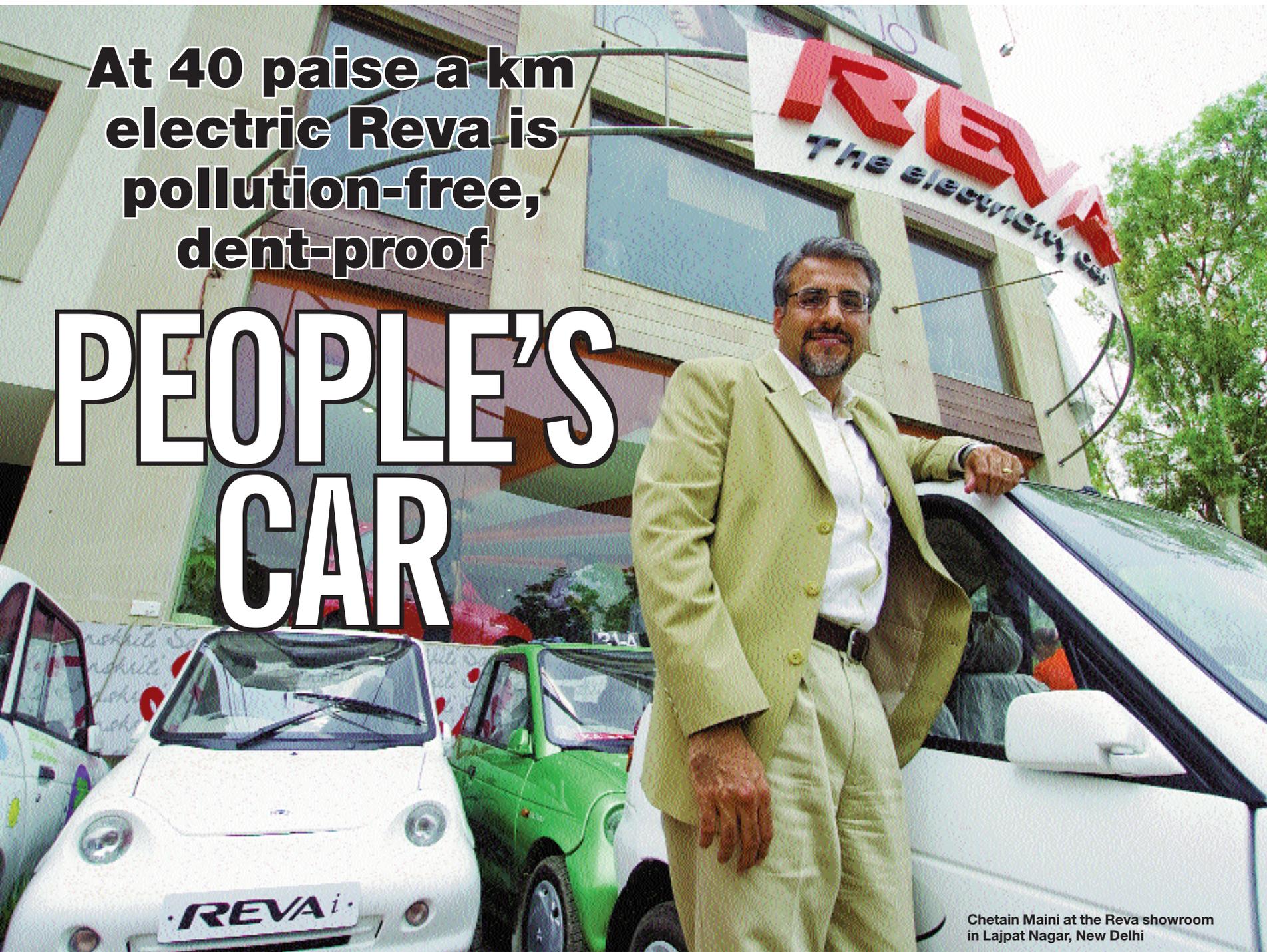


# CIVIL SOCIETY

**At 40 paise a km electric Reva is pollution-free, dent-proof**

## PEOPLE'S CAR



Chetain Maini at the Reva showroom in Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi



### INDIA'S BRAVE KABUL EMBASSY

The Indian embassy has an open door policy unlike most international missions which barricade themselves behind barbed wire

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### RAHUL BAJAJ ON CSR AND MORE

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**JUBILANT AD**



## COVER STORY

## PEOPLE'S GREEN CAR

The Reva, the world's most popular electric car, has come to Delhi with special concessions from the state government. Is this the model for other Indian cities?

18

Cover photograph: LAKSHMAN ANAND

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# Civil Society

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## Reva's importance and other stories

THE Reva, India's only commercially produced electric car, deserves much more attention in this country than it gets. It is for the second time that it is making an attempt to enter the Delhi market --- with the difference that it now has serious tax concessions from the state government.

The Reva is the product of a new brand of entrepreneurship. Chetan Maini has for the past decade has been a man ahead of his times. He has built a car that is not only a technological marvel, but also a social statement of our times.

People become fans of the Reva because it is such an amazing car to drive. It is so easy to handle and costs just 40 paise a kilometre to run. It has no emissions, no great maintenance costs and apart from being safe in crashes of any kind its body is made of material that takes a knock and springs back to normal. There are 1,000 Revas running in London for these very reasons.

What then is holding back the Reva in India? It is the absence of government support for electric car technology. This is why the Delhi state government's decision to give the Reva tax concessions up to 30 per cent matters so much. If it were to follow this up with infrastructure like recharging points and waivers of parking fees, chances are that the Reva will be able to reach numbers that will not only make it viable but also change the way we live.

China has gone from just 40,000 electric vehicles to 18 million in preparation for the Olympics. Europe has lots and lots of cars, but public transport, cycles and so on matter more there. Latin America has innumerable examples of bus systems that have taken polluting cars off the road. If the world can make the shift to cleaner ways of living, why can't we?

Delhi's example of funding concessions on electric vehicles with a 25 paise cess on every litre of petrol sold in the city can become the model for other cities which are similarly plagued by runaway air pollution and traffic congestion.

Reva apart, we have in this issue stories from across the country. There are the resilient red bees of South India, which, because of their ability to ward off viruses, have revived the interest of agriculturists in bee-keeping. From Kabul comes an exclusive report on the genuineness of the Indian presence in Afghanistan. We also found that in Darjeeling the new agitation for a Gorkhaland has a young force at its core. It is development and growth on a scale the staid and ageing Left Front government in West Bengal is not able to provide.

We managed to catch up with the microfinance bunch for the release of the Sa-Dhan report on the sector. And finally, there is an eye-opener of a conversation with the redoubtable Rahul Bajaj, who was kind enough to spare time for me to talk about corporate accountability.

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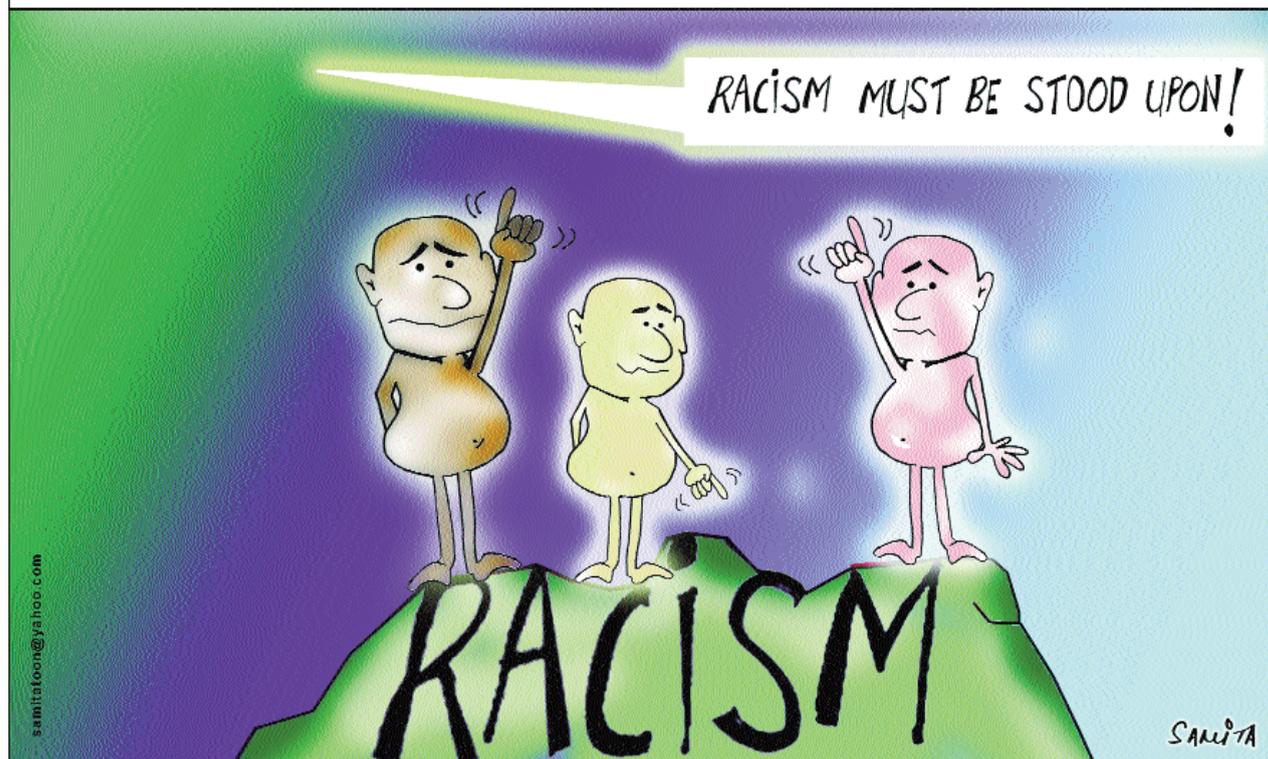
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## IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR

**Kolkata's wetlands**

It was indeed heartening to note that your July issue published an unbiased cover story on the East Kolkata Wetlands and its 'discoverer' Dr Dhruvajyoti Ghosh. It is unfortunate that though this wetland has redefined the city of Kolkata, very few people are even aware of it. Standing up for its preservation is thus out of question.

Being a resident of Kolkata, I am dismayed at the cultivated ignorance of a majority of people living here towards many things, especially the environment. People are content to spend countless hours on verbal debates rather than undertake any concrete collective action. Neither have senior government officials understood or appreciated the true value of the East Kolkata Wetlands. The fact that we are on the verge of losing this precious ecosystem is an indictment of our failure to safeguard it and the greed of the real estate lobby.

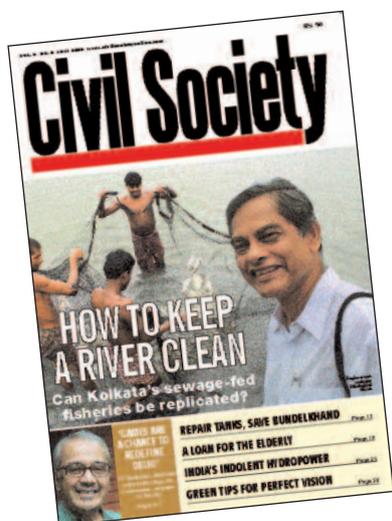
The sorry state of the East Kolkata Wetlands stems not only from this attitude, but also from the fact that some environmentalists who are aware of the wetlands are more interested in using it to achieve their own goals rather than conserving it. Perhaps the city of Kolkata will stand a better chance if we give the East Kolkata Wetlands their due importance and the true champions of the environment, like Dr Ghosh, their due regard.

Sudeshna Ghosh

**Reverse mortgage**

In western countries a retiree begins his second innings with a long holiday tour or with some community activities. His Indian counterpart manages to live with his little pension or interest and cannot dream of affording such luxuries. We are encouraging senior citizens to avail a reverse mortgage loan to fulfil their cherished dreams of a retired life.

Sheila

**LETTERS**

Reverse mortgage is a time bomb. The longer the borrower survives, the louder the bomb will tick. If the borrower outlives the tenure of the loan, the bomb could even explode. Though reverse mortgage appears to offer prima facie a sense of financial independence to elders, it is likely to create future baggage and crush them with financial problems at an age they wish to put their feet up and live in peace.

Major Suresh Chand

**India's hydropower**

Regarding Himanshu Thakkar's article, 'India's indolent hydropower' I would like to say we need to make some hard decisions. Remember, oil prices could spiral out of control. We should carefully work out our energy needs and then match it with our current resources. How much can coal provide? How much do we get out of hydropower? We should proceed accordingly, taking the people into confidence at every step. Otherwise we will be groping in the dark, shortly.

Ganesh Markande

I would like to point out that China built the Three Gorges Dam. Yet their hunger for energy has not been satiated. We have to examine conservation also.

Sarita

Himanshu is right. We keep making new structures without seeing how the old ones are doing. But we do need electricity to power our industries so why not make suitable suggestions?

Enakshi

India needs electricity. How much will we get from keeping our old dams primed up? We need to calculate that. There is no choice but hydropower, nuclear energy, solar power and windmills.

B Venkat

I would like to inform readers that many private companies in Uttarakhand are building dams but they don't have any experience. They don't know how to deal with people's issues like rehabilitation. Some of the employees are rude with villagers. Their construction methods are hopeless. They will bring the Himalayas crashing down.

Ajay Rawat

**Commonwealth Games**

This is with respect to your interview with KT Ravindran. I am glad to note that he wants the construction taking place because of the Commonwealth Games to be integrated with the city's needs. He also wants the DUAC to be an activist body. In that case may I remind him there is a controversy taking place about building the games village on the floodplains of the Yamuna. Environmentalists have been protesting. The second problem is the numerous slums. They have been banished to the outskirts. But

“ This is the last fight by the hill people for a separate state. We will achieve the promise made to the people without violence. The movement this time will be fought with pen and paper. ”

Bimal Gurung

Leader, Gorkha Janamukti Morcha

“ To me the basic justification of the existence of a company is not to do charity, not to make money, it is not to provide employment: it is to satisfactorily meet the needs of its customers. ”

Rahul Bajaj

Industrialist and Rajya Sabha MP

they still exist and we should provide slum dwellers with attractive low cost housing. I don't know if these two issues come under the ambit of DUAC but they should be looked into.

