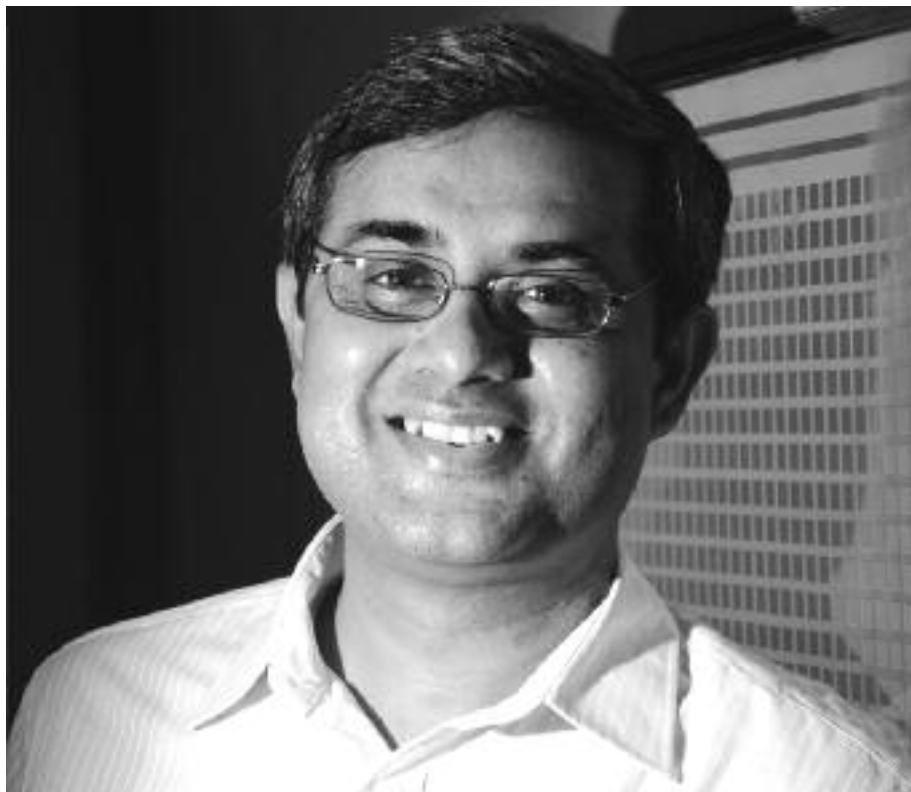
Ekgaon Technologies was set up in 2002 to cater to this market by Aditya and Tapan S Parikh. While Aditya had hands-on experience in development and the grassroots, Parikh had just finished his Masters at University of Washington in systems design and software engineering.

The two co-founders put in ₹50 lakhs each as seed capital. Aditya, who is the chief executive officer, (CEO) had to scrounge around to bring his share to the table since he had saved all of ₹8,000 from his last job! So convinced was the duo about the business, that they registered the company as a for-profit entity and began to design and develop technology solutions to offer a slew of banking, citizen and agricultural services to the rural multitudes.

Ekgaon's innovative applications can be downloaded on a mobile handset making for cheap and easily accessible service delivery. The company today is known for pioneering mobile financial services delivery and rural accounting in the under-served pockets of the country.

"To sell software as a service in villages when the bulk of Microsoft software used in India is pirated was like a crazy idea," chuckles Aditya. The first year-and-a-half was spent studying microfinance for a Madurai-based NGO, Centre for Culture and Development, and figuring out how technology could be applied to it. The software that resulted was deliberately kept open-source for the benefit of small self-help groups (SHGs) that it set out to work with.

Over the last few years the company has established a suite of products under the 'One Fin' branding with 700,000 unique users in four states – Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu – and Sri Lanka and Nepal in addition. Microfinance institutions, NGOs, NBFCs,



Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya

cooperatives and banks can now reach out to their customers in villages using Ekgaon's 'One Mobile', a front-end technology solution on the phone, linked with 'One MIS', the back-end application on the server so that all transaction information from the field gets registered in real-time.

Financial services are without doubt the mainstay of Ekgaon's business, contributing 80 per cent of its estimated ₹1.5 crores in annual revenues and sustaining it as a cash-positive company in the initial years, says Aditya. The gameplan, going forward, is to move on to other information-related services.

Agriculture advisory services is the latest offering that Ekgaon launched in 2009. Branded 'One Farm', the service package provides customized services to individual farmers, specific to their need. So farmers' requests, either through an SMS on their cellphone or through a community information centre, are processed by Ekgaon's servers for information like weather forecast, crop advice, soil nutrient management, disease alert, market prices, in addition to supply chain integration and networking with input suppliers. These are in the nature of any other mobile value-added services, all aimed at enhancing the productivity of the farmers. Already on offer in three states – Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Gujarat – Ekgaon is talking about taking it to four more states shortly.

Getting 'One Farm' ready came with its own share of problems. Aditya says he had to file no less than 40 to 50 Right to Information (RTI) applications to draw out information that universities were refusing to share under the pretext of it being proprietary. "Most of this information was

SHAMIK BANERJEE

in fact meant for the public domain," he says, while talking about a similar task he had to undertake against as many as eight dam authorities.

Today, Ekgaon has in-depth domain knowledge of 67 varieties of rice, eight varieties of cotton and four of wheat. "Putting together that kind of knowledge base and adapting it for multiple languages and media in step-by-step modules has been a drain on resources and time," admits Aditya. Talks are on to take the service to telcos, but they want a cut on it like on a regular value-added service, he explains. That would mean having to price it far beyond an average farmer's reach, he adds.

A revolutionary service that Ekgaon has been quietly working on for the last three years is MERComs (Monitoring Entitlements for Rural Communities), a one-of-a-kind

mobile phone-based social audit that tracks delivery of government entitlements to the rural poor. For this, Ekgaon developed a framework that captures the actual transactions, payments, status and availability of government schemes and entitlements like MNREGA, the public distribution system (PDS) and pension schemes to poorer people. The system has been in operation in only two blocks, Banspal and Ghatagaon of Keonjhar district in northern Orissa, which is home to a large tribal population, 80 per cent of whom live below the poverty line. But official information also needs to be tallied with field-level data. So, WOSCA or the Women's Organization for Socio Cultural Awareness, an NGO, has been roped into collecting this data and the project has been limited to a small area.

However, despite its small size, MERComs has still managed to reach out to 250,000 members across some 45,000 households, and the results are out in the open. Discrepancies in records of entitlement delivery revealed that 1,398 job cards were held by contractors, 127 PDS cards were bogus while about 4,000 entitled to pension started to get them only after MERComs revealed irregularity. Aditya is now looking to creating a business model in the product.

More is in pipeline. Mobile remittance services aimed at migrants of East UP and Bihar working in the National Capital Region (NCR) could well be next. RBI nod permitting. As Ekgaon looks to expand its business model across South Asia, Africa and South America in the coming years, the global village may be more than just a name for Ekgaon.