Anita Roy

**Make tanks**

This is in response to your story, 'Repair tanks, save Bundelkhand'. After a prolonged drought this region finally has some rain. Like most of rural India, Bundelkhand needs a green revolution and the symbol for that should be the tank. Without water we have nothing.

Santosh Kumar

**NREGA heroes**

It is indeed shocking to learn about the death of Lalit Mehta. Other activists too have been killed while trying to get poor people their entitlements. Every year, the sector loses some of its brightest and most idealistic people. Can India afford such a loss? Our activists are the only people who raise their voices against injustice, who have the courage to do what they think is right. Corrupt officials hide behind the government while our activists are thrown to the wolves.

Anand Kumar

# New Gorkha stir is Gandhian,



Women supporters of the Morcha bring out a candle rally all over the hills

**Vivek S Ghatani**  
Darjeeling

**T**WENTY years ago the agitation for a hill state of Gorkhaland, carved out of West Bengal, was given a quiet burial. The movement has now revived and spread like wildfire in the Darjeeling region.

The leaders of the revived movement are asking for identity and development. They are seeking investment, jobs, education facilities and protection of the environment.

In yet another departure from the agitation of 1986-88, the current leaders have pledged themselves to non-violence and Gandhian methods.

Under Subhas Ghising and his Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) the movement was bloody and violent. It engulfed Darjeeling for 28 months and then ended rather tamely.

On August 22, 1988, Subhas Ghising signed an agreement with the government of West Bengal and the Centre. Instead of statehood, GNLF settled for an autonomous self governing body called the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), established under a statute. The council did not have any constitutional guarantee, say critics.

The revived movement for Gorkhaland is being led by the new Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM). It was formed in October 7 last year under the leadership of Bimal Gurung, once considered the right hand man of Ghisingh.

"Subash Ghisingh fooled people of the hills for 20 years," says Bimal Gurung, 40. "The hill council could not fulfill the aspirations of the people despite a 28-month bloody agitation in the mid 80's in which around 1,200 people laid down their lives."

"The Gorkha Janamukti Morcha has been formed

to attain the demand of the people which has always been Gorkhaland. But one must remember that the agitation this time is a non-violent one. We believe in Gandhian theories and a democratic movement because we do not want to kill more people in the hills. After the previous bloody agitation what have the people got? A DGHC which never did fulfill the aspirations of the people," he explains.

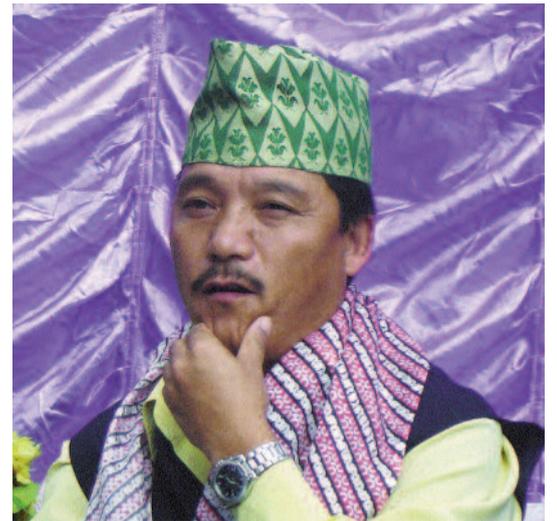
Gurung has promised the people that statehood will be attained. "I have already said that Gorkhaland will be achieved by March 10, 2010. It's a promise but the people will have to support the cause in every possible way. Bimal Gurung has not come out for the politics of the chair. Nor does he want to be the chairman of the present council. Any leader in the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha who is looking for a chair will not survive in the party for long. I will throw him out," Gurung recently told a public gathering in Kurseong, 30 km from Darjeeling.

The new state of Gorkhaland, says the GJM, will comprise Siliguri, the Dooars area in the plains and the three hill sub divisions of Kurseong, Darjeeling and Kalimpong.

Many people here believe that the Gorkhaland movement got ignited when the people of the hills came together to vote for singing sensation Prashant Tamang in Indian Idol, Sony Entertainment's popular TV reality show. Viewers were asked to vote via SMS for their favourite singer and the crooner who got the most votes would be declared winner.

Gurung made heartfelt appeals to the people of Darjeeling to vote for Tamang and help him win the singing contest. The people responded with enthusiasm and voted in one voice. Their solid support took Tamang to the finals of the contest.

The lesson was not lost on the GJM. When the



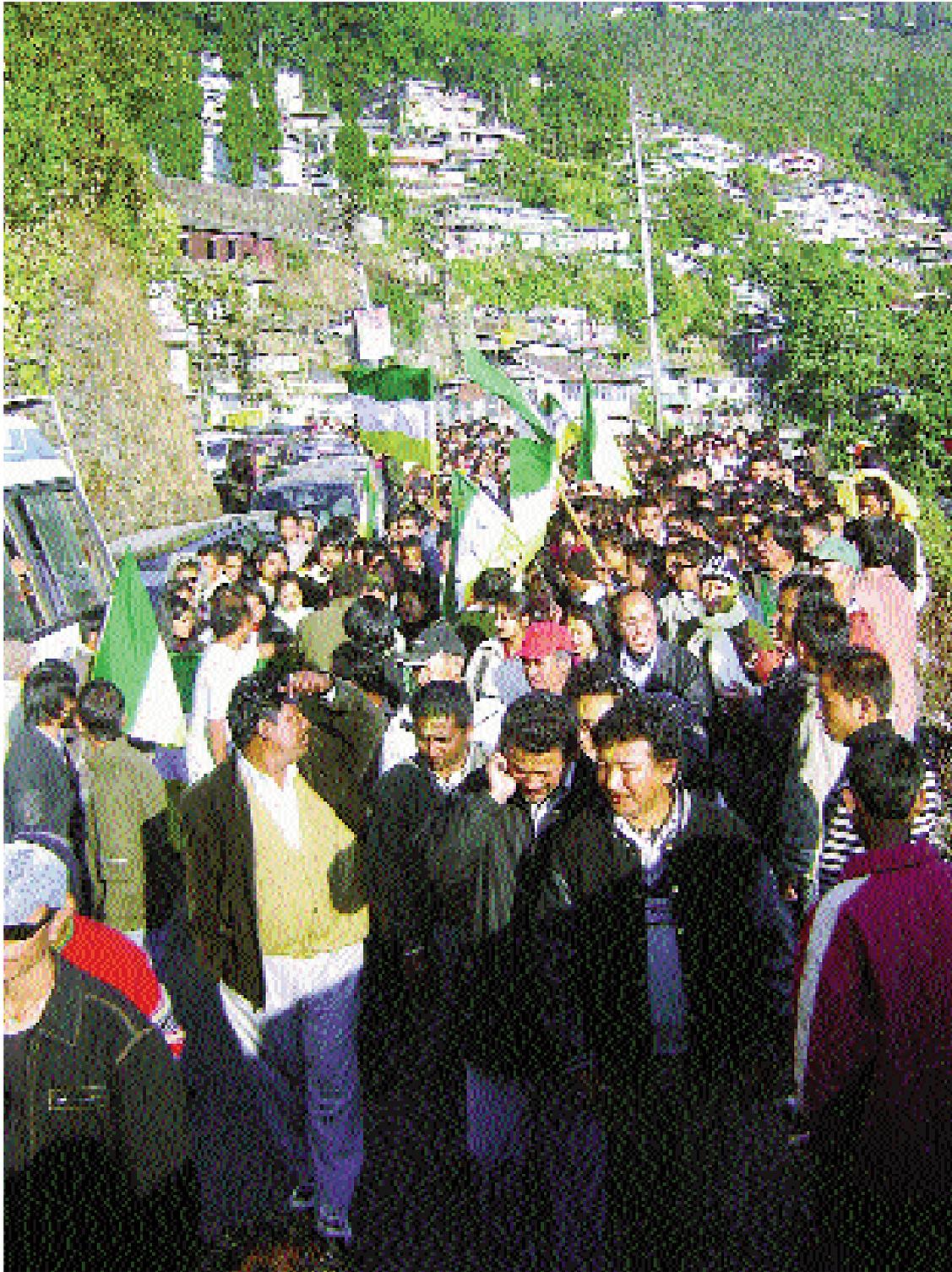
Bimal Gurung, the Morcha chief



Subash Pradhan, the youth leader

# young and wants growth

Photographs by VIVEK S GHATANI



Rally of Morcha supporters

people could collectively back Tamang, they could also unite to achieve Gorkhaland, a claim that people here say is more than 100 years old.

"This is the last fight by the hill people for a separate state. We will achieve the promise made to the people without violence. Even a three-year-old child today chants Gorkhaland while playing at home. One cannot fool these little kids anymore. We have to think of their future which Ghisingh never did during his tenure," says Gurung.

The GJM says it believes in non-violent struggle. Gurung has asked the people to eschew violence and not use *khukris* and guns.

"The movement this time will be fought with pen and paper," says Gurung. According to him nothing will be achieved by violence. There has been no development in the hills for the past 20 years and there is nothing to destroy, he says.

Ghisingh, who has gone into political hibernation, had been appointed Administrator by the West Bengal government when in 2005 the DGHC

had been wound up and he had demanded a new council with Sixth Schedule status under the Constitution, which is applicable in tribal areas of the northeast, for Darjeeling. Ghisingh believed a new council with greater powers was the way to go.

The GJM thinks differently. It says nothing less than Gorkhaland will be acceptable. The GJM demanded scrapping of the Bill for Sixth Schedule status when it was about to get passed in Parliament. It staged a successful indefinite hunger strike in Kurseong, Darjeeling and Kalimpong. With Ghisingh ousted and the Sixth Schedule status Bill scrapped, both demands of the GJM were met. The GJM thereby gained more support.

Following the Gandhian model it broad-based its support. Today, almost all the people here have switched their allegiance to the GJM. It has followers from minority communities like the Marwaris, Biharis and Muslims. The GJM has twice successfully called for an indefinite shutdown in the hills demanding tripartite talks for discussions on

Gorkhaland.

As part of its non-cooperation movement, the GJM has asked residents not to pay any taxes including electricity and telephone bills. It has recruited young people to form a peace force that will prevent party followers from creating any violence.

The GJM has plans to change number plates of vehicles running within the proposed Gorkhaland area from Siliguri subdivision and the Dooars area up to the Sankosh River near Cooch Behar on the Assam-Bengal border.

"The peace force will control people during public meetings of the party and supervise picketing during bandhs. The young people in the force will be given training," Gurung adds.

Political analysts in the hills believe that the movement this time is more self-sacrificing and has the full support of the youth. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in the eighties had not included so many young faces. Talking to *Civil Society*, Subash Pradhan, 37, youth leader of the GJM, agreed that the party gives importance to youth.

"Gurung himself is a young leader and he believes in involving the young. More than the aged, Gorkhaland is for the young who have been deprived in every field, from education to jobs," says Pradhan. "Once Gorkhaland is achieved, it is the youth who will have to run the new state. It is better they learn some leadership qualities."

"We are encouraging educated young people to create awareness about the need for Gorkhaland among the youth who are uneducated. We are also conducting classes at the grassroots for young people, for awareness, to awaken their dreams and to encourage them to come out and fight for Gorkhaland in a democratic manner."

Looking back, it is clear that the agitation has been mostly led by the youth. Hundreds of young people took part in the indefinite hunger strike called by the GJM, in different parts of the district. "Gorkhaland is the first priority for me. I took part in the hunger strike not for myself but for my future generation. I do not want them to lead the life I have lived all these years," says Sonam Lama, a 26-year-old who was part of the hunger strike. Students too have given their wholehearted support. They held a relay hunger strike to support the movement for Gorkhaland.

But achieving Gorkhaland will not be easy. The government of West Bengal has repeatedly asked the GJM to hold talks and drop the demand for a separate state. Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya has announced that more powers can be given to the current hill council or another autonomous body can be worked out under the framework of the Constitution.

The state government has ruled out another partition of Bengal. The Union government too has decided not to acquiesce to any division of West Bengal. The GJM has, however, not wavered from its demand for Gorkhaland.

Development for the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, under the GNLF, meant construction of community halls and roads all over the hills. Even those who have got employment in the hill council are merely on contract.

Despite the mass support the current movement for Gorkhaland enjoys will it really be able to achieve a separate state by 2010 as promised? No one here is quite sure, but everyone is waiting in anticipation.



YASIR IQBAL

# Yatris happy with Kashmir hospitality

**Jehangir Rashid**  
Srinagar

**T**HE Amarnath Yatra has always epitomised love, peace and brotherhood among Hindu pilgrims and Kashmiris who make arrangements for them. This year too Kashmiris extended their support to the smooth functioning of the yatra.

Despite stray reports of stone-pelting on vehicles carrying Amarnath Yatra pilgrims, the annual pilgrimage to the holy cave has taken place with Kashmiris offering their cooperation.

Speaking to *Civil Society*, yatris expressed concern over the lack of facilities. They said the state government is not serious about providing facilities and is, in fact, causing them great inconvenience through the Army.

"We are intensely frisked by the troops. It almost seems that we are not taking part in a religious pilgrimage. Going by the degree of such measures put in place, we get the feeling that we are visiting a war ravaged area and not one of religious importance," said Vinod Kumar, a resident of Gujarat. There were many others who held the same view. Some of the yatris said that the government is just making a show of concern over their safety and security.

"The officials here give the impression that they want to ensure our security, but I don't trust them. The security forces cannot provide us security all along the route to the holy cave. The government should make other arrangements, but unfortunately they have not done it so far," said Abhishek, a yatri from Maharashtra.

The yatris said that they have to pay a hefty sum to the government for a gas cylinder. They said the government is doing little to solve their problems.

"We are asked to pay Rs 1,260 for one gas cylinder. This is four times its actual price. There are no proper facilities in the *langar* (community kitchen), resulting in hardship for the yatris. We are welcomed by ordinary Kashmiris. But the authorities do not have any concern for us," said Pramod Dutta, a yatri.

Even this year when there was a controversy over the transfer of 40 hectares to the Amarnath Shrine Board (ASB) Kashmiris did not lose sight of their role. They organised *langars* at various places in Srinagar for the people who were on their way to the Amarnath cave.

Although the land transfer order was subsequently revoked by the then state government of Ghulam Nabi Azad, the situation had turned volatile with five casualties and injuries to hundreds of people.