# Insights

- Opinion
- Analysis
- Research
- Ideas
- Angst

## Plotting the Indian city

V. RAVICHANDAR

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Cities are the gateway to a state's prosperity

If our cities are to become world class, we need to focus on solutions to how the myriad wonderful visions, desires and ideas voiced here and elsewhere can ever see the light of day. The problem is not a shortage of root cause analysis and solutions for our cities. The challenge is getting even a single page of the many solutions out there implemented on the ground.

The case one plans to argue for in this piece is that in the messy public governance space, elegant systems theory though useful will not work. It is modified game theory we need to master – how do we get to desirable end outcomes in an eco-system of negligible vision, institutional constraints (governance) and varying stakeholder (politico, bureaucrat, corporate, NGO, citizen) motivations. Unless we figure out 'what's in it for

them' and position the ideas accordingly, desired changes will not happen.

For starters, our third tier of city government is flawed and the State calls the shots in respect of Indian cities. There is zero incentive for state legislators to let go of their considerable powers for a directly elected mayor and more. Three champions can emerge – the Central government links all new urban grants to the State government with a new city governance structure; younger politicians across parties realise that instead of waiting to get old to lead, being part of empowered city politics is the path to later day State and National glory; and citizens only vote for candidates who embrace new city governance models. Till then we need to find solutions within the current framework.

Our cities are the gateway to a State's prosper-

ity but political compulsions will never allow overt acceptance. The answer lies in offering an alternative narrative that works for all. This is in the idea of regional development viewing the region around cities (not a Greater City) as the new 'Rurban' entity. Without this, any incremental fixes to making a city liveable will lead to further influx causing infrastructural collapse and deterioration in the quality of living. The future lies in having six to eight 'live and work' clusters (with high local community involvement) that are urban nodes within a regional network with high inter node connectivity. There is greater scope to attract investments (and create jobs which is a sure vote catcher) from going to other States. Further, by promoting such decentralised clusters, the rising demands of the political class can be accommodated and it improves re-electability.

If a city does not work, corporate interests will suffer – top and bottom lines will be lower. Consequently, corporate involvement on issues of urban governance through offers of collaboration with City and State government agencies is in their enlightened self-interest. The City Connect is a fledgling initiative (Disclosure – I am a member and evangeliser) catalysed by CII to make professional urban talent and volunteers available for city development. It currently operates in Bangalore, Chennai and Pune. The benefits being sought is for all citizens particularly for the urban poor. This will reduce the scope for social unrest, improve employer productivity (in business interests) and a pro-poor approach to development is both morally the right thing to do and politically expedient.

Our bureaucracy, a key cog, has very fine officers working under severe institutional and personal constraints. We need to celebrate their performances since they have nothing akin to private sector reward and recognition programmes. We need a public accountability platform with half yearly summits. This has been tried out with great success by the Bangalore Agenda Task Force in early 2000. This allows performing officers to get recognised by the public (and political leaders) and drive a virtuous cycle of embracing higher tar-

*Continued on next page*

# Building Bihar's schools

SUDHA KUMARI

**A**CROSS Bihar change is palpable. But unlike other states change in Bihar is being triggered from the top rather than as a response to demands from below, from advocacy groups or lobbyists for specific issues. Generally, concessions, welfare and relief measures are given, sometimes grudgingly, by political masters to the people who have in fact elected them.

In Bihar, the scenario is different. Change is being defined by the ruling political powers. This perhaps is the single and most prominent characteristic of a state which is surprising everyone with the rapid strides it is making to shake off backwardness and inertia.

This impetus is amply evident in the education sector. The goal of the state is to put in place an education system of quality which is accessible to all. Scores of teachers' posts lying vacant were filled in a time-bound manner involving Panchayati Raj institutions and Nagar Nigams in the process. The most visible face of this is the unprecedented construction of school buildings. Steps have been taken to involve the target group themselves – the students. Girls, in particular, were given a leg-up through the distribution of bicycles and uniforms. According to sources, a staggering 36, 8100 girls have been covered under the programme for school uniforms and 13, 6000 girls have been given bicycles under the innovative 'Mukhya Mantri Cycle Yojana'.

It is the attention to detail which has been striking. School structures coming up have adequate provisions for toilets, drinking water, playgrounds as well as sports materials and study aids – all of which are crucial to building young minds. All these were taken care of under the Mukhyamantri Samagra Vidyalaya Vikas programme.

The intent and the pace of the work is indeed heartening. Kudos to the government which slid very easily into a second term in office based on the concrete steps it had taken in changing the face of Bihar and setting it unequivocally on the development track.

Yet let us not be too hasty in giving all the accolades to the Nitish Kumar government alone. For in doing that we run into the danger of using a broad-brush approach and failing to recognise the

nuances within this big picture, particularly what has been inherited from the past.

Looking back there is the role of anganwadis across Bihar who silently, steadily, over the years have nurtured young minds and bodies in villages and hamlets with often severely limited resources and sparked off a path to education. This is not a new phenomenon. It goes back to three decades, to 2nd October 1975, when the anganwadi programme began in 33 blocks in Bihar.

Take, for example, Bhaotora village which falls under the Sindhiya panchayat just south of Madhubani district straddling Darbhanga district,

**In Bihar, many anganwadis have done remarkable work over the years, motivating village folk to send their children to school and caring for young ones.**

both large populated areas. An ordinary village except that here too as in many 'unknown' villages across Bihar, the anganwadi has done remarkable work over the years, motivating village folk to send their children to school, caring for young ones. Essentially, anganwadi centres and those who run them have been partners in the quantum change, now visible in Bihar.

In Madhubani district, for example, Gunza Farzana is the anganwadi Sevika in Kendra no.78. Obviously devoted to her work, she proudly talks about how the anganwadi has made a difference to the 40 children under her care. From providing nutritious meals of *khichri* and *chokha* (a flat pancake made of lentils) to counseling and caring for pregnant women, Farzana's is an valuable input into strengthening society at the grassroots.

The anganwadi is really like a nursery, the rural equivalent of the posh 'play schools' in big cities and urban centres. Here the children play, are fed

and given their first lessons in life. Farzana has been associated with the centre for six years. The anganwadi imparts rudimentary learning to children above the age of five. They are 'prepared' for admission into the village primary school. In fact, the transition from the anganwadi to the school system is quite seamless; the children do not require any certificate or any other formality for entrance into the formal academic system.

It is this pool of children backed by hundreds of Sevikas like Farzana that have prepared the ground for the change we see in Bihar today. In a way, Nitish Kumar, credited for triggering and sustaining this momentum, is reaping the benefits of the seeds sown over the decades by anganwadi centres and their Sevikas.

There is another invaluable role that these little schools are now playing – the issuing of birth registration certificates. Anyone even slightly familiar with the rural scenario would know what an onerous challenge this can be. Many births are still not institutionalized and awareness of its importance remains minimal. Village folk had to travel long distances to the Darbhanga court to register. Giving the anganwadi Sevikas the responsibility of issuing birth certificates within their area was a masterstroke by the government authorities. At the local level, the community is close-knit, leaving precious little chance of any birth falling off the radar.

The anganwadi is a small operation but has immense significance. Farzana says that what draws the children to the centre and motivates parents to send them are clearly the facilities provided by the government. The mid-day meal is a big attraction but so are slates, pencils, boards – all of which make learning an enjoyable and wholesome experience.

Of the staggering 500,000 children linked to the anganwadi system, some 250,000 lakh children below the age of six in more than 60,000 centres across the state are benefiting from the anganwadis. The government and indeed all sections of our society need to recognise the spirit and sincerity of hundreds and thousands of Sevikas who have in fact powered the juggernaut of education in Bihar today.

Charkha Features

## Continued from previous page

gets and matching performance among agencies.

Many fine senior officers do not get the chance to become Chief Secretaries. Instead of losing them to inconsequential posts or resignations, why not create badly needed outcome driven posts (to manage silo driven agencies) which are headed by Additional Chief Secretaries (ACS). For example a Land Transit Authority as an empowered czar for everything that moves within a city headed by ACS who can drive an outcome of faster movement for all with less casualties. This can be a motivational retirement plan that can rival a Sachin Tendulkar

farewell when it does come!

A parting thought for the political leadership. Rural parts of the State can teach the cities a thing or two about governance – for example Panchayati raj and Bhoomi, for land titles. One should think there is political capital to be exploited that the self-proclaimed elite of the cities are being given lessons in city governance (a panchayati raj like bill for citizen participation) and clear land titles (urban bhoomi).

Finally, we citizens have a major role to play if cities are to become the great hub we all desire. The system is realising that the citizen-govern-

ment trust deficit is widening and needs to be addressed if their hold on power is to be retained. Use it to get desired outcomes by using social media and other avenues to keep the spotlight on better performance. Greater civic responsibility is needed and if not forthcoming implementation through rule of law must be encouraged by civil society. If we all demand the same outcomes, stay the course and use game theory, there is a greater chance of truly global cities emerging.

V. Ravichandar, Chairman, Feedback Consulting, hopes there are idea nuggets here that could allow us to game the system for better outcomes

# Three burning spots

KANCHI KOHLI

EVERY year we celebrate World Environment Day on 5 June. We plant saplings, display recycled material and preach about conservation. Yet the smouldering issues which confront us are swept under the carpet.

Dhinkia is burning, two of Raigarh's environment activists are in jail, and Jaitapur's coastline continues to witness protests against the setting up of nuclear plants. Each troubled territory has a compelling present and an uncertain future.

Early morning on 28 May, two strong-willed social activists, Ramesh Agrawal and Dr. Harihar Patel were arrested by the district police in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh. Their arrest came almost a year after they had participated and raised concerns at a public hearing – mandatory under the EIA notification, 2006 – held on 8 May, 2010, against the expansion of an existing thermal power plant of the Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) with an additional capacity of 2400 MW.

In their written submissions to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Agrawal and Patel, representing Jan Chetana, stated that the Chhattisgarh Environment Conservation Board (CECB) had made observations that the company had initiated construction activity even prior to their environment clearance process being completed and approval granted. The MoEF, based on these submissions, initially withdrew the Terms of Reference (ToR) granted to the company but subsequently granted it five months later. But this was not without consequences for the two activists who are still dealing with the repercussions of the cases being registered against them.

This was not the first time Agrawal and Patel, who also represents the Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Ekta Sangathan, had been part of a heated public face-off. They had been highlighting the disregard of environmental norms in the district before the concerned state and central level authorities/ministries. They had also sought judicial recourse to address some of the issues. Undoubtedly, the May 2010 public hearing was heated and so were the verbal exchanges. But is that reason enough for the lower courts to keep them in jail? Even as I write this, Agrawal and Patel continue to be in custody, because they chose to raise social and environmental issues for their area.

Not far away in the state of Odisha, the police and administration have brutally beaten up villagers of Nuagoan who opposed the forceful acquisition of their land for the Pohang Steel Company (POSCO) Company. People of the area have been fighting for their lives, livelihoods and



Betel leaf cultivation in Paatna village

**Dhinkia is burning, two of Raigarh's environment activists are in jail, and Jaitapur's coastline continues to witness protests against the setting up of nuclear plants.**

ecological spaces for the last six years. The people of Dhinkia panchayat continue to lead the resistance. But forces from the highest corridors of power have come together to push for POSCO to get its environmental approvals. This is despite many questionable facts, assessments and sheer disregard of mandatory procedures, the last one being the go ahead from the MoEF on 2 May, 2011.

Appeals from the Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) have highlighted that from 18 May onwards, the administration has been acquiring the land of the few villagers who are supporting

the POSCO project. As of 4 June, the administration has acquired 38.69 acres of forest land by demolishing a total of 434 betel vines, which is the most critical source of livelihood in the region. Those who continue to resist take over of their lands and culture, are facing repression both legal and physical. Out of the 4004 acres of land requirement, a major chunk of land falls under the Dhinkia Panchayat. Since the last one week, more than 2,000 villagers both men and women are protesting day and night in the Govindpur and Dhinkia village border, to prevent entry of officials and police forces into their area. The police platoons, numbering about 20, have surrounded the area in threatening numbers to assist land acquisition in favour of the company.

Cross over to the western coast of Maharashtra and Jaitapur's nuclear noose continues to hang over many heads. Six reactors of the 9900 MW nuclear power plant proposed to be located in Madban, a village adjoining Jaitapur, have been in the international limelight. The plant was granted environmental clearance just around the visit of the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, to India in December 2010. The French multinational, Areva, has been contracted to supply six reactors of 1650 MW each for the plant.

The setting up of the nuclear power plant has raised serious objections from the time its location came to be known. People have taken to the streets, been put behind bars, and have refused to accept compensation from the government authorities for the take over of their land and homes.

One of the biggest arrests was in December 2010, when the protests had turned volatile. Around 1,500 people were detained including members of the Konkan Bachao Samiti (KBS) and the Janahit Seva Samiti who were spearheading opposition to the project. In March this year, Jaitapur's coastline had turned tense again when protests and subsequent arrests took place. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra held a public meeting supporting the plant and the police reportedly went on an offensive against the activists and 14 of them were arrested.

These three are not the only stories that shape the discourse of people and their environment versus the growth imperative. There are many smaller protests taking place too, not all in full public glare.

Some succumb to their fate. But their scars will continue to mar the story of India's growth.

*The author is member of Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group and is based in Delhi*

# Nuclear safety is a big worry

MIHIR R. BHATT

**T**ABREZ Pehekar who was killed in police firing while protesting against the Jaitapur nuclear plant represents the citizens' growing concern over the safety claims of India's nuclear power plants. Very little information on India's nuclear safety performance is available to its people. The recently proposed safety audit of nuclear facilities which was declared in Parliament by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, is being taken up as an internal exercise by the nuclear energy establishment. Unless this audit becomes accountable to the citizens of India, its findings are useless to assuage the fears of those protesting in Jaitapur.