It goes to the credit of Kashmiris that they were not swayed by emotions and provided facilities to yatris wherever they could. *Langars* were organised

at Nowpora, Boulevard Road and the Tourist Reception Centre where food was provided to the yatris. While some of the yatris had performed *darshan* there were others who had yet to do so.

An impression is being created by vested elements that the situation is very tense in Kashmir and it is not wise to go on a yatra. But when yatris come to Kashmir they get to know about the hospitality of Kashmiris. "The people here provided us food and blankets," said an appreciative Ajay Raj, resident of Chandigarh.

The separatist leaders too played their part by trying to ensure that no harm was done to the yatris. They asked the people, especially the youth, to desist from taking steps which would harm the pilgrims.

Leaders like Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Shabir Ahmad Shah, Sajad Gani Lone, Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai and others asked people to control their emotions while resisting the land transfer order. They said that Kashmiris are fighting against the State and have no differences with people coming from different parts of India.

Malik, who is the chairman of JKLF, personally visited the yatri base camp at Baltal-Sonamarg and enquired about the facilities being provided to yatris. He was given a warm welcome by the yatris who raised slogans in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Malik went from *langar* to *langar* and told the yatris that Kashmiris would not leave any stone unturned to ensure that all facilities are put in place. Volunteers from the JKLF distributed rice, pulses, flour and blankets among the yatris on this occasion.

Mufti Bashir-u-din, the grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir also paid a visit to the yatri base camp at Baltal. He talked to the yatris and told them they should go ahead with their religious duty without any fear. More than four lakh pilgrims have already performed *darshan* during the yatra which started on June 18.

## SUPPORT NEEDED

### SAVE THE CHILDREN

Bachpan Bachao Andolan, BBA (Save the Childhood Movement) envisions the creation of a child friendly society, where all children are free from exploitation and receive free and quality education. BBA has a legacy of a crusade of 25 years, and is known for its innovative initiatives and multi-faceted interventions including secret raids and rescue operations to liberate slave children, making them leaders and liberators in Mukti Ashram and Bal Ashram - unique rehabilitation centers, Bal Mitra Grams (Child Friendly Villages), child centric community development programmes, amongst others. You can give valuable support for our various programmes like Bal Mitra Gram, Bal Ashram, awareness campaigns etc

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## OBITUARY

Anil Rana

20 May 1961- 18 July 2008

# A true champion of change

Rita and Umesh Anand  
New Delhi

THE development sector lost one of its most sincere and hardworking leaders when Anil Rana, director of the Janhit Foundation, Meerut, passed away on Friday, July 18. The end came suddenly. Anil died of brain hemorrhage at the young age of 47.

He was a friend of ours and a supporter of this magazine canvassing all the time for subscribers. But more importantly he was a man we admired greatly for his vision, his commitment to action and his amazing ability to be self-effacing despite his many achievements.

Anil was a true change leader, championing the cause of poor people and their environment. His death is a loss to the nation. His absence will be felt not only by his family but also by all those who worked with him and knew him.

When *Civil Society* did a cover story on his work with farmers and visited the villages every farmer we met was deeply grateful to Anil and Janhit for their help. "Without him, we and our farms would have surely perished" they said.

His vision was to turn Meerut into an organic district in the next five years. For his work in organic agriculture, he was recently conferred the prestigious One World Award. Janhit was selected as one of five finalist organisations in the world which have constantly contributed towards nature conservation, biodiversity conservation, organic agriculture and activities which have brought change in the lives of the community economically and socially.

Anil had been busy the past few months preparing a policy on groundwater for Uttar Pradesh (UP). On Sunday, July 13, Janhit had organised a meeting in Meerut to discuss the policy threadbare with government officials, activists, local people, journalists and lawyers. In his characteristic inclusive manner, Anil had involved all stakeholders.

Anil was born on May 20, 1961. He came from an academic family. He too became a lecturer in English teaching at Kurukshetra University in Haryana. He had studied at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and enrolled for a PhD there.

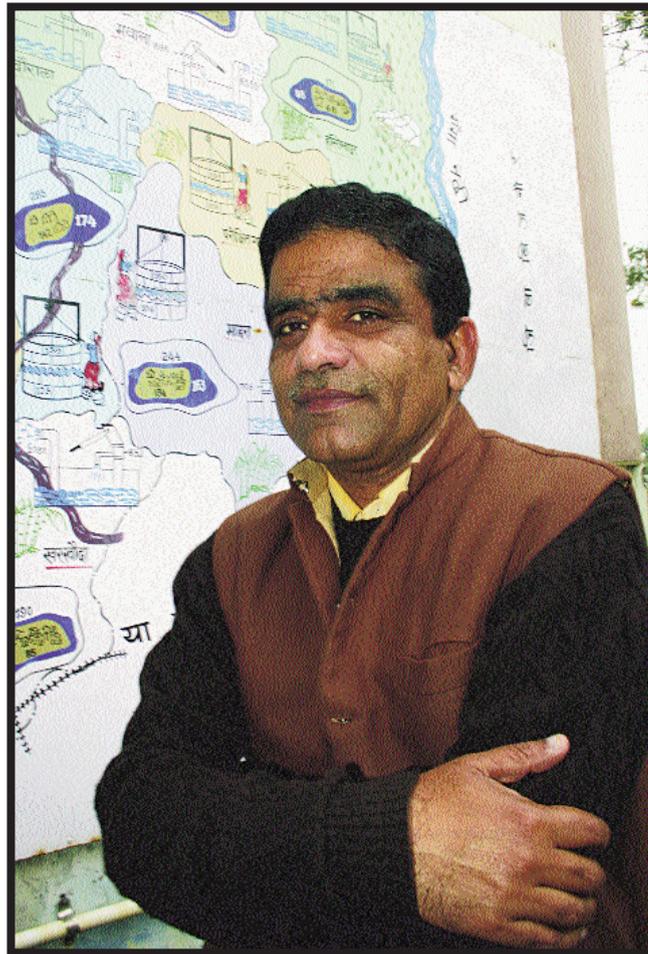
In 1998, Anil left his university job and founded the Janhit Foundation, swapping the easy-paced life of a lecturer for the uncertainties of being an activist. He was keen to revive the lost environment of western UP. In a region once crisscrossed by rivers, people were scrounging for clean, drinking water. The water table was falling dangerously.

Every river and channel was filled with dirty water polluted with industrial effluents, chemicals from farming and sewage. People were recklessly tapping into groundwater. Farmers, who once practised natural farming, were poisoning their fields with chemical fertilisers and pesticides and producing food at such great expense that it was driving them into debt. Chemical farming was also harming public health.

Anil realised it was of utmost importance to restore the water table. But for this to happen he needed to influence a diverse range of people who had little in common with each other but were all responsible for the mess: industry, farmers, the government, ordinary citizens.

He put together a team of young people and worked day and night.

First, Janhit found out what the ground realities were. Under him thor-



ough research was done on the exact nature of pollution, its impact on people and what could be done. All research was action oriented. Janhit's reports on pollution of rivers like the Hindon, Kali and the surrounding groundwater are rich with scientific and social detail.

Each chemical was identified, the source of contamination traced and its effect on health investigated by door to door surveys. This is how Anil discovered that village after village in Western UP had people suffering from cancers. Anil did not confine himself to UP but also studied Malsinghwa in Punjab's Mansa district where in desperation people had put up their villages for sale. Pesticides, salt and heavy metals had wrecked the soil and groundwater of these villages. Villagers were deep in debt because of crop failure and many were dying of cancers and other illnesses. It was Anil who came forward to help them. He treated every poor person's problem as his own.

Anil's research was not merely academic as research often is. After finding out the reason for the sufferings of people he and his team went about taking corrective steps. They would create awareness, prescribe what

should be done and lobby for change.

Anil was a soft spoken person, yet he was a leader. He left an impression on those who met him and influenced people with his ideas. Most of all, he was an implementer. Work was always carried out on deadline in a thorough manner. He looked into every detail of each project he undertook.

In just 10 years the Janhit Foundation has an impressive list of achievements to its credit.

Anil set up UP's first Rain Centre at Meerut to educate people about the benefits of rain water harvesting. The centre provides every little detail from construction to maintenance of such systems.

He emphasised restoration of Western UP's historic water tanks, some tracing their history back to the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He tried his best to persuade industry to stop causing pollution and when factory owners did not listen he took the matter to the High Court in Allahabad.

Janhit's significant achievement is that it got factories of the DCM Shriram Group at Daurala, 14 km from Meerut, to stop putting their effluents into the Kali river. Janhit did research and published a pamphlet "Daurala Hell on Earth". It lobbied with Members of Parliament and the Supreme Court's Committee on Waste Management. It created awareness among the people of Daurala, led protests and finally got the company to commit itself to a clean-up programme.

Anil was given an Appreciation Certificate by Water Aid and by the UP government for his efforts towards water conservation.

Anil pioneered organic farming in Western UP. He got 100 farmers deep in debt to shake off their inertia and begin farming naturally. He helped them at every step with training, seeds, soil rejuvenation, crops and certification.

Realising that farmers would worry about not being able to sell their organic produce or get the right price, he even set up Meerut's first ever organic retail outlet called Organic Aaharam where organic produce could be sold directly to urban consumers and farmers could earn more.

With his death, India has lost a true agent of change.

# Anti-dam struggle in Uttarakhand

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Dehradun

ON June 13, Dr GD Agrawal the eminent environmental engineer went on a fast unto death in Uttarkashi to save the sacred Bhagirathi river from being killed by dams. He was subsequently persuaded to call off his fast for health reasons. But his self-sacrifice has not gone in vain.

Stirred by the 76-year-old scientist's gesture, the Uttarakhand Jan Caravan Manch, a state forum which examines development issues from a peoples' perspective, organised a one-day workshop in Dehradun on June 18 to discuss destruction caused by dams and rehabilitation. More than 100 participants including NGO workers, activists, researchers and politicians participated.

About 220 hydro-electricity projects are going to be built in Uttarakhand to convert this small, ecologically fragile Himalayan state into an *Urja Pradesh* (power state).

"Instead, Uttarakhand is becoming a *Murda Pradesh* (dead state). Thousands are being sacrificed at the altar of 'development' to satisfy the insatiable needs of the urban rich," fumed Laxman Singh Negi, convener, Uttarakhand Nadi Ghati Bachao Abhiyan, a peoples' campaign to save rivers and valleys from dams.

Most participants were from Uttarakhand, but a few came from Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. Specific case studies of areas being destroyed by dam construction in Uttarakhand were also discussed.

One such study was on the pathetic condition of people impacted by the ongoing Pala Maneri Project in Bhairav Ghati, the region where the sacred Bhagirathi begins its journey and is close to Dr Agrawal's heart. Around 85 villages, stretching

from Dharasu to Uttarkashi are affected.

Presenting the study, Nagendra Dutt, a social activist and researcher, pointed out that the dam projects have acquired almost all land and now there is no land left for the people.

"These run-of-the-river projects are building a series of dams on the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda—the two main branches of the Ganga—and putting the holy

*Houses have developed cracks and land has also split.*

*Famous orange and mango orchards are now bygone tales. Agricultural land and pastures have been destroyed.*

river in tunnels," rued Dutt. Local villagers no longer have access to water, as they did earlier. With land too taken away, their livelihoods are vanishing.

The condition of Chain village in Chamoli district is another example of havoc caused by dams. Under the Vishnu Gad Project, a mega power plant of 450 MW capacity is being constructed by JP Construction Company, a private sector firm. The river Alaknanda is being pushed into a 12.5 km long tunnel from Lambagar to Vishnuprayag and then to a 23 m high power plant under construction just above this village of 135 households.

"The administration considers only 25 households affected by the projects. Even they are waiting for rehabilitation," said Harish Parmar of

Jandesh, an NGO located at Joshimath which is working against the government's dam craze.

Several houses have developed cracks and land has also split. Famous orange and mango orchards are now bygone tales. Almost all agricultural land and pastures have been destroyed. The construction of the powerhouse has also led to landslides in the village and eight water sources have disappeared as a result.

Kishor Upadhyay, the Congress MLA from Tehri, had to cool down the rising temper of the participants. "Building Tehri Dam was a mistake and even today thousands of affected people are living a miserable life," he admitted. "Then, those not 'directly affected' by the Tehri Dam aren't even being compensated." When participants complained about lack of information about these dam projects, he promised to make it available as soon as the State Assembly meets.

Maheshanand, convener of the Kanhar Bachao Andolan, a peoples' campaign against the proposed Kanhar dam in Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh said their determined struggle forced the government to shift the dam three km from its proposed site. Forty eight villages had come together and launched a successful mass movement against the Kanhar dam. His story inspired participants.

After the presentation of studies, participants discussed their future strategy. "There is no alternative but to get united and fight," declared Negi. They focussed on the need to identify friends, supporters, rivals and enemies to the cause.

It was also decided to influence shareholders of the private companies who were building these dams by attending their annual general body meetings and making them aware of the destruction these projects were causing to the environment, the people and society.

## Govt ignores rural invention

**Bharat Dogra**  
Lalitpur (UP)

MANGAL Singh of Bhailonilodh village in Block Bar of Lalitpur district, Uttar Pradesh (UP) is a rural scientist who has invented the innovative Mangal Water Wheel Turbine pump cum PTO machine.

This machine is low cost and does not require fuel. It harnesses the energy of flowing water to lift water for irrigation. The Mangal Turbine requires low water heads up to one metre and this can be achieved by building check dams. In fact, existing check dams can also be used.

The whole world is discussing the energy crisis. Yet, this device which could save fuel and electricity worth millions of rupees is being neglected, even hindered. Its inventor has been humiliated, harassed and denied his payments by the government. Recently his ancestral property was even auctioned by the government.

By using the Mangal Turbine, water can be lifted many times more than the available head. It can also be used by cottage industries or rural industries for several applications like operating *atta chakki* (flour mill), sugarcane crushing, threshing, oil expelling, chaff cutting, etc.



The Mangal Water Wheel Turbine

Just recently this machine was used for irrigation. It helped a large-scale afforestation programme in Lalitpur district. Trees had to be planted as part of the Tehri Dam Project's compensatory afforestation programme. Mangal Singh has also been called in to install the device or demonstrate its effectiveness in Dehradun, Jhabua and other places.

He has constantly protested against corruption by a few highly-placed officials. It is believed his outspoken nature has cost him dearly. Yet there are important people who admire his machine.