The protests in Jaitapur in Maharashtra are against the proposed location of a 9900 megawatt nuclear power plant in their area. Once completed, it would be one of the largest nuclear power installations in the world. The plant is proposed to address India's accelerating need for energy and to fuel its 9.5 per cent GDP growth rate. The protests are neither against the growth rate nor against the ensuring of energy security, but due to fears of possible failure of safety measures of the proposed nuclear power plant in case of a disaster. The recent tragedy at the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant in Japan has increased fears on nuclear safety worldwide. These fears arise not only out of concern for the intrinsic safety of nuclear energy, but also out of the opaqueness surrounding its safety measures.

People fear calamities at nuclear plants which can arise due to malfunctioning of the plant or due to external factors like natural disasters or a combination of both. Internal risks can be reduced by generic safety measures. Other risks are more location specific and often more difficult to assess. Areas that are prone to conflict or natural disasters, like the area of the Fukushima nuclear power plant, pose additional risks to the operation of nuclear facilities. These risks are widely known but information about their mitigation has not been shared with citizens.

First, the plans do not provide basic safety information. In the case of a calamity at a nuclear power plant, who will be affected, how many will be affected, and for how long? What will be its impact on land, food and drinking water in the area? Such forecasting must be undertaken, and openly shared with vulnerable people. Do the villages covered under the Ratnagiri District Disaster Management Plan have access to these details? Does the Maharashtra State Disaster Management Plan identify key stakeholders, like the local population, as part of a risk communication strategy?

Second, like the protestors, many Indian citizens would like to know who is responsible for ensuring safety? How safety levels in these plants will be measured over time and by whom is key information that citizens should know. Who will guard the implementation of safety measures and at what level should be clearly spelled out to the local population. Who is liable for the failure of



Police beating up Jaitapur protestors

supervision must be known to local lawyers and the police. Who will be responsible for taking assessments and implementing them to improve safety should be known to the district collector. To what degree will panchayats be involved in the governance of safety measures should be known to the panchayat members.

Nuclear safety has to be instituted locally at the plant and community level. It should not be a top-down exercise totally driven by scientists and administrators. Scientists assuring scientists about nuclear safety is certainly essential, but it has limited value beyond scientific circles. Information on issues that concern the citizens should be publicly debated.

Third, there must be a list of rights on nuclear safety information and nuclear disaster preparedness for citizens. The Maharashtra State District Disaster Management Plan needs to mention these rights and how they will be applied. The National Disaster Management Authority's preparedness and ability to respond in case of a nuclear disaster or a disaster affecting nuclear plants must be shared with citizens across India. The National Disaster Management Plan of the Government of India should spell out and protect these rights.

The long-drawn and highly frustrating 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy lingers in the public mind. Citizens have learned from the Bhopal Gas Tragedy to question the location of hazardous industries close to habitation. But it is unclear to what extent authorities and industries have learned from Bhopal. Have efforts been made to improve safety regulations and independent supervision to prevent future industrial or

nuclear disasters? Moreover, victims of the chemical disaster have not been compensated or have received measly compensation only after decades of legal battles. The citizens need clarity on who is accountable for future nuclear accidents or disasters and who will compensate the victims for their loss and suffering.

Fourth, what is the track record of nuclear safety management in India? The citizens should know how time, money, effort and lives are saved by past measures. Those who addressed safety issues should start a dialogue with citizens through media and meetings. The independent and open safety studies conducted so far should be put in the public domain. Links between spending and safety in the nuclear sector should be demonstrated to citizens. What are the possible innovations in safety management? What kind of risk communication is in place to address the concerns of protestors should be known to all citizens.

In spite of an impeccable safety record of 335 reactor years of operation in India, citizens are protesting against nuclear plants. These protests should not be viewed as questioning India's nuclear programme itself, but seen as an opportunity to educate our citizens about nuclear energy so they can make informed choices that affect their lives. Addressing the four safety concerns I raised with accurate and concrete information may be a better way to deal with the protestors. This way the citizen can become an intelligently instead of an ill informed adversary to India's nuclear future. And perhaps such an alliance with citizens is what India needs the most these days.

*Mihir R. Bhatt is working on promoting safer schools in six states in India.*

# Out in the open

REENA MEHTA & BHARAT DOGRA

**T**HE establishment of transparent systems comes up as one of the foremost concerns during discussions on panchayati raj. With the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the subsequent escalation in the budgets of panchayats, this concern has grown.

It has been observed by many that the recent panchayat polls witnessed an escalation of expenses by candidates. Those who have spent so heavily on elections will indulge in corruption of

being taken up.

The village committee is made up of about 10 to 15 members. It has equal representation of women. Supervision of the work, management, purchase of material and payment to workers is done by the committee. The selection of committee members should ensure that they are empathetic to public causes and can devote time to this work.

While organizing famine relief work the Barefoot College evolved a system that ensures

wages are in place and tally with each other. Photographs of work-sites from certain angles are taken (a) before the work is undertaken (b) when voluntary work is provided (c) when work is in progress and (d) when work is completed. All records of the purchase committee are maintained carefully.

A social audit is conducted in which all records, in a simplified format, are presented to the people and any objections or discrepancies raised by villagers are carefully examined. After the completion of the work it is necessary for the community to endorse in writing that the work has been completed. The work is then handed over to the community for maintenance and repair.

The Barefoot College took up drought relief and employment projects supported by CAPART and other organizations not just to provide relief but to demonstrate how transparent systems work. Some of these practices proved very helpful when transparent systems were being discussed by the government for wider implementation.

At some places in the country there have been complaints that minimum wages are not paid. At other places there are complaints that assets have not been created properly under employment or drought relief schemes.

The Barefoot College evolved a system based on the slogan, *Nayari Napti, Nayari Rate, or Poori Napti, Poora Rate* (proper work, measurement and wage). For this slogan to become a reality it was important to measure an individual worker's work properly and promptly. If only a group's work is measured then those who work very hard suffer due to those who lag behind. On the other hand, the system of individual measurement assures the worker of a fair wage and also enables him/her to choose their hours of work.

However, some officials argue that detailed measurement done by the Barefoot College cannot be replicated at a national level. The debate can go on but what cannot be denied is that the Barefoot College's system has worked very well in many villages and a lot can be learnt from it, particularly at a time when the rural employment guarantee scheme is emerging as the government's biggest initiative.

These efforts of the Barefoot College are a significant milestone in the struggle for minimum wages. When many women workers employed at the government's relief works were not paid the legal minimum wage, Barefoot College activists encouraged them to protest. The women raised the demand for minimum wages at the famine relief work sites in villages and in the courts.

The director of the Barefoot College, Bunker Roy, fought this case all the way to the Supreme Court. Subsequently, the Supreme Court judgment upheld the demand for minimum wages and its order is often cited by various struggles for minimum wages.



Women in Rajasthan are leading the movement for transparency

an even greater magnitude, it is believed. This is the context in which the creation of transparent systems in rural decentralization is being increasingly emphasized.

The Barefoot College which has been working in Ajmer district, Kishengarh block, and its adjoining area in Rajasthan for several decades has been closely involved in the creation of systems of transparent functioning. At first these related to the Barefoot College's own functioning. Later, this effort was extended to creating transparency in drought relief works, rural employment schemes and panchayat raj.

In the villages where Barefoot College works, more and more power, including financial power to spend funds, is vested in the hands of various committees of villagers.

For example, the village water committee gets substantial control over funds for water programmes and the village education committee gets substantial control over funds for night schools. In addition, the Barefoot College also transfers much of its own budget and functionaries to its field centres which are closer to the villages where different development works are

complete honesty in the payment of wages, maximum employment and priority to needy families. Meetings of the village community were held to involve them in the selection of work and to give them complete information about the budget that is available. All essential records were displayed publicly to ensure that people have access to information.

'Barefoot managers' picked up from villagers, especially women, were provided training for managing such projects. Training is also organized for mates on work measurement, maintenance of muster rolls and other records etc. Women get priority in the selection of mates. Workers are selected carefully so that those who have greater need for employment are given preference. Wages are based on measurement so workers who have completed the work can go home without having to stay for all eight hours. Thereby they have flexibility of working hours and can avoid exposure to extreme heat. All works involve some voluntary contribution of free labour.

All financial transactions are made through bank accounts. A system based on labour cards and mate cards ensures that all records of employment and



# Living

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## A swinging ride

*Your very own elephant for a day at Patara*

SUSHEELA NAIR

**Susheela Nair**  
Chiang Mai

THE elephant holds a special place in the Thai way of life. We experienced a slice of their fascination, concern and care for elephants when we visited the Patara Elephant Farm, a 30-minute drive from Chiang Mai. We had a rendezvous with the elephants rescued from unsuitable working conditions and cruel backgrounds.

Located in the picturesque Hang Dong Valley, Patara Elephant Farm focuses on conservation, healthcare and breeding management of elephants in Thailand and their reintroduction into the wild. To help fund the organization, Patara has devised the 'Elephant Owner for a Day' programme which enables visitors to get hands-on experience in interacting with elephants, their care and upkeep, how to hike, track and approach elephants in the bush, unchain the elephant, walk, feed it, bathe and brush the elephant in the river, how to ride on an elephant and communicate through different spoken commands. The revenue earned from the tourist inflow helps in the upkeep of elephants in a natural environment for the breeding programme.

We were ushered to a hut open on all sides where we listened in rapt attention to Pat, the owner. An exceedingly knowledgeable person, he made learning about these creatures an interesting and enjoyable experience. After a 30-minute introduction to the realm of the pachyderms, our interaction with the elephants started. We were given a basket of fruit and taken to meet our elephants. We introduced ourselves to the elephants by offering a huge basket of fruit each. Then we were introduced to Bon, our elephant for the day. When we called out his name and lifted a banana in the air, he flapped his ears, lifted his trunk and trumpeted, acknowledging our presence. The basket of fruit opens the door to friendship. Some visitors looked into the colossal mouths of the elephants to catch a glimpse of their teeth.

After the 'greet and eat' introduction, we

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Elephant ride through a stream



Visitors splash around and have fun with elephants

SUSHEELA NAIR

*Continued from previous page*

checked the wellness of the elephants and brushed dirt off their skins. We were taught a lot about the care of our elephants – their health, how to inspect their dung, check whether they have been sleeping, check whether they are happy, unchaining them and about their history and breeding. Then we walked them to a stream where we scrubbed and washed them. Elephants enjoy the water but scrubbing and bathing them was tough as elephants are enormous and have quite a lot of surface area. It was a treat to watch the elephants gamboling around in the water and spraying us with water from their trunks!

After the bathing ritual, we got lessons in mounting and dismounting an elephant. We were shown how to get on the elephant to prepare for our ride up the mountain. There are three ways: make the elephants lie down and climb up from the back; hoist yourself up from the elephant's raised leg; or climb up the trunk. I found all the three methods very difficult but somehow managed to mount the elephant with the assistance of the others.

Getting used to sitting on Bon was equally exasperating because there was nothing to hold on to besides his ears. You control the movement of the elephant by kicking their ears and yelling a few different commands which we scribbled on our wrists to remember. I had to constantly yell out Pai Bon! Pai Bon! (Go Bon! Go Bon!). We set off through rice fields and down a shallow river, balancing our-



Sethaphan Buddhani, Director, Thailand Tourism.

selves by tucking our knees behind the elephant's ears. At times the ride proved daunting as the incline of the hill was rather precipitous, the path eroded but with stones for the elephant to step on. We meandered up and down cliffs through paths that were smaller than the elephant, up steep steps, down serious drops and across creeks, all without anything to hold on to. Eventually, trust in our elephant grew. Our self-confidence increased and we realized that elephants are much more surefooted than we ever thought.

At the end of the trail we had a delicious lunch of more kinds of sticky rice than you can ever imagine, all wrapped up in banana leaves. We were wondering what to do with the leftover food and wrappers, when Pat advised us to feed the

elephants – of course. It's one of the most fun experiences I've had.

We found Patara farm to be so unlike other elephant camps. Here you have your own elephant for the day. You do not ride in a cage or a saddle but bare back. You aren't just taken on a little trek but spend the day caring for your elephant, learning about his life. There are no circus tricks displayed or touristy shows like soccer or painting. You can tell just how much the mahouts care for their elephants. They allow them to breed and when the babies are old enough they are released into the wild. "Last year, we welcomed two newborn babies from the breeding programmes," said Pat.

Before we left the camp, we were told the elephant's three secrets to life. First, walk like an elephant. Elephants are surefooted and check the ground meticulously before every step. We should not be hasty in our decisions, but really think about things before acting. Secondly, eat like an elephant. Family is important to elephants and they all look after each other. The mother of the herd is important.

It was indeed an amazing experience and a trip well worth it. The money you pay is ploughed back for the welfare and upkeep of elephants. In the evening, we were hesitant to say goodbye to our amiable elephant friends!

*Address: Patara Elephant Farm, Chiang Mai, Thailand  
Contact: pataraelephantfarm@hotmail.com  
Tel: 081-9922551, 081-6710958*

# Himachal's serene splendour

**Kavita Charanji**  
Shimla

STEP off the beaten track and visit Sarahan instead of doing the tired tourist circuit of Shimla, Kullu, Manali and Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. Sarahan is a quiet hill station with a spectacular view of the Srikhand Mahadev Peak, the Bhimakali temple and Srikhand View, the summer palace of the kings of the erstwhile Bushahr state.

After a grueling six and a half hour journey from Shimla to Sarahan, located at 6,430 ft, we enter the Srikhand Hotel, run by the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC). As the door of the balcony opened, the snow clad Srikhand Mahadev Peak, revered as the home of Goddess Lakshmi, loomed in all its stunning glory.