BK Saha, former chief secretary, Government of

Madhya Pradesh has certified Singh's machine and recommends it strongly. "Installation of this device is strongly recommended wherever there is flowing water in small streams by constructing a stop dam and installing one or two water wheels as designed and developed by Shri Mangal Singh. It saves on energy like electricity or diesel and is ecologically completely benign," says his letter.

Purno A Sangma, former MP, wrote to the then Chief Minister of UP, Kalyan Singh, in September, 1998: "Mangal Singh has invented a unique low-cost and efficient fuel-less Mangal Water Wheel Turbine Pump cum PTO machine which has received the Innovative Farmer Award from United Nations

International Fund for Agricultural Development. This machine has received an Indian patent and was exhibited in Rome in February 1998. He has also received recognition for this outstanding achievement from different authorities in India and abroad. It is a matter of pride for all of us that an Indian has invented such a low-cost machine which is beneficial in the true sense to the entire agriculture community.'

Though Mangal Singh is a broken man today it is not too late to help him realise his dream of helping farmers, reducing costs and saving fossil fuel.

# Orissa floods blamed on NH-60

**Biswajit Padhi**  
Bhubaneswar

THE National Highway (NH) -60, part of the government's Golden Quadrangle project, is being blamed for causing north Orissa's most furious floods. "Never before have we witnessed floods of such magnitude," said Sudarshan Das, a development activist. "More than 1,200 villages in the three districts of Balasore, Bhadrak and Mayurbhanj have been swept away."

According to the Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) over 887 villages were marooned. Balasore district was the worst affected. Around 900,000 people in 165 gram panchayats of 14 blocks found themselves stranded. Relief efforts were tardy. The district administration found it hard to use country boats because of fast moving currents of water. Power boats were in short supply. Most rescue efforts ended in failure as did the dropping of food from the air.

The National Highway-60 was breached in three places. An important bridge which connected north Orissa to Kharagpur in West Bengal was swept away. Arun Dey, the vocal MLA from Balasore district, went from village to village to organise relief and rescue operations. He is angry that the local administration could not handle floods of this magnitude.

But, he says, the main culprit is the National Highway-60. At many places the height of the road was raised to 30 to 40 feet by implementing agencies just to increase the amount of work and thereby mint profits, he alleges. The old Grand Trunk (GT) Road used to run almost parallel to paddy fields on both sides and it never created floods of this nature, he says.

The NH-60 connects north Orissa to Kolkata and Chennai. After entering Orissa it continues over the old GT road till Nidhipanda. From Nidhipanda to Basta, it takes a detour from the original road. "There were many causeways and culverts on the old GT road allowing water to flow freely," said Dr Priyanath, a scholar from Balasore.

In many places water used to flow above the road thereby facilitating drainage. But the National Highway authorities without doing a proper feasibility study not only raised the height of the road but also left few options for the water to cross from one side to the other.

The old GT road had drains at least 25 to 30 meters wide. But the National Highway authorities



A bridge that caved in

closed down those drains. As a result thousands of cusecs of water accumulated on both sides of the road and created strong currents.

"The NH-60 should have carefully made drains to allow free flow of water without damaging the crops of farmers," said Dr Priyanath. Farmers on both sides of the road had strongly protested against the construction of culverts. "But if there had been provision of drains farmers would not have objected to culverts or small bridges," he said.

The irrigation department had spent more than Rs 15 crore to construct the Hullia nullah, a small offshoot of the Budhabalanga River. But the National Highway authorities closed the nullah. "The nullah would have helped ease some water into the sea," said Nishakar Parida, a farmer.

The local media played up the story and the blame game started. The National Highway authorities blamed the executing agency, Larsen & Toubro. Then the state government issued a press statement pointing fingers at Sheladia International, the American company which did the feasibility

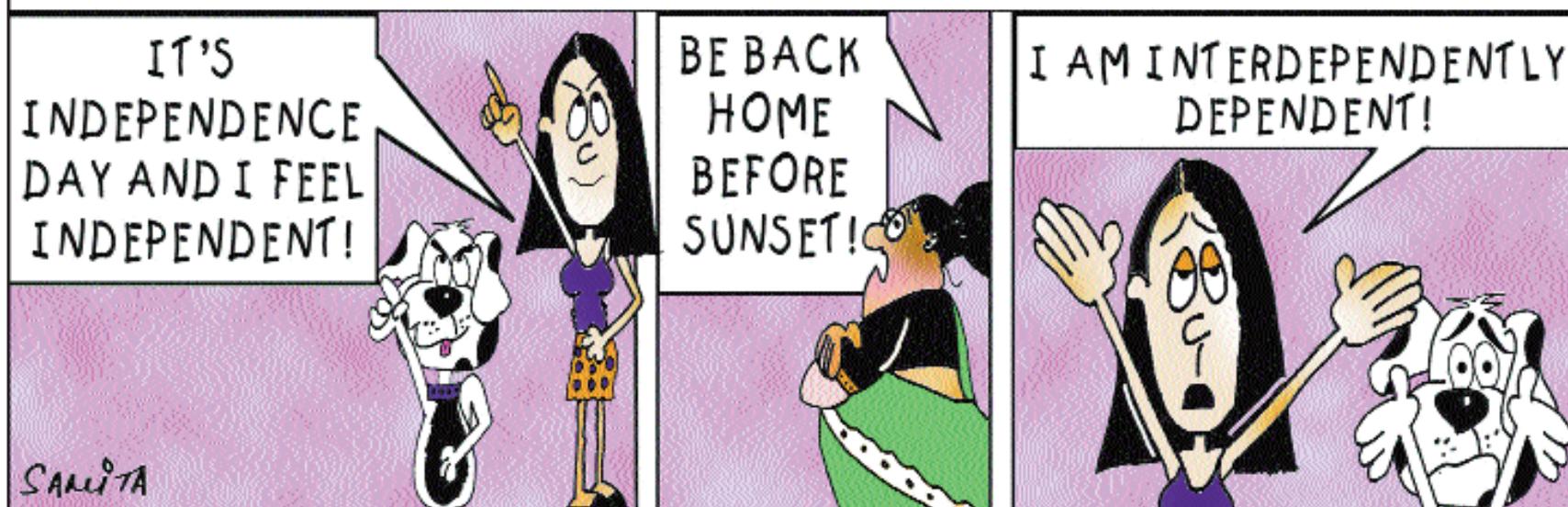
report. The truth is all three were involved in carrying out the project.

Breaches caused by last year's floods were not repaired. The district administration did not look into what caused flooding last year. "They did not even do the basic operation of identifying the most vulnerable areas," said an angry Bhanu Prasad Panigrahi of Unnayan, an NGO. To top it all politics got into relief work. The state's revenue minister belongs to Bhadrak district and there were allegations that major relief operations had been diverted to Bhadrak.

The Budhabalanga, Subarnarekha and Jalaka rivers run through these districts and discharge into the sea. Laxmikant Sethi, BDO of Bhogorai said that the Jalaka River rose to a massive height of 8.15 m. The highest it has risen in the last 60 years is 7.4 m. Similarly, Budhabalanga broke a 40-year record of 12.38 m to rise to a height of 13.80 m. Subarnarekha rose to 12.7 m. It rained copiously during the full moon when the sea experiences high tide. So the rivers could not drain out the water.

## Samita's World

by Samita Rathor



SAMITA

Photographs by DR ST PRABHU



Mashigadde Dharmendra Hegde holding up docile and hardworking red bees

# Farmer in South India finds red bee has got what it takes

**Shree Padre**  
Bangalore

A creative partnership between a farmer and a scientist has resulted in the creation of a disease tolerant bee strain that promises to revive bee-keeping in south Karnataka, Goa and Kerala.

The bee strain is tolerant to the dreaded viral disease, Thai Sac Brood (TSB). The bees are also much more productive and focused in producing honey.

Bee-keeping in south India began flagging in 1992. TSB struck that year. It first hit the Koynadu bees in the Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. In the span of two years, the virus wiped out entire colonies of bees in many parts of southern India.

Entomologists were deeply concerned. At that time, Ian Olsson, a bee expert from Denmark was in Karnataka. The Gandhi Krishi Vijnyan Kendra (GKVK) had tried introducing Italian *Apis mellifera* bees but the project wasn't successful.

"Introducing mellifera bees won't solve the problem," observed Olsson. "The only way to emerge from this crisis is to identify and develop resistant strains from your own *Apis cerana* bees."

To study the grave situation, Dr ST Prabhu, an entomologist with the Hanumanamatti Krishi Vijnyan Kendra (KVK) Ranibennoor, sent a team to Sirsi in Uttara Kannada district. The first bee farm they went to belonged to Mashigadde Dharmendra Hegde.

Dharmendra was depressed. Disease had killed all but two of his bee colonies. He had bought new bees many times from different areas. But they didn't survive. Earnings from his tiny quarter acre areca garden were paltry. His sole livelihood was honey. Day in and day out, the question of survival loomed large.

Basavaraja Gutti, one of Dr Prabhu's team members, looked at Dharmendra's bees and expressed surprise at their colour. "What's this? Are these honeybees or not?" he exclaimed. "Bees in our area are red. These are black." Gutti came from Ranibennoor, 90 kilometres away.

Dharmendra had never seen red bees. Gutti's remark stuck in his head. He was very, very curious. In 1999, when Dr Prabhu was transferred to the Agriculture Research Centre (ARC) at Sirsi, just 10 km from Dharmendra's place, he asked him for some red bees. With Dr Prabhu's cooperation, Dharmendra procured two 'red strain' bee colonies from Ranibennoor.

Within a decade, Dharmendra, working closely with Dr Prabhu, developed a promising TSB tolerant bee strain.

The breakthrough is significant. The bee strain will hopefully revive not only the bee-keeping industry in Uttara Kannada but in the nearby districts of Dakshina Kannada, Kasaragod, Udupi, Kodagu, Shimoga, Chikmagalur and even in the coastal states of Goa and Kerala.

"When I arranged for a red bee colony to be handed over to Dharmendraji, what I had was a natural academic curiosity. We knew that this strain was not present here. I was just curious to know how it would fare. Amazingly, it has reached this level, thanks to his consistent efforts," said Dr Prabhu.

When Dharmendra first received the red bees, he wasn't very hopeful about their future since all his earlier experiments had failed. He kept the red bee boxes near the disease stricken black bee families. "If they are destined to survive, they will," he thought, leaving the red bees to their fate.

Eventually, he forgot about the bee boxes completely. A fortnight later when he checked, one red bee colony had fallen victim to the disease. But the other family was thriving without any trace of TSB.

Now this was getting interesting. For the next few months, Dharmendra kept close watch. The red bee colony continued to be healthy. "These bees might be suitable for our area," he thought with hope in his heart. It was worth his while to continue experimenting with the red bees, he decided. And from the red bee colony which survived TSB, Dharmendra started developing new bee colonies.

**THE BEE HUNT:** Dharmendra's first red bees had come from Ranibennur in Haveri district, a semi-arid region which, unlike Uttara Kannada, gets only 700 mm of rainfall. Crops like jowar, groundnut and onion are grown in these sprawling flat lands.

Bee-keeping is rare in Haveri. Since pollen is scarce, honey productivity is low. Honey is not a tradition here. Red bee colonies live deep in Haveri's abandoned wells.

Dharmendra scoured Hubli, Chitradurga, Mari valley of Hiriyoor and other areas for the red bee strain. He must have brought at least 150 red strain families. Why was he constantly bringing red bees, year after year? "It's a search for better performance," he explains.

Dharmendra looks for three main bee characteristics: less tendency to break away from a colony, fast bee development and faster honey production. Bee families that selectively collect pollen are weeded out. "Those who visit all varieties of flowers are ideal. Only two or three colonies out of 10 have this character," he says.

"Productivity should be the first criterion. For this, one has to keep constantly selecting. It is a never-ending process. The lessons learnt this year might change next year. In the good old days, bees weren't dividing fast. We could keep more super chambers. But now, they divide faster. Like modern human beings, the bees don't like joint families."

Catching red colonies from the wild requires heroic efforts. The abandoned wells are 15 to 100 feet deep. Dharmendra used to take a team of four with him. He would go down the well with a rope tied across his waist. "If we did not have a jeep or a tree to tie the rope to, we would bring a big rock, tie the rope to it and make two people sit on it," he says.

It took him hours of sitting in a well to collect the bees. Some colonies were caught in a few hours others required more than a day.

Queen replacement is a technique Dharmendra has used the most. If the queen is old, if her performance is poor, she is taken out and a new queen cell introduced. "In a natural process, the bee colony produces only two or three queen cells. But if we induce the process, out of anxiety, they produce more queen cells."

Transplantation of the red queen cell into a black strain family, in due course, converts it into a red family. This process is like 'top working', a process used to change the variety of a particular fruit plant. The queen cell, with proper care, can be transported over a short distance.

"Both red and black strains are almost of the same size," he explains. "Red bees are very docile. Biting is rare. They aren't affected by TSB easily. Compared to the black strain, disease occurrence in red bees is 80 per cent less. Deserting the box is pretty rare and the ability to collect pollen is very high. Visiting every flower is another good habit. Like trucks that carry loads of paddy straw, the red bees lug a lot of pollen. You should see them returning to the box."

"While the black bee gives about 10 or 12 kg of honey under optimum conditions, the red bees yield 15 to 17 kg. Lack of aggressiveness makes honey extraction faster. I used to extract 10 boxes a day from black bees. The red ones produce three times more."

Dharmendra now has 80 red bee colonies. He does migratory bee-keeping. His annual production of honey ranges between 15 to 20 quintals and

has a reputation of being adulteration free. In fact, the honey is called 'Mashigadde honey'. It is popular and sells at Rs 130 a kg.

**THE BEE BUZZ:** In the last seven to eight years Dharmendra's 'Bhargava Bee Nursery', must have sold about 1,000 bee colonies to Bijapur, Bengaluru, Maharashtra and Goa apart to farmers from his home district. The nursery is named after his younger son who is also a bee enthusiast, just like his father.

How do people so far apart get interested? Dr Prabhu recommends red bees to farmers who come to ARC Sirsi, seeking advice. Prakruthi, an NGO based in Sirsi, has also been popularizing red bee keeping.

From one colony, two or three new ones can be produced in a year. Dharmendra produces around 100 new colonies every year. These are sold in a bee box for Rs 1,500. As the cost of timber and



Red bees

**Red bees are very docile. Biting is rare. Compared to the black strain, disease occurrence in red bees is 80 per cent less. Deserting the box is pretty rare and the ability to collect pollen is very high. Visiting every flower is another good habit.**

labour is rising, he is likely to hike his rates too.

"The traits that attract bee farmers to red bees are tolerance to disease and being prone to stinging less. Once these bees get acquainted with the bee farmer, they won't bite. If they were black bees, they would fight among themselves and finally abscond from the box," he says.

Shripathi Bhat Mavinakoppa has 35 years experience in bee-keeping. He has 25 bee colonies, all brought from Dharmendra. "Black bees get easily disturbed when we open the box. But the red ones continue their work unperturbed. Their productivity is nearly double."

Dinesh Hegde Shashimane, another bee farmer, agrees. "The moment we open the lid, the black bees get scared. They fly out and sit outside the box. In contrast, the red ones don't leave the combs."

"The red bees have completely adapted to our environment. Since we have a lot of flowers, it is a boon for them," says Dharmendra. In fact a promising development is that since the last three to four years, the new strain of red bee colonies have started settling in a radius of 20 km around Dharmendra's

farm. "These are the ones originally divided from my colonies," notes Dharmendra. Bee farmers who catch black bees here manage to entrap three or four red ones too.

"Red bees are easily available in nature now. Some farmers catch them without knowing they are different and better," says Balachandra Hegde Joganmane. He has 22 bee colonies out of which only four are black. One of his black colonies fell sick but the red bees by their side survived. "This has given me much confidence," he says.

Pointing to a red bee colony that has been living in his arecanut tree since four years, Joganmane observes that the red bees are not affected by wax moths. "If the bees on the tree were black, they would have fled in a year."

Says Mahabaleshwara Hegde Manjulli, programme executive, Prakruthi: "Dharmendra lives a nomadic lifestyle. He will go to any extent for bees. He spends many days in forests and does not mind sleeping there either. He has the physical and psychological fitness his profession demands. What I appreciate most is his adherence to quality whether it is honey, bee box or bee colony. His bee colony always contains a minimum of five frames full of bees. He never gives inferior, lazy bees."

Dharmendra's dedication along with the efforts of Dr Prabhu and ARC is making bee-keeping popular. Dharmendra says he has sold roughly 350 colonies to different areas in Uttara Kannada. Farmers must have multiplied these. According to a rough estimate Uttara Kannada probably has by now about 1,000 red bee colonies being looked after by 100 bee farmers.

The red bees are doing well in coastal Goa too. Abhijith Sawaikar had taken 10 colonies two seasons ago. "I'm getting an average of 8 kg of honey per colony. There is absolutely no symptom of TSB," he says. Arun Madgaonkar, another bee farmer, corroborates the red bee's disease tolerance. Manjuli has arranged for 100 red bee colonies to be distributed to Goan bee farmers.

"Dharmendra always finds time to clarify the doubts of new bee-keepers any time of the day," says Dr Prabhu. Each bee family is different from the other. Dharmendra knows that and so he carefully selects colonies for further development. "Only if one has a clear knowledge of the entire goings on inside the bee box is it possible to be successful," says Dr Prabhu. "Dharmendra has painstakingly done the strain development process just like a qualified scientist."

Bee-keeping had been going down in Uttara Kannada because of TSB. "Though we had been trying to rejuvenate it our efforts weren't successful in the absence of a resistant strain. Now we can say with confidence that this strain withstands the disease to a great extent."

Two years ago, ARC Sirsi, in collaboration with GKVK, conducted training workshops for 60 Sirsi farmers in bee-keeping using the red variety. Five farmers who were trained – Subraya Hegde Sirsimakki, Shripathy Bhat Mavinakoppa, Jagadish T Hegde Sirsimakki, Vishwanath G Hegde Heggarni and Balachandra Hegde Onikeri – have been doing serious bee-keeping with the red strain and are satisfied.

ARC Sirsi is carrying out studies on the red bee strain in three aspects: productivity between the red and black strain, the absconding nature of both and their capacity to withstand TSB disease. The studies are expected to be completed by 2010.

Meanwhile, Dharmendra's Bhargava Bee Nursery has orders for 200 red colonies to be delivered in October. "I'm not sure whether we can fulfill our commitment because mating of the queen depends much on natural conditions," he says.

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(With inputs from Na Karanth Peraje)

# Panchayat digs lake, saves salamander

**Vivek Singh Ghatani**  
Darjeeling

**J**AGAT Syangbo is a school teacher whose passionate mission it has become to save the Himalayan Salamander, a tiny amphibian facing extinction because of rapid urbanisation in the hilly regions of West Bengal. The Himalayan Salamander is listed as an endangered species under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

Syangbo has revived the Bhanzang Salamander Lake, located 14 km from Kurseong town in Darjeeling district. A former gram panchayat pradhan from the Gorabari-Margaret's Hope Tea Estate area, Syangbo has carried with him 23 fellow gram panchayat members.

"We have revived the lake only for the salamanders which exist in large numbers in this area," says Syangbo. "The salamander is currently facing the threat of extinction here mostly because of lack of awareness. As soon as we realised the plight of the salamander we decided to revive the lake, which was once looked after and maintained by the British tea estate managers."

The lake is very essential for the salamanders since they start their life cycle from the water, explains Syangbo. It was created, probably, just before India's Independence in 1947. L. Hanagen, a manager of Margaret's Hope Tea Estate, started to dig the lake after noting that natural waters existed in the area encircled by tea bushes. "We were very young then. The manager had most probably dug the lake for a nice view and some entertainment. A single boat was also parked there," said Syangbo.

Unknowingly, the lake helped the salamanders multiply day by day. "But then in 1968 a huge landslide occurred in the Darjeeling hills. The lake got completely filled by debris. Only a small portion was left with a little water. The salamanders lost their habitat. A few continued to exist in the remaining portion of the lake," recalls Syangbo.



Bhanzang Salamander Lake; Inset: the salamander

In 2003, Syangbo was elected as pradhan and 23 people as members of the gram panchayat. "This was the first time a panchayat was started in the tea gardens of West Bengal and we were the first people in the whole area to be elected. We were enthusiastic about working for the betterment of our area. And we always had it in our minds to work for the salamanders also. This is how it all began," says Syangbo.

"We saved some of the funds that come to our panchayat for development without, of course, hampering development work. We started to create awareness among villagers about the plight of the salamanders. We told them that the species was in danger. Finally, one day we decided to dig the lake and bring it back to its original size," explained Syangbo.

The residents, including the youth and tea garden labour, started to work shoulder to shoulder with their panchayat representatives. "The entire residents, who are mostly tea garden labour, worked in the revival project. Since we did not have much money we could not pay the labourers. The people too did not work for money but gave us their full support. In return, we provided them two meals. It took us more than one month to dig up

the whole lake which is 3,200 square feet in size," says the enthusiastic Syangbo.

At an altitude of 5,413 feet the lake now offers a magnificent habitat for the salamanders. From the lake, ringed by mountains, there is a great view of Kurseong town too. It is becoming one of the favourite destinations of tourists.

The salamanders are happily breeding in peace. "Over the past four or five years we have found that the number of salamanders has increased a lot. Though we do not have any scientific knowledge on salamanders we feel that they find it much easier to multiply. At every step you walk around the lake you will find a gora (the local name for a salamander). Residents too



have started to understand that their efforts have not gone in vain," Syangbo explains.

The lake has made it easy for researchers from many universities in India to come and study the salamanders. Recently, a

group from a university in Kolkata came for study. Syangbo said the Zoological Survey of India visited the spot recently to see the area and study the salamanders.

Though members of the panchayat have finished their tenure they are thinking of forming a committee to maintain the lake and protect the salamanders. "Since we have a lot more work to do in the near future we are thinking of forming a committee comprising of the same members," he added.

The team has plans to dig up two small swamps in the area to provide more habitats for salamanders. Once the committee is formed Syangbo, said that they will try to get some funds by approaching government bodies. "We may also generate funds through cultural programmes like performing plays and other means apart from approaching the government," said Syangbo.

"The population of salamanders in the hills certainly has decreased over the past few years. In Pacheng, which is some 10 km from the lake, we used to have a lot of salamanders. Now the lake has completely vanished. People have started to build houses. There is lack of interest, no peoples' initiative and no funds. There is no proper social organization either," says Syangbo.

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# Jackfruit becomes a papad

**Shree Padre**  
Sirsi (Karnataka)

In its raw form, jackfruit has no takers. But convert it into a ready to eat product and demand spirals. That is the curse or blessing of the world's biggest fruit.

A native of the Western Ghats, jackfruit is grown in homesteads and around gardens in many parts of India. Bangladesh has bestowed the prestigious position of national fruit on the jackfruit. According to one estimate, India grows jackfruit on 26,000 hectares. Unfortunately, most jackfruit is left to rot in villages during the monsoon.

Raw jackfruit papad is an ethnic product rolled out by housewives in Mangalore and Sirsi areas of Karnataka. During the monsoon it is a popular tea-time snack. Till recently, jackfruit papad was a poorly packaged product available in small, local retail stores.

Nobody had seriously thought about making jackfruit papad into an organized branded product. It was available for a few months. In Karnataka, the jackfruit season is from April to July. By June, the monsoon starts. The damp weather is an obstacle for papad production because it requires sun drying.

Though papad making is labour intensive, it doesn't require very hard labour. In fact, it's an ideal income generating activity for women's groups.

In May this year, the Kadamba Marketing Souharda Sahakari Niyamitha, a two-year-old cooperative in Sirsi, the headquarters of the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, launched the Mayura brand of jackfruit papad, the first such organised product in the state.

The cooperative initially conducted a series of workshops to train self-help groups (SHGs) of women in papad making. One hundred and twenty women from six SHGs took part.

Of course, jackfruit papad making is nothing new to village women.

But the emphasis was on how to produce uniform papads of good quality. Each papad has to have a six inch diameter and weigh 65 grams.

In fact, the Kadamba cooperative has been marketing jackfruit papads since one year. Says Vishweshwara Bhat, its manager: "We sold about 40,000 papads in just four krishi-melas in the last season. This exposed us to the kind of demand this product has. Inspired, we started intensive efforts to bring out a branded product this season."

One packet of 25 papads is priced at Rs 25. From May 23 to 24, Kadamba organised a jackfruit fair at Sirsi. Its Mayura brand of jackfruit papads was released with fanfare. "Nine thousand papads were sold in two days," says Mamatha, the cooperative's office assistant.

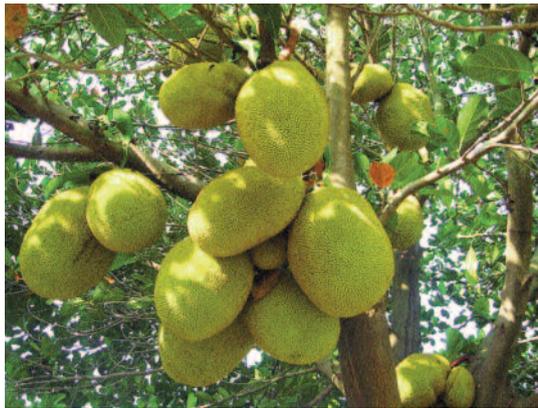
The papad season starts by the third week of April when mature, raw jackfruit is available in plenty. It goes on till the onset of the monsoon. A team of 20 women make around eight to nine thousand papads in their spare time.

All raw jackfruits are not suited for papad making. Some are good for making chips, dosas, payasam and other foods. Kadamba identifies jackfruit trees that yield fruits ideal for papad making. "Since it is difficult for the women's groups to procure the right kind of raw jackfruit, we take up that responsibility," says Vishweshwara Bhat.

The jackfruit fair created a great deal of consumer interest. In just a few hours a wide range of jackfruit products were snapped up by consumers. After the fair was over, for a week Kadamba sold 10,000 jackfruit papads from their small outlet in Sirsi town.



Women from the cooperative rolling papads



Jackfruit tree



Packaged jackfruit papads

Bhat noted that the jackfruit papad had two types of clientele. The first and the biggest buyers were those connected to farming families who were familiar with the taste of jackfruit papad. These included families employed in Mumbai and other far off cities who had come home for their holidays. They preferred to buy jackfruit papads on their way back to the city. The second buyer of jackfruit papads were freshers who had not been exposed to the taste of the papads and people from drier districts of Karnataka.

"In fact, demand for this product is quite encouraging," said Bhat. "But we are hesitant to intensify our marketing efforts. The reason is we are not ready at the moment to increase production to that level. Getting the right kind of raw jackfruit would be a

**Fruit papads can be eaten without frying in oil or roasting on a tawa. Children especially like these. Masala papads come with flavours like pepper, garlic and onion**

problem. We are planning to encourage good plant nurseries to graft selected cultivars of jackfruit."

Since the monsoon is on, papad production has almost stopped. But with the help of driers, papads can be made without a break. Kadamba plans to install a few driers in the next season. "There are some more areas like packing and design where we have to improvise. By next year we would standardise this as well as the production aspects." But, according to sources, Kadamba has stocked 50,000 papads made this season. These papads could meet demand for the next three months.

There is also scope for diversification. A variety of papads can be made from the same jackfruit like fruit papad. This year, some raw jackfruit bought for papad making ripened unexpectedly. Instead of wasting it, the women made it into fruit papad, a new product. Now some customers specifically ask for this. Fruit papads can be eaten without frying in oil or roasting on a tawa. Children especially like these. Similarly, masala papads with flavours like pepper, garlic and onion can be made.

Kadamba also plans to request hotels in Sirsi to introduce jackfruit papads in place of black gram papads that are currently served with thali meals.

"We intend to give some cookery demos to hotel chefs. We would like to introduce delicacies made from jackfruit into hotel menus. Manchurian jackfruit and jack seed jamun are some recipes that will attract customers," said Bhat.

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# School builds homes for wildlife

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

THE sun had just risen on the horizon when Nandita Bose, the youthful principal of Navakriti, arrived at her pre-school. Soon Padmavati, a parent, her three and a half year old son, Ishaan, and six *didis* or teachers joined her. There was a buzz of excitement.

TK Sajeev, conservation education officer at the Bombay Natural History Society's (BNHS) centre at the Asola Sanctuary was going to take them on a nature walk round their 2.5 acre lush campus.