There's only one day to take in the sights. You can begin with a stop at the famous Bhimakali temple. A mix of Hindu and Buddhist architecture, the temple is dedicated to the mother goddess, Bhimakali, the presiding deity of the former rulers. The temple is also one of the 51 Shakti Peeths in India and therefore an important stop for pilgrims and tourists. Gingerly, you climb three floors to get a glimpse of the idol of Bhimakali. An adjacent temple built in 1943 catches the eye with its delicate woodwork.

Another important landmark is a pagoda-palace built by Raja Padam Singh in September 1917, with lush lawns and a wide courtyard. Hopes for a quiet walk in the Sarahan pheasantry were quickly dashed as a sign in bold letters declares that the pheasantry is closed for visitors from 15 April to 31 July. Apparently it is the breeding season for the highly endangered Western Tragopan which is being bred in captivity. Thanks to locals and dedicated government officials there's hope that the project for the tragopans and other Himalayan pheasant species will help reintroduce the rare birds into the wild.

Sarahan is the gateway to the picturesque Kinnaur district, homeland of the tribals of Himachal. Kinnaur is also famous because it lies on the ancient Hindustan-Tibet trade route or the famed Silk Route. You reach Sangla in Baspa valley, located at a height of 8,792 ft, after a three and a half hour bone rattling journey from Sarahan.

The clear, gushing waters of the Baspa river, tall mountains and thickly wooded forests greet you.

The Igloo Nature Camp offers 'Swiss' tented accommodation. But it is a bit of a rude shock for city dwellers. The sleeping area is very functional and the bathroom does not have running hot water. Lighting is minimal and the food, passable. The endless wait for a hot bath every morning is a major irritant as water is heated on a primitive looking stove.

However, former media professional Debabshis Dey, one of the promoters of the camp, explains that Igloo's aim is to maintain the eco-balance by doing away with geysers and generators. The

understand the culture, the flora and fauna or the people around him. For the true traveller, travelling is a way of exploring the self," says Rajesh Ojha who set up the camp with his friend, Captain Ajay Sud, in 1973.

Kamru Fort offers a superb view of the mountains. There is a fascinating image of Lord Buddha at the main gate. An idol of Kamakhya Devi at the top of the fort is believed to have been brought from Assam. A temple of Badri Vishalji houses the idol of the deity which is taken to Badrinath every five years.

ERIC WELLS



**Pretty Sarahan offers a spectacular view**

place does begin to grow on the visitor with a greater appreciation of living in harmony with nature. Moreover, the camp has an interesting genesis as both Dey and Tapan Basu, former creative director with J Walter Thompson, gave up cushy jobs to pursue their passion for the outdoors and travel.

"Travel is a passion and now a business for Tapan," says Dey. "He operates tours all across Kinnaur, Leh and Ladakh and knows the people, customs and villages of the interiors like the back of his hand."

The eco-friendly Banjara camp provides more comfort. It has 13 fully furnished deluxe tents and offers 12 well laid out rooms. The camp organises 'active walking holidays' with facilities for beautiful walks, hiking, trekking and overnight camping. "The people who come here are largely environment conscious. I would say that we get serious travellers rather than tourists. To my mind a tourist is a person who ticks off places he has visited and makes no attempt to

Another attraction at Sangla is the Nagji ka Mandir which adjoins a Buddhist temple complete with a giant prayer wheel and smaller prayer wheels. An important landmark of the area is Chitkul (11,318 feet), the last village in Kinnaur just before the India-Tibet border.

However, the idyllic environs of the Sangla valley are in danger due to hydro electric projects set up by the Jaypee group. While the 300 MW Baspa 2, located on the river Baspa, is already operational, a second one, the Karchcham Wangtoo 1000 MW project, is being constructed on the Sutlej river. The ugly Baspa 2 dam abruptly blocks a beautiful flowing river.

"The entire ecological balance has gone," says Dey. "Karchcham has caused much of the flora and fauna to disappear. With the moisture content diminishing, we fear that the apple orchards will be severely hit. Moreover, local people are not being employed. Instead, a lot of labour comes from Bihar and Nepal. Entire mountains have been

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## Race to the top

IN this rather engaging book the authors, Anita Bhogle and Harsha Bhogle, draw parallels between sports and management. Harsha is a well-known sports commentator. His wife, Anita, who is from the advertising world, is the content person for Prosearch, a research and communication consultancy agency. Both are from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM).

The Bhogles have been doing a series of motivational workshops with blue chip companies called, 'The Winning Way.' They have analysed the kind of methods and training which help sports people win big and consistently. At the workshops they apply this learning to companies so that businesses too can win in the market place.

The foreword has been written by Mukesh Ambani. The last chapter titled, *The Last Word*, is by the inimitable cricketer, Rahul Dravid.

*The Winning Way*, talks about what successful sports people and winning teams do to get to the top – the practices they follow, the habits they cultivate, the kind of attitude they have – basically their formula for success. Team work especially rouses interest. Most companies and even small businesses see good team work more than great individual effort as the key to success.



### THE WINNING WAY LEARNINGS FROM SPORTS FOR MANAGERS

Anita Bhogle & Harsha Bhogle  
Westland  
₹ 200

In the first chapter, *The Business of Winning*, the authors dissect what makes some teams win. The Australian cricket team was apparently awesome in the mid-nineties and early in this decade. Since they had the right body language and attitude their competitors felt like losers even before the match got going. They imagined winning. The Bangladesh cricket team once lost out to a match with the mighty Australians though they were poised for victory because they just couldn't imagine winning.

The second chapter is *Goal*. It talks about achieving your ambition. Winning, says the book, has different connotations for different companies. But like good sports people we need to set our goals realistically but certainly higher than our standards. In a team different people may require

different goals but like in an orchestra they need to be kept in harmony by the team leader.

The next chapter, *The Winning Triangle-Ability, Attitude and Passion* shows that talent alone is not enough and honing your abilities counts. It points out that India's growth story has boosted sports by giving a chance to youngsters from small towns to win in big ticket sports events.

The chapter on *The Burden of Winning* reflects on the perils of victory. Just as successful sports people get overtaken by younger champs, laidback companies lose out to young, nimble ones. So too much winning is dangerous and it is important to keep on your toes.

*Learn while Losing* is about analyzing failure. *Change* is about constantly upgrading yourself. So, old style cricket has morphed into a faster, jazzier game, Twenty 20, which appeals to the young. Similarly companies need to reinvent all the time. Hockey didn't change and languishes today.

The next chapter analyses teams — Australia's cricket team, Manchester United, Infosys and Wipro. So what makes them tick?

The next two chapters, *Leadership* and *Challenges in Today's World* are self explanatory. Today resources are no longer an issue – it is people who count the most.

Finally, there is Rahul Dravid's nicely written piece, *What it Means to be a Team Player*, about his experiences as part of the Indian cricket team. Inspiring book.

### Continued from previous page

eroded and sludge and cement are being poured in to hold the dams which look really ugly," says Dey.