Navakriti is located inside the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Mass Communications at Adchini in New Delhi. Some parents noted that the school's campus had at least 100 big trees filled with birds. They decided to go to Asola sanctuary and get wooden bird boxes made of waste to rig up in the school. Here they met Sajeev and got talking.

"Why not create micro-habitats inside the school?" suggested Sajeev, who grew up in Kannimangalam village in Thirussur district of Kerala. A naturalist, he has been building homes for birds, insects and amphibians all his life. "We could put up cartons for house sparrows, wooden boxes for robins, earthenware pots for small birds and rotten logs for wood peckers. We could also hang up a basket for bats to roost in," said the enthusiastic architect of nature homes.

"In fact, bring along any waste material you have," he continued. "We could put broken pots in a wet space. Snails can grow nicely underneath."

Word reached Nandita Bose. A progressive teacher who always felt new ideas take root when teachers work with parents and experts, she got excited about Sajeev's idea and warmly invited him to the school.

That morning she had just about welcomed Sajeev when he spotted a squirrel's nest perched on a tree next to her office building. Nobody had ever noticed the nest though many walked passed it every day.

Sajeev then darted off to a short pruned tree close to where the *didis* were standing. He invited everyone to bend low and crawl into the tree. Sure enough there were small tailorbirds there. "They build nests on the leaves of these bush-like trees," he explained.

He led the group on the nature walk, telling them stories about the environment that surrounded them. Every hole in a tree, each pod on the ground, smudge on the earth, leaf on a tree, seemed to have a story to tell.

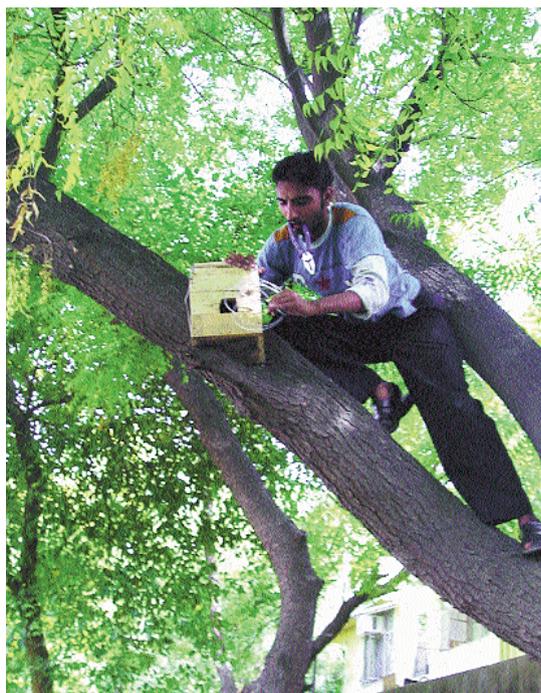
A short and soft-spoken man, Sajeev explained how to make coffee from Amaltas pods lying around. Then the group went looking for holes in trees. One hole was spotted and just as he was going to explain how it was an ideal home for birds, it was discovered that a parakeet family was living there. Juvenile parakeets hopped out.

"This is an awakening. We were just not aware that all this life existed right around here," said Aruna Bhowmick, a gifted storyteller who has taught children for near 20 years.

Sajeev then spied fig trees on the front lawn. He said there would be barbets in there. Sure enough he heard them. To the *didis* the birds looked like small black blobs against the sunlight till they saw them through the binoculars. Suddenly the vivid colours of the clown-like Coppersmith Barbet were visible. It was magical! As if that was not enough, Sajeev pointed out that there were several varieties of wasps in the trees as well.



TK Sajeev of the Bombay Natural History Society



Putting up a box for the birds to live in

Now it was time to put up the bird boxes. The first box went up in the central neem tree which overlooked a sand pit. The agile Sajeev climbed up. "I feel like a child myself with these small children around," he remarked. Narinder, Nandita Bose's driver, climbed up after him and helped him tie the wooden box with wire.

Next a plastic cloth was found and tied over an earthenware pot. A hole was made in the cloth and the pot was placed on an unused electric pole. Another earthenware pot was put up on a wedge in a tree. A small pot that was lying near the flower beds was emptied and placed on the stump of a

tree that had fallen down.

A carton was converted into a nest and placed on the school building for sparrows. "I have seen shopkeepers in Kerala do this. They usually have a sparrow nest at the edge of the shop and feed the birds," said Sajeev. He then identified many more spots where cartons could be put up. Nandita Bose decided to place the cartons in front of all the children when school reopened. In the span of an hour at least eight to ten nests had been placed.

Just as the group took a break, a huge black-shouldered kite flew by casting a shadow. Sajeev's ears perked up. He could hear a hornbill. Sure enough a large grey hornbill flew across from the rubber tree to the neem tree and back. "We have been here for so long. How could we have missed such a big bird?" wondered the *didis*.

While the group was having breakfast, Sajeev pulled the handle off a fruit basket, and fixed two twigs inside for bats to hang on to. He found a tree with dense foliage in a narrow pathway that was not likely to be frequented by people. The basket was covered with cloth and then hung up.

The last habitat was for the woodpeckers. There were large logs near the school's compound wall. As the group arrived there, they witnessed a courtship ceremony about to unfold. A male garden lizard in his breeding colours was stalking a female. Nandita Bose had often wondered how to introduce lizards to children. Now she got her answer. Sajeev caught hold of the suitor. By now it was 9 am and the children had begun to arrive. They got to see the lizard at close quarters.

The nature walk was an awakening for the group. "Sajeev was a living example of a natural, empathetic intelligence that we have lost in the urban rubble of our lives," said Nandita Bose.

# Kashmir's socially responsible marriage bureau

Jehangir Rashid  
Srinagar

At a time when a lot of wealth is being spent in the Kashmir Valley on marriages, a group of concerned people have stood up to reform the entire marriage system. This group, called Humsafar, tries to ensure not only that the boy and girl find an ideal match but that their marital life is blissful and free of vexing problems.

On July 3, 2005 the group started the Humsafar Marriage Counselling Cell (HMCC). Since then HMCC has been successfully playing its role of propagating simple marriages. Many people are beginning to accept their suggestion that marriages need to be minimal and austere.

"Since a lot of wealth is spent on marriages we thought it better to start the reformation process from this aspect of social life," said Fayaz Ahmad Zaroo, Chairman of HMCC.

"We are running a centre called the Islamic Dawah Centre in Srinagar. Islamic scholars of national and international repute are invited to deliver lectures on problems concerning the youth. The lecture is followed by a half hour interactive session in which questions are posed by participants. It was here that we took the initial decision of setting up an institution to reform the marriage system."

Zaroo says the HMCC was not just set up in a jiffy. A lot of initial groundwork was done. A survey was carried out to find out how people felt about marriage reform and to identify areas which needed to be looked into. Doctors, students, employees and volunteers carried out the survey. Some findings of an earlier survey undertaken by the Sociology Department of the University of Kashmir were also put to use. "They too helped us in setting matters right," said Zaroo.

During the survey it was discovered that due to extravagant weddings, late marriages were becoming a permanent feature in the Kashmir Valley. People were tying the knot in their mid-thirties and, in some cases, late-thirties.

Usually a Kashmiri wedding costs not less than Rs 4 to Rs 5 lakhs. This makes the youth wait till he his family has enough money. There are also cases where a prospective groom or bride commits suicide unable to bear the humiliation of not having



A marriage ceremony in progress

enough money to pay for the extravagant wedding. In some cases, youth turn to drugs. "It is imperative that this trend is arrested," said Zaroo.

A person who wants to get married has to register with the HMCC. A form with all particulars of the applicant needs to be filled. These include details like the name of the youth, parentage, address, occupation, monthly income and expected match. The forms are processed and then matched with other prospective brides or grooms who have

almost the same parameters.

After this the two parties are asked to visit each others localities to confirm whether the information given in the form is correct or not. This dispels doubts of any mischief and sets the path for a happy married life once other things are agreed upon.

"Once formalities regarding verification of the antecedents of the families are completed and the families agree to solemnize the relationship, we ask the elders of both families to fix a date for the Nikkah Khawani (a ceremony where the relationship is solemnized in the presence of a religious cleric). The baraat is restricted to five to eight persons with *kahwa* (Kashmiri tea) being served to people at the bride's home," said Zaroo.

The centre charges Rs 410 from the family which registers the name of their son or daughter for the purpose of marriage. At the time of registration the families are briefed about terms and conditions. It is impressed upon them that they have to carry out the marriage in a simple and austere manner.

"I am glad that a beginning has been made and we have been able to bring about some changes in society," said Zaroo. On the very first day HMCC opened, 100 youth registered and vowed to root out extravagance. So far 2,100 people have registered with HMCC. According to Zaroo, 175 marriages have been solemnized so far.

HMCC's service is not restricted to Jammu and Kashmir. People from different parts of India have registered with the centre. This is because HMCC's activities have received quite a lot of media coverage.

"We are very thankful to the media for covering our activities," said Zaroo. "It is due to this reason that we have got a great response from people living in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore. They have registered with us. Some of them have been able to find a match while the cases of many others are under process."

When HMCC first opened its doors, mostly youth from very low income groups registered. "But as people began to understand the need to bring about change, we got the support from all sections of society. Today youth belonging to different strata of society are registering themselves with us," said Zaroo.



Humsafar's simple marriage arrangements

**Many people are beginning to accept Humsafar's suggestion that marriages need to be minimal and austere. "Since a lot of wealth is spent on marriages we thought it better to start the reformation process from this aspect of social life," said Fayaz Ahmad Zaroo.**



Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit welcomes the Reva to Delhi. Will she show the way for other cities?

Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND

# PEOPLE'S GREEN CAR

## 40 paise a km, no pollution, no dents

**Umesh Anand**  
New Delhi

It seemed like just another showroom about to open in the Lajpat Nagar Market in south Delhi. But when the wraps came off, its bright orange and yellow décor set it apart from a sea of conventional shop fronts. And then, lo and behold, a small, exotic electric car went on display.

What was this oddity? Middle-class families out shopping stopped to check it out. Kids scrambled to get behind the wheel. Some mums did likewise, no doubt eager to break free. Dads asked about the price and tried to figure out the technology.

Only 40 paise a kilometre running cost? Amazing! Just plug it into a socket and charge it? Really, is it that simple? No clutch, no maintenance, no pollution?

Delhi is a city so crazy about cars that it puts some 270,000 new ones on its streets each year. In Lajpat Nagar you will find hardcore worshippers of combustion engines. There are

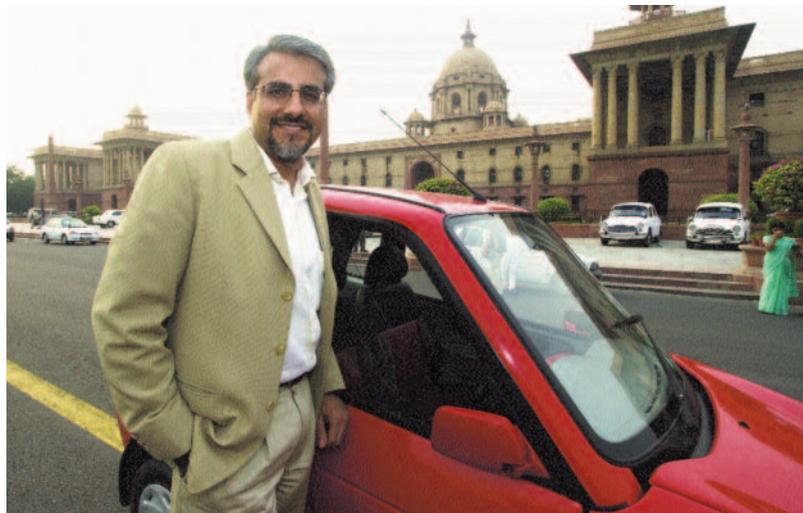
families that own two and three cars with a scooter and a motorcycle thrown in for good measure.

It is here that the Reva, the world's most popular electric car, has finally made a full-fledged debut in its flamboyant colours. The Reva has at least a thousand takers in London and is getting noticed and picked up in other environmentally conscious cities of Europe where it has been test marketed.

It has landed in Delhi all of 7 years after it was launched thanks to a 29.5 per cent subsidy provided last month by the Delhi government. With the subsidy, you can now buy a basic Reva for just Rs 3 lakhs. A top-end version with remote AC and heater, stereo, leather seats, security system and so on comes for Rs 3.78 lakhs on road. ICICI Bank provides loans.

The Reva is manufactured by Chetan Maini at the Reva Electric Car Company in Bangalore. It is Chetan's pet project. The Maini family's business, founded by the father, involves automobile components and battery operated material handling equipment.

What has made the Delhi



Chetan Maini with the Reva at Raisina Hill

government wake up to the virtues of the Reva?

● Right on the top of the list of reasons is runaway pollution caused by, among other things, the fumes coming out of personal cars. When it comes to air quality, Delhi is a downright unhealthy city. CNG was introduced for buses and the Sheila Diskhit government was quick to pick up awards for green governance. But the reality is that nothing was done to rein in private transport. On the whole pollution has grown and the city is choking.

● Next come congestion and the absence of parking. In Delhi these days you crawl from one jam to the next. Parking lots are overflowing.

● Then there is global warming casting a shadow over the future of the planet. A city's persona is its biggest asset and decides who will live there, the tourists it will attract and how much investment it can hope to bring in. These days every city needs to worry about its carbon dioxide emissions. Public transport is one way out because it reduces the number of vehicles on the roads. Clean personal transport like the Reva electric car is another.

London exempts electric cars like the Reva from eight pounds a day congestion charge and provides free parking and so on that add up to benefits of over 5000 pounds a year! Most modern cities are going the same way. In Beijing, subsidies and other incentives have been used to sponsor the switch to electric vehicles in preparation for the Olympics.

**OIL PRICES:** Delhi's realisation hasn't come a day too soon. It also coincides with the spiralling prices of petrol and diesel. The economies of countries and cities will have to learn to come to terms with this reality.

Also, the very shape of cities is changing. Suburban living is passé. Inner cores that once sustained urban aspirations are being revived. The new city is the old city with modern technologies.

If you think you can commute 50 km a day in a car and survive you are sadly mistaken. Not only is it ruinous for family budgets, it has become unacceptable in environmental terms. Cities that don't acknowledge this reality will find themselves getting left out. To be world class they need to be targeting zero emissions.