Our final stop in Kinnaur is Kalpa, which is at 9,711 ft. It is a two and a half hour drive from Sangla. Once again, we stay at the HTDC's Kinner Kailash Hotel. With its breathtaking view of the famous Kinner Kailash mountain and the granite structure of Shivling, we don't want to budge from the hotel. However, our guide says we must make a trip to the ancient Roghi village, a Nag temple which stands next to a Buddhist temple and the Chandika temple in Kothi village. To reach the Chandika or Durga temple we traverse a treacherous mountain path and are rewarded by the sight of the goddess's idol. Rekon-Peo, the district headquarters of Kinnaur, is a study in contrast with its busy shopping area and concrete structures.

And then we are back to Shimla, the hill station that has lost much of its original charm. We head for New Delhi with all its flurry and hurry. It's as if Kinnaur was a veritable heaven.

**Best time to visit:** April to October  
**Places to stay:** The Srikhanda, Sarahan  
**Phone:** (01782) 274234  
**E-mail:** sarahan@ptdc.in

**Igloo Nature Camp, Sangla, District Kinnaur**  
**Phone:** 08894610946, 08894610947  
**Email:** dd@mediaplus.in igloonaturecamp@mail.com

**Banjara Camps and Retreats Pvt Ltd, 1 A Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi-110016**  
**Phone:** 26861397, 9810040397

**The Kinner Kailash, Kalpa**  
**Phone:** 01786-226159  
**E-mail:** kalpa@ptdc.in

## India's best farm



### THE VISION OF NATURAL FARMING

Bharat Mansata  
Earthcare Books  
₹ 295

THIS book is a tribute to Bhaskar Save, the 'Gandhi of Natural Farming' and his brilliant use of nature to raise a multitude of crops on a modest piece of land. The author, Bharat Mansata, is an activist of natural farming and an unabashed admirer of Save.

Mansata writes a detailed account of Save's philosophy and his farming methods. The 280-page book is full of practical tips on natural farming. It has nuggets of information on earthworms, weeds, recipes for plant health, history etc.

The author visited Save's farm around 21 years ago and he was captivated. In fact, he became a follower. Mansata, along with friends, acquired 64 undulating acres in the Sahyadris which he converted into a Van Vadi, doing organic farming and forest regeneration.

Save's farm, called Kalpavruksha, is located in the coastal village of Dehri, a few km north of the Gujarat-Maharashtra border. Here he has converted 14-acres into an amazingly lush forest-farm filled with a bewildering variety of fruits, vegetables and cereals. The number of coconuts per tree

is perhaps the highest in India. His crop of chikoo, planted 45 years ago, yields 300 kg of fruit per tree. There are bananas, papayas, arecanut, lime, tamarind, passion fruit, native varieties of rice, wheat, pulses...whew.

A carpet of leaves covers the ground saving the soil from erosion. It serves as mulch. Save does not till the soil. The earthworms do that job for him. His forest farm is multi-storied. From the soil to the weeds to crops and trees, Save strives to create a natural environment where all aspects of nature can play their role and help plants to flourish. His farm is low cost. His reasoning, born of experience, is that plants thrive on sunshine and minimum water. The soil is really there for insects and earthworms. Plants soak up very little soil. His use of water is minimal. The soil merely needs to be damp. So Save says with some pride that his farm is a net supplier of water to the ecosystem rather than a net consumer.

In fact, Save upturns all established notions about farming. He has demonstrated that a farm-forest can be raised by harnessing nature. No wonder, his farm has become a sort of pilgrimage for agricultural scientists. In fact, Fukuoka, author of the Bible of natural farming, 'One Straw Revolution,' visited Save's farm and remarked: "This is the best. It is even better than my own farm."

While policy planners and scientists worry about how India will feed a growing population, here is the Grand Old Man of Natural Farming, Bhaskar Save, with his overly fecund farm.

Take a look.

# Enriching India's villages

## Civil Society News

New Delhi

INDIA'S villages are not all dark and dismal. There are villages which have made a transition from very poor to pretty rich. Hivre Bazaar, a village in the rain-shadow area of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, has some 50 millionaires. There are many others like Anna Hazare's Ralegan Siddhi and Enabavi, India's first organic village. Most of these villages were rainfed and suffered from a degraded environment. The formula for climbing out of poverty is not rocket science.

Currently, 400 million poor people live in 200 of the poorest districts in India. These are all rainfed areas. Imagine if all 200 districts could become modern Hivre Bazars, with bountiful farms, connectivity and lucrative jobs. It is not impossible to achieve.

In these four volumes, the authors, Sachin Oza and Astad Pastakia of the Development Support Centre, Ahmedabad, have put together what it takes to improve agriculture and boost livelihoods in rainfed areas. Sixty per cent of India's agriculture is without irrigation and with groundwater levels falling, this number is actually a modest estimate. So this set of books is an important template. If done right, India's expanding rainfed areas can be mobilised to feed our growing population and remove poverty.

NGOs and some government projects have developed successful models to tackle agriculture and livelihoods in such areas. But what kind of strategy should be adopted had not been clearly documented. After all, land-use, climate, social and ecological conditions are different across India. These four volumes bring all strategies and best practices together under one roof. You can pick and choose your models depending on where you are working.

Development begins with improving agriculture. But the books go beyond improving farm output to job creation. The authors identify specific livelihoods that could be created in villages and how to link these to markets. They examine methods of using ICT for improving incomes and the kind of people's institutions that could be formed to empower villages. Each handbook begins with principles and ethical values. It is important to get your philosophy right first.

The first handbook, *Strategies Based on Natural Resource Management*, is a compilation of the best methods for reversing land degradation and restoring water availability so that farming can be revived and jobs created. Forest and pasture revival strategies are included. For semi-arid



BK Sinha, Secretary, Dept of Rural Development, and Dr Hans Van Vliet from the EU releasing the books



### LIVELIHOOD AUGMENTATION IN RAINFED AREAS

Astad Pastakia & Sachin Oza  
Four volumes  
Aga Khan Foundation  
Price on request

regions, the Tarun Bharat Sangh's river basin approach which revived the river Aravari is a classic case.

There is a chapter on tackling saline lands, a rising problem in India. Livelihood options for distress hotspots like Vidarbha and the encouraging experience of organic farming are also included. So are technologies which help like micro-irrigation, BAIF's multi-storey farming and technologies which remove the drudgery which women face. The last section is on best practices – BAIF's wadi model, Sadguru's lift irrigation, Pradan's goat husbandry project in Dholpur and so on.

The second handbook, *Entrepreneurial Strategies for Augmenting Rural Livelihoods*, should be read by every social entrepreneur. It looks at how

producers, whether farmers, artisans or those who rear silk or animals can improve productivity, access markets and get better prices. The biggest success story here is Amul, which ushered in India's White Revolution.

There is good advice for social entrepreneurs on choosing a sector. The advice is on understanding the value chain, improving productivity, organising producers and accessing markets. The book takes the reader through a range of successful models – from ITC's e-choupal to Rangсутra and Pradan's many innovative businesses.

By 2012, rural users will comprise 60 per cent of mobile phone subscribers and the third hand-

book, *Catching the Virtual Bus: ICT for Augmenting Rural Livelihoods*, examines in detail projects and strategies which through efficient use of ICT is easing problems related to agriculture and livelihood.