It is into this scenario that the Reva fits. It was really a car ahead of its time when it was conceived of and launched by Chetan Maini. Had it then been given recognition and concessions as a new technology, it would perhaps gone into extensive use across India and been identified as an iconic vehicle globally.

If there were just 40,000 Revas on the road in India with an annual driving distance of 12,000 km per vehicle, the harmful effects of 130,000 tonnes of pollutants would be annulled.

**DELHI'S STRATEGY:** Significantly, the Delhi government's recent decision to now encourage the Reva is part of a larger strategy to encourage clean personal vehicles, promote public transport and provide incentives for non-polluting technologies.

The story is in the strategy and the big question now is whether Delhi will become the model for other cities in India that need to urgently deal with congested roads and polluted air.

Delhi's subsidy for encouraging electric vehicles comes from a levy of 25 paise per litre of diesel sold. As Indian cities go, this an innovation because it means that polluters pay for supporting struggling cleaner technologies.

Delhi has already led the way in using compressed natural gas (CNG) for buses and autos. In recent days it has decided to discourage the use of large cars by making parking more expensive. Parking on the whole is going to be put on a centralised system accessed by smart cards. On the one hand this will mean more revenue for the municipal corporation. On the other hand it will make people think about shifting to public transport.

The first effort to install a bus rapid transit (BRT) system in Delhi has been the target of protests by car owners encouraged by local media eager to ride a wave of middle-class remorse.

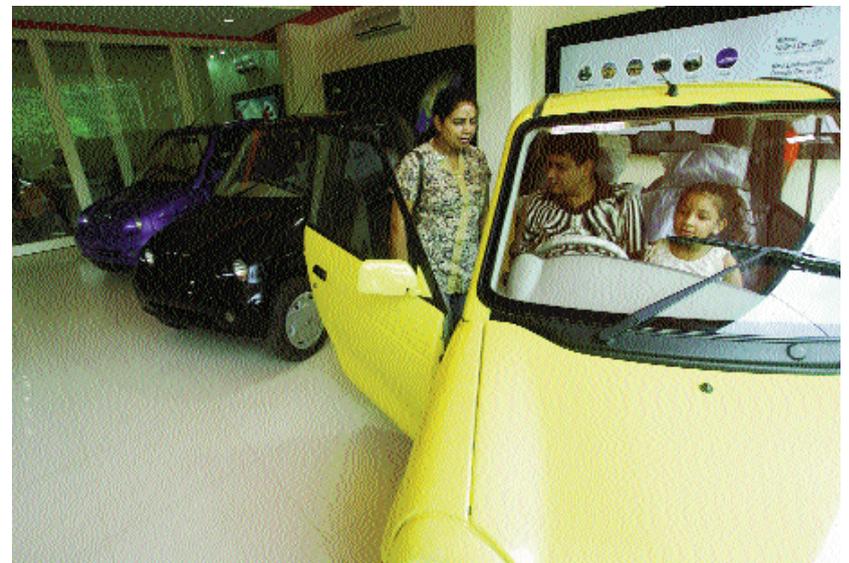
But in a city where more than 60 per cent of the residents don't use cars, a BRT will be inevitable. Already low-floor buses have made an appearance and are being appreciated. The BRT trial was also welcomed by commuters and the majority of drivers because it brought sanity to the road.

The BRT has been deferred, but no one doubts that it will come to Delhi in much the same way as it is being put in place in cities across the world. If the Delhi state government hadn't lost its nerve in the face of a shrill media, it could have seized the moment and rewritten the future of urban transportation in India.



Customers take a close look at the Reva in Delhi

**If just 40,000 Revas run in India with an annual driving distance of 12,000 km per vehicle, the harmful effects of 130,000 tonnes of pollutants would be annulled.**



A family gets down to a serious inspection



It is so easy to park the Reva on a busy street like this one

## THE ANATOMY OF AN INNER-CITY CAR

**Rs 3 lakhs to Rs 3.78 lakhs**

**Runs on battery**

**No gears, easy to drive**

**No pollution**

**Recharge anywhere**

**80 km in single charge**

**40 paise per km**

**Remote-controlled AC**

**Two onboard computers**

**Climate-control seats**

**Speed 65 kmph**

**Dent-proof body**

**All-round safety**

**Tubeless tyres**

**Low maintenance**



Revas parked on a London street



A smart card activated recharge point in London

**There are at least 1,000 Reva cars in London as the picture on the left shows. It has over 160 recharging points like the one above and plans are to increase them to 1,000 this year.**

The question now is whether the policies Delhi is trying to put in place will also become a national goal? Can a combination of clean fuels, electric vehicles, a switch to public transport and disincentives for personal transport be made the norm for cities?

A national policy can work wonders. "China had just 40,000 electric two-wheelers in 1999. Policy made it 18 million this year," says Maini in an interview to *Civil Society* in his new showroom. "It was all because China decided it was necessary to clean up its act for the 2008 Olympics. The cities in China also serve as a catalyst. In the rural areas where there is no regulation 70 per cent of the purchases are electric vehicles."

"Delhi can lead the way in India," says Maini. Its model of a cess on polluting diesel to provide a subsidy for clean electric vehicles can be followed by other cities.

Similarly, if the Delhi government provides facilities for recharging electric vehicles in public places and companies come forward and buy electric vehicles, more and more people will start using them.

"The idea is to create visibility for electric vehicles so that people see them as a practical means of transport within a city. In London, the Reva became visible when we crossed 400 cars. London is a much bigger city than Delhi but its congestion zones are smaller. In Delhi too when people begin using the Reva it will get seen and become popular," predicts Maini.

Popularity is a combination of many factors. If shopping malls for instance create recharging points, awareness will grow. Similarly, if companies encourage their employees to use electric vehicles and give them free charging facilities, usage will increase. It is already happening at Infosys and Wipro in Bangalore. Both companies, says Maini, have designated Green Zones for parking and charging electric cars.

London has over 160 recharging points activated by prepaid smart cards and plans are

to increase them to 1,000 this year. If Delhi were to do the same together with its new tax incentives, cess on diesel and so on, the efforts of the Capital's administrators could be showcased for the rest of the country.

"You need policies to create an environment to encourage people to use a technology. After that market forces can take over," says Maini.

The big incentive to use the Reva is of course the rising price of oil. In Bangalore it is Rs 57, in Delhi it is Rs 50, in London it is Rs 115 a litre. "In London people say that what they pay to fill their tanks once is what it costs them to run the Reva for a full year," says Maini.

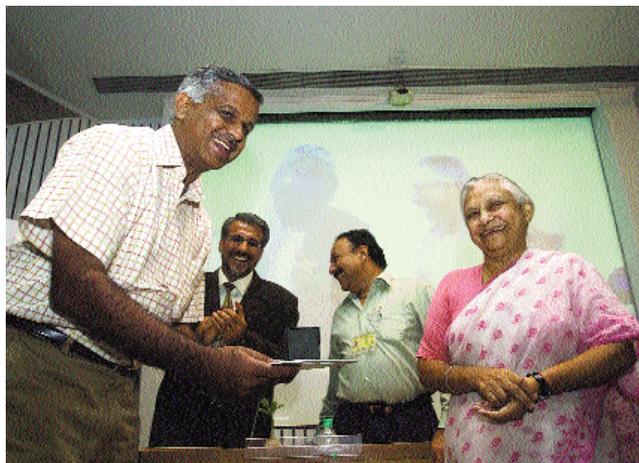
Reva's USP is that it is an inner city car good for quick short trips on a daily basis. A single charge of the battery provides 80 km. The Reva is upgradeable to newer battery technologies such as lithium ion that will extend the range to 140 km and will be available in the future. The body is dent proof. So, each time the car takes a small knock, the body absorbs the shock and comes back to normal. A scratch proof body is also available and most people buying the high-end model are happy to go in for it.

The car seats four people, but it is cramped at the back. The important thing is to get used to driving a car that is intrinsically different. It is not meant to be lavishly spacious. It wasn't designed to thunder down the street. It is a personal car in which you can get around nimbly, in thrifty spurts.

Since the Reva does not have gears, it is easy to drive. It gets high marks for manoeuvrability. You get in, switch it on and drive off. All that you need to do is alternate between accelerator and brake.

We are asked Maini what technological improvements the Reva had been through since it was launched. "We have moved from a DC drive train to an AC drive train. This has made the motor 40 per cent more powerful," said Maini.

The car has also been made more energy



A customer is felicitated by the Chief Minister

efficient by 10 per cent. Every time you brake on the Reva, the motor becomes a generator and charges the battery. There is also a unique hill restraint feature that prevents the car from rolling down a slope when you remove your foot from the accelerator.

There have been improvements in the onboard electronics as well. Heating, electronically controlled air conditioning and central locking are all available. Heating and cooling for the seats has also been introduced.

The Reva now has disc brakes and anti-roll bars. There have been improvements on the rear suspension to make higher speeds up to 80 kmph possible. The Reva has zero emissions and its motor is a completely sealed unit that allows the car to pass through three feet of water without stalling.

**SMALL WORLD:** Several things have given the Reva new importance. Oil prices of course top the list. Everyone's worried. But more importantly, it is a small world these days. People who travel abroad see the Reva in use in other countries and talk about it. They come back here and think about buying one.

It is also true that by virtue of having been around for a decade, the Reva has takers in the Indian market. These are people who could be owners of expensive luxury vehicles which they drive from time to time, but use the Reva for their daily chores. They are seen as responsible intelligent citizens and their preferences become something to aspire to.

Like most small brands fighting uphill market battles, Maini has come to read this dynamic well. Converts bring him customers and customers quickly become converts.

Thus far it has been a slow and almost painful process.

But suddenly the pace is picking up. Because it is a small world, policy changes elsewhere define consumer preferences that come to be acquired here. Similarly, the Delhi government's incentives for electric vehicles could be the hefty push that is needed to change regulation across India.

**MAINI'S MISSION:** Maini's has been the ultimate garage operation: dreaming, innovating and standardising. He believes big strides similar to in information technology are possible if small teams with technological vision are allowed to develop new products.

It was in the University of Michigan that Maini as a student got involved in a project on solar electric cars. The US department of energy supported the project, which aimed to make a car that would run on solar energy for 3,000 km across America.

The student team from Michigan was sponsored to go to Australia to participate in the solar challenge there in November 1990. The race was from Darwin to Adelaide and the team finished third.

"What really excited me was that we could do 3,200 km on solar energy and the potential of this in a country like India," says Maini.

With graduation behind him, Maini joined a start-up to manufacture electric cars. It was a firm founded by Dr Lon Bell of Amerigon. He soon went back to campus, now at Stanford, to develop more specialised skills. While at Stanford he worked on developing a hybrid electric car, the kind which Toyota and Honda market now.

Maini went back to Amerigon and suggested to Dr Lon Bell that there was a huge market for electric vehicles in India and China waiting to be explored.

It was at that time, in 1994, that the Maini Amerigon Car Company was launched to produce electric vehicles. The company later took the current name of the Reva Electric Car Company.

The Reva was developed by teams in the US and India over seven years with Maini flying up and down. From the research efforts emerged eight global patents and several other innovations.

These efforts make the car one-third lower than the price of comparative technology elsewhere in the world.

But little has been done to support a path-breaking Indian technology. The factory in Bangalore can produce 6,000 cars a year, but in the absence of incentives the capacity has been seriously underutilised.

In 1997-98 the Reva Car Company was given a subsidy of Rs 1 lakh per car and the excise was set at eight per cent while it was 40 per cent for other cars. But by the time the Reva was ready to be produced after two years, the subsidy vanished and excise on all cars was down to 16 per cent.

This was a crippling blow and the Reva was reduced from a possible mass

produced energy efficient vehicle to a fad for those who would seek it out and be able to afford to pay for it.

**THE FUTURE:** So what does the future hold for the Reva? A lot will depend on the policy support it receives. As much as clean technology vehicles are required, the market is not structured for them. The kind of tax incentives that the Delhi government has announced will be required on a much bigger scale. In addition, it will be necessary to show some creativity in sponsoring the use of electric vehicles. Parking fees could be waived or reduced. Recharging points could be set up in public spaces.

Maini has a point when he says that a new technology blossoms when everyone comes together to make it succeed. So, it is important for companies,



Zooming down the AIIMS flyover as good as the rest

**If the Delhi government provides facilities for recharging electric vehicles in public places and companies come forward and buy electric vehicles, more and more people will start using them.**



A Reva holds its own in the thick of traffic in Delhi

government, individuals and perhaps even activist groups to create an environment in which electric vehicles become popular. Every shopping mall that has the facility to recharge a car or a two-wheeler run on battery will be doing its bit. So also companies that give their staff free recharging facilities. Experience shows it is not so much the cost as the vision.

The Reva could lead the way for battery-operated two-wheelers, which are already being marketed, school buses, delivery vans and three-wheelers. Much depends on how governments come forward and make it possible for manufacturers to scale up. Till that happens, electric vehicles will be driven more by the personal passion of entrepreneurs than the large-scale use that will make them affordable and seriously change the way we live.

# Business

## BEYOND PROFIT

**Rethink money with us. What should the entrepreneur of the future be like? How can you get rich and still serve society? Do causes need bottom lines?**

# 'Quality, accountability, then CSR'

*Rahul Bajaj says the customer comes first*

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

Photographs: LAKSHMAN ANAND

FOR years together, Bajaj Auto had a monopoly on the Indian market and produced polluting, clumsily shaped two-wheelers based on outdated technology. People had to join long waiting lists to own these ugly blobs of metal. Such was the choice before the hapless Indian consumer that the Bajaj scooter would even be given in dowry! Liberalisation has changed all that. Bajaj Auto can no longer afford to be complacent because competition has loosened its stranglehold.

Even more significant is the kind of evolution that has taken place in the leadership of the company. Rahul Bajaj, chairman of Bajaj Auto and one of India's most candid industrialists, admits that finally consumers force companies to improve and deliver better products. As the bar goes up so does the standard of products because a company that doesn't provide quality products and services at an affordable price does not have a reason to exist. Bajaj should know. His company has been forced to innovate with design and technology and upgrade its vehicles several times over what they were 15 years ago.

In a typically freewheeling interview to *Civil Society* in a deserted dining room of the India International Centre (IIC), with the odd waiter stretched out on the floor in a post-prandial stupor, Bajaj, now 75 but as always full of energy, spelt out what he considers to be responsible corporate behaviour.

### How should companies define their social obligations?

Like most questions this can be answered in many ways. You ask Narayana Murthy of Infosys and he would say something. You ask Venu Srinivasan of TVS and he would say another thing and you ask me and I would say something else. So, there may be many views.

But I would say there are four steps that a company, irrespective of size, should be careful about. Though I do concede that the bigger and more profitable the company the greater its responsibility.

The first step is provision of good quality products and services to your customers at a reasonable price. To me the basic justification of the existence of a company is not to do charity, not to make money, it is not to provide employment: it is to satisfactorily meet the needs of its customers. The customer may



be for a banking service or a motorcycle as in my case. You too as *Civil Society* have to meet the needs of your customer, which is your reader.

If you don't give customers quality or if you charge them exorbitant prices in times of short supply as it used to be in times of socialism, you cannot survive.

To talk of corporate social responsibility (CSR) without this first provision being taken care of is hypocrisy of the highest order. Quality goods at the least possible price: that is taken for granted.

Second is corporate governance. In fact no one heard of corporate governance in India till 1995-96. CII formed a task force under my chairmanship at that time. That was the first clear cut report on good corporate governance, which came out in 1998 or thereabout. But then who was going to follow it?

So I got after DR Mehta who was at time the chairman of SEBI to make it essential that a company which is listed meet the requirements of disclosure, transparency, accountability, independent directors and auditors and so on.

Most of the corporate governance requirements have now come in the in the companies act and become mandatory.

The third point in social obligation is CSR, which today is not mandatory. It continues to be debated: If I'm to maximize shareholder value as board member

or chairman or CEO of a company does it help, come in the way or is it neutral? Till 10 years ago, the majority of the top 100 companies in the world said 'no' to CSR. The majority now, partly because CSR is fashionable, say 'yes, it helps us, it is in our enlightened self-interest'. There are a lot of people even now, though in the minority, who have doubts. So, each chairman, each CEO has his view.

But CSR must flow from good governance and accountability. A company must provide transparency, accountability, disclosure, 50 per cent of the board should be independent. Now I can put a tick mark in the box and say done. The independent director is not a full time guy, doesn't get paid, is not my relative. In reality is he independent?

**There are independent directors getting very fat fees.**

Exactly. Even in a most corporate governance savvy company like Infosys -- and Narayana Murthy and Nandan Nilekani are good friends of mine and I hold their company in high esteem, it is way ahead of most other companies - they pay their board members like mad. There are people who have told me 'we look at Narayana Murthy's face before we open our mouths' -- of course this was five years ago.

**So, there is not much difference between Reliance and Infosys in such things?**

Yeah, but, but, but... Mukesh (Ambani) is like a younger brother to me.

**So, what then is corporate social responsibility?**

In Baja Auto it is to make an environmentally clean vehicle in an environmentally clean manner. Doing so helps the company and respects the environment. CSR is also training people to be safe drivers. It could be working in the area of HIV/AIDS. In India HIV/AIDS may not be such an important issue for corporates. But in Africa it is a big issue.

**And the fourth point?**

The fourth is philanthropy. Charity is a bad word. To the extent that there are people who doubt whether CSR helps add to shareholder value, philanthropy can probably be questioned more. Donating here, donating there. Again it has to be kept in mind that if you don't do the first three and then you do charity you are the worst hypocrite of the lot. It is like going to the temple in the evening and the whole day cheating.

**CSR as it is practised here or elsewhere in the world seems like so much window-dressing. What can make it more meaningful?**

If you are in a society where HIV/AIDS is very prevalent and from which you recruit people, then to do things to prevent it is in my opinion is in your interest and also good CSR. Similarly environmentally clean vehicles. India may not be that much conscious as yet, but in many other markets there are people who would prefer to buy a clean vehicle. In America from foodstuff to other products, everything is mentioned. And there people who are very conscious who will not buy a product that is not clean.

**To me the basic justification of the existence of a company is not to do charity, not to make money, it is not to provide employment: it is to satisfactorily meet the needs of its customers.**

So, when you say it doesn't happen, I don't fully share that view except to the extent that much more needs to be done. But for that, and I'm not passing the buck, public opinion has to be created. That you have to do.

**There is a need to upgrade technology in emerging markets like ours. What is it that governments can do to help companies?**

It is a long story. America has still not signed the Kyoto Protocol saying India and China are to blame for the increase in greenhouse gases. That is utter crap. I told Al Gore this on his face. Of course we are doing things, but per capita emissions from India will never exceed that of the West.

**What is there that we can do by way of policy framework?**

There are hundreds of things. But you take my industry. The vehicle being produced 15 years ago and today is seven times better. What more do you expect us to do. If other companies are not doing it you ask them.



**And you feel this has been possible because of the policy changes that we have seen?**

No, no, not policy. This is us. Except, if I have to give credit elsewhere, I would say the bar is being raised. Cleaner and cleaner vehicles. If they didn't raise the bar at all industry would be a little lax.

**Do you see a role for policy in promoting electric vehicles?**

The only five electric three-wheelers running in Agra at the Taj are Bajaj three-wheelers.

**The point here is that more incentives need to be given to switch to cleaner fuels.**

Much more, much more needs to be done. But the government is bankrupt. We pay taxes that have to be spent on national rural employment, education, drinking water, sanitation. There is no question of the government paying anything. In such a situation incentives come from lowering taxes marginally. But it is not enough. I have a hydrogen three-wheeler in Pune built in collaboration with an America company. It is not commercial, not viable.

**Why?**

Cost. Performance. Take the electric vehicle. How much charging time does it require, what is the range and what is the speed? What is the cost of the battery? The technology is being developed at a cost of billions of dollars, but is still not available after all these years.

**We have a good electric car like the Reva, but we don't promote it.**

None of them are viable, none of them are commercially saleable. Why don't they sell commercially? Sell a million cars. They all have limitations. The electric vehicle is not an answer. The answer for the next five or 10 years, in my view, is the hybrid vehicle. This will be till the hydrogen fuel cell vehicle comes another eight to 10 years down the line.

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# Sa-Dhan says MFIs are on course

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

Microfinance services over the past financial year have reached more than nine million new clients in India, according to Sa-Dhan, the association of community development finance associations.

Banks have been lending less, but microfinance institutions (MFIs) have hung in and new banks have showed up to fill at least some of the space vacated by those who have seemingly lost interest in the sector.

Sa-Dhan's final report for 2008 is in the making but the quick data released in Delhi last month shows that 33 million or 23.6 per cent of the total low-income families in India have access to microfinance.

The microfinance institutions (MFIs) that Sa-Dhan represents reach 14 million of these families and the rest are served by NABARD's SHG-Bank linkage programme. MFIs have a presence in 209 of 331 of the poorest districts in India.

There was a 53 per cent increase in the number of clients in 2006-07 and a 40 per cent increase in 2007-08. However, the MFI's 14 million clients in 2007-08 are more than double the 6.6 million that there were in the previous year.

Portfolio growth rates have dropped by 5 per cent: from 77 per cent in 2006-07 to 72 per cent in 2007-08. The report attributes this to "bottlenecks in access to funding". That essentially means that banks are getting distracted and drifting off.

Vijay Mahajan of Basix, while releasing the report, put the number of borrowers across the country at 50 million and the outstanding at around Rs 20,000 crores or \$ 5 billion. This is of course if you sweep together all initiatives. The mood is generally celebratory and expansive with MFIs eager to build on their successes. The story of the sector was summed up in the numbers 50 million and \$ 5 billion, Mahajan said. This may well be a bit over the top, but the idea is to be market savvy and create identity for the less glamorous business of lending to the disempowered and needy.

The purpose of microfinance is to reach the poorest in the economy and usher them into the formal banking system over time. To that extent the MFIs seem to be on course with their mission. The really small loans account for the bulk of the portfolios with borrowers seeking below Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,000. Also, women continue to borrow in larger numbers.

A discernible trend is the emergence of urban microfinance. Some 28 per cent of the new clients are from urban areas, which have been driving the growth in the sector. Now one out of four MFI clients, we are told, is from an urban area. Similarly, one out of three rupees in a microfinance portfolio goes to an urban borrower.

Is this urban bias to be welcomed? The Sa-Dhan report says urban clients are easier and cheaper to serve because of better access and communications. But will the interest in urban clients be at the cost of rural portfolios? The problems of the urban poor notwithstanding, it is after all in rural India, with its many uncertainties and logistical nightmares, that microfinance continues to be hugely needed.

There is perhaps the danger that a growing urban population and the easier ride that MFIs have in the city will divert the energies that should go into serving the rural poor.

Mathew Titus and S Prabhakara of Sa-Dhan spoke to *Civil Society* on the report. Edited extracts from the conversation.

**What is the picture that emerges about the microfinance sector from this report?**

I think this is a report about the consolidation of the industry. In the past one year there has been a decline in lending by banks to this sector. The decline could be in the region of Rs 500 crores to Rs 700 crores. However, the outstanding by MFIs to the retail sector has not declined. What this means is that there are other banks which have entered this space and taken up the lag.

**So there are more banks lending?**

There are many more banks lending.

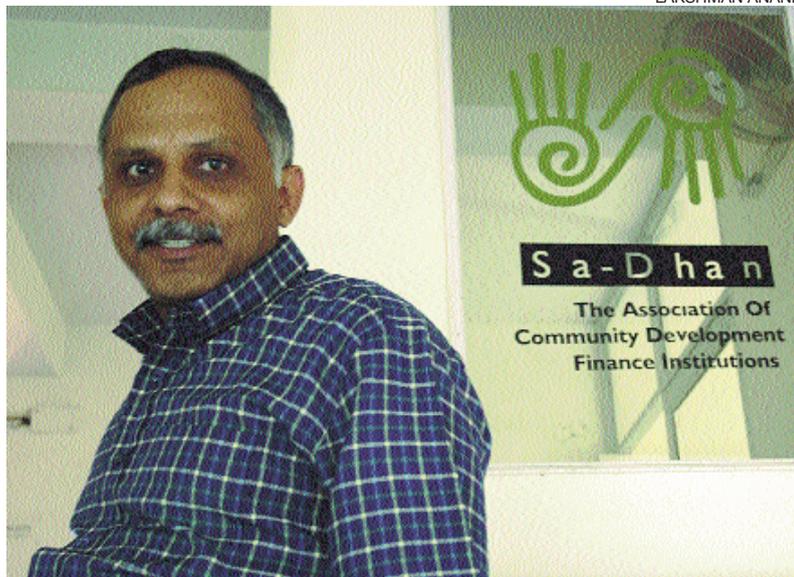
**Even as the original banks are lending less?**

Much less. There is a drop. So you will see in this report that there is a five percentage point decline in the growth in lending to this sector --- last year we had a 77 per cent growth. This year we have 72 per cent. But the real story is that this five percentage point decline is nothing compared to what it could have been were it not for the entry of more banks into this sector. So the one thing that this report demonstrates is that there is a much wider appreciation of what the microfinance sector is about.

**Why are some banks not lending even as others are coming forward?**

Banks lend to particular sectors because of their internal strategies plus their exposure levels. At different points of time they want to weigh their portfolio exposure at different levels. They have the right to make that choice. At times

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Mathew Titus

they may be risk averse to microfinance and at times they might be positive because they get priority sector benefits. ICICI Bank, just to take an example, in its early stages did not have any priority sector lending because they were a DFI. They became a bank only six years ago. So in these six years they had to build up their priority sector portfolio. They were given the banking licence on the condition that 40 per cent of their portfolio would be in the priority sector and therefore the rush to lend.

**And microfinance was a convenient way of solving this problem?**

It was one of the many. In priority lending there is technology, agriculture and so also there is microfinance. When they became a bank they had

many problems. One problem was on the portfolio side. The other problem was that they did not have a network of branches.

**So, you had MFIs serving as extension counters, in a manner of speaking, for the bank?**

Yes.

**Is this maturing of the sector or is this an absence of a larger purpose. After all the banks that are already in microfinance should be going deeper into it because of the unfinished task of fighting poverty and bringing more people into formal banking.**

Possibly this is a way of looking at it. The financial sector is driven by populism. Another problem in running an operation is the shortage of manpower. Now if a bank feels it has saturated a particular segment it is possible that it will go to the bottom end to maintain its position. May be that will happen, but I think it is early days as yet.

I would prefer to make a much more general point. Financial services haven't recognised the fact that they haven't addressed all the segments of the Indian market. The very fact that the market is concentrated among the middle class shows you what the problem is.

The problem is not limited to one bank but is generic across all banks and therefore there are a lot of challenges in sorting that out. But the key point that this report is making is that the vision on microfinance is so widely shared that there were other banks that were ready to step in and make up the deficit.

For various reasons --- it could be management or strategy --- a bank may pull out for one or two years and then come back. I wouldn't be so concerned because I believe many of these banks will come back over time.

**The sheer numbers are one thing, but what is the kind of lending that is happening?**

There are quite a few important features. One is that we are not concentrated now only in the South. If we have 3 million clients in Andhra Pradesh we now also have 1.5 million clients in Orissa. Tamil Nadu is 1.6 million, Karnataka is 1.9. So Orissa and the rest of the east are catching up.

Another feature is that 25 per cent of the clients are urban. This also mirrors the urbanisation of the Indian poverty graph.

Then there are 331 poorest districts in the country and we have a presence in 209. So, 70 per cent of the portfolio is directed at the poorest. In the case of banks and other financial institutions, 80 per cent of their clients are in the prosperous parts of the country and 20 per cent are in the poor parts. Ours is the reverse.

# Worldview

## LATITUDE MATTERS

**Everyone owns a shrinking planet. People count more than governments. Track change before it becomes news.**

### India's brave Kabul embassy

**Aunohita Mojumdar**  
Kabul

**R**AVI Ramakrishna had planned to collect his telephone diary that fateful morning from Venkat Rao, Counsellor Information at the Indian embassy. He had left it behind in India on his last visit. As the AIR-DD correspondent based in Kabul, Ravi works closely with the embassy and Rao was his constant point of contact. Instead, a few hours later, Ravi found himself filming the gory death of someone he knew so well.

Over 3,000 Indians work in Afghanistan on rebuilding the country. They work either directly for the Indian government or on Indian government funded projects