Over the past decade, strenuous efforts have been made to bridge the digital divide beginning with the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation's Village Knowledge Centres initiative. Information technology has been used in several ways to improve life in villagers – GIS for natural resource management, software technologies for microfinance to help self-help groups and artisans etc. It has also given rise to e-governance initiatives and as a service for spreading literacy.

The last book, *Creating Social Capital for Livelihood Interventions*, looks at people's institutions, the first building block for any development programme. This volume is mostly concerned with people's institutions which deal with economic activities and natural resource management. Such institutions include some traditional ones but mostly newer forms like watershed committees, forest protection committees, value chains, self-help groups, cooperatives etc. The book helpfully explains how to form and work with such institutions and community leaders and create structures which are pro-poor and gender sensitive. The last section has examples of excellent best practices. NGOs in Gujarat appear to have taken the lead in building strong people's institutions.

So full is this book with the right information that it would be appropriate to say the authors have performed a national service. It has taken two years and a dedicated team to put these books together. The entrepreneurial skill that a lot of NGOs, social entrepreneurs and the government have displayed is really quite remarkable.

# Understand your mind

SAMITA RATHOR

ACCORDING to the Buddhist scriptures, "Our life is the creation of our mind." How many of us blindly put faith in people just because someone told us to? We do this when we are faced with a situation in which we feel we need support because the mind is feeble. Instead of merely seeking support, should we not train our minds to think and rationalize?

We all have minds but how many of us actually channelize our minds positively? The mind is merely an instrument to help us realize ourselves and our true nature. How we utilize the mind depends on how evolved it is. A mind devoid of anger, hatred and attachment is always in a state of balance.

It is so important to go by our own personal experiences than follow or believe in someone else's. An experience becomes an experience only if it is an occurrence of the individual. This can be achieved if we put our minds to work. Becoming aware of the mind and its potential is an individual journey. It may differ from person to person. What is more important is to develop awareness of the mind's capabilities so that we can use the mind for our own benefit and for the benefit of others.

A productive and evolving mind studies, analyzes, researches. It seeks knowledge and information.

Yoga sees the mind as an evolutionary instrument. The more it evolves, the wider becomes its perspective in understanding the world.

Appearances can be deceptive. Looking at things

from the surface could lead to wrong knowledge and understanding.

Here are some methods which can channelize the mind in a positive direction. Such steps require small but consistent efforts.

**Train your mind:** ● Develop a state of enquiry to understand what the mind is.

● If there is interest in understanding the mind then instinctively we develop trust and learn the importance of conviction. Conviction is a very strong mind workout so keep practicing it and learn to sustain it.

● Be connected to positive and meaningful activities.

● Learn to tame any negative thoughts that emerge from the mind. To do this we have to first be aware of the negative patterns of our behavior.

● An emotionally unstable mind will always be a magnet for suffering. So the root cause of pain must be dealt with and not merely its superficial symptoms.

● We have the option of knowing when anger is rising within us. We have to be geared to deal with it. If we can develop a state of mind which can observe anger we will enhance our knowledge on anger and the futility of it.

● Along with desire and attachment, anger is a tricky emotion. Discrimination plays an important role here.

● The mind capacity of each individual needs to develop gradually.

● By developing compassion and kindness the mind automatically begins to see things from a positive perspective. So start by developing these attributes even in a small way.

● Accept that change is a fact of life.

● Do the best you can by living in the present rather than holding on to the past and getting confused about the future.

● Use intelligence and reasoning for every activity you undertake.

● Turning the mind inwards brings peace.

● Happiness comes from within and not from without. Those are momentary pleasures. Understanding and discriminating between the two will strengthen your mind process.

● Be connected with yourself on an internal basis.

● The feeling of nourishing and cherishing others will help the mind to think positively.

● Inner obstacles are the biggest source of pain. Deal with them.

● Appreciate the environment around you.

● Go to places where silence can be experienced.

● Try to be present at the moment.

● Compassion and forgiveness is the highest form of an evolved mind. So whenever compassion and forgiveness are present there is no room for anger. A mind free of anger is a highly evolved mind.

The ultimate goal for the mind is to achieve a sense of well-being, equanimity and happiness.

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## PRODUCTS

# BABY MO TOYS

INTRODUCE your baby to a few non-toxic friends – Tuttu Turtle, Cubby and Waggy. They are colourful, natural and perfectly safe toys made from eco-friendly materials. Let baby gurgle, drool, drag or squeeze without worrying. In fact there is a whole gang of toys out there for your baby – rattles, dangles and push pull toys.

Then, there are baby building blocks and even an abacus for baby pre-school.

You can buy these toys from Maya Organic (MO), a Bangalore based non-profit which helps artisans and worker cooperatives to produce products of a high quality. MO is a fair trade organization. It works with artisans in Channapatna, a small town 60 km from Bangalore, where lacware is a traditional handicraft, to produce these toys.

MO toys are hand crafted, non-toxic, use only natural vegetable colours and comply with all international safety standards. The toys are made of Hale wood and the finish is done with lac, an organic, natural resin.

Address: MAYA ORGANIC  
25/1-4, 9th Cross, JP Nagar, II Phase,  
Bangalore - 560078 Phone: 080-26594547  
Contact: getinfo@mayaorganic.com  
Website: www.mayaorganic.com



# Changing Lives



## Education

Srinivasan Services Trust aims to provide holistic and sustainable development in rural areas. Education is an important thrust area. Now many schools get the active participation of the community, have motivated teachers. Facilities for extra curricular activities have been created. Children look forward to coming to school. Says Babu of Middle School, Boomandapalli, “I am studying in the 8th standard in the Panchayat Union Middle School, Bommandapalli. After school, I used to spend most of my time loitering with my friends. After SST opened the resource centre, we have many interesting things to do. We have facilities for playing games, learning arts and crafts and working on computers. My friends and I now regularly attend school. Learning is fun. Our reading and writing skills have improved. All this has given me and my friends a lot of confidence.”

### Achievements in 1000 villages as on May-2011

Enrolment of children in balwadis (%)	100
Regular attendance (%)	98
Develop mode balwadis	262
Involvement of mother volunteers in balwadi (%) .	81
Enrolment in School (%)	100
Regular attendance (%)	98
Percentage of students securing above 60% marks	71
Number of Women made literacy through adult literacy program	36,183
Women made literate up to Class 2 level	26,752

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# Smart Steel

All of us are experiencing the drastic changes in our climate and environment.

As an indispensable part of a developing world, Tata Steel has decided to rise to the challenge

of reducing its carbon footprints while increasingly developing new steels with new technologies for a demanding world. This has resulted in important commitments and actions.

- Reduction in the weight of steel used in automobiles has reduced atmospheric pollution
- Special Steel developed to substitute leaded steel in fuel tanks
- Increased use of steel structural's in multistoried buildings
- Use of steel pipes in construction has reduced bamboo and wood felling

**TATA STEEL**

Green Steel

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Responsible Steel

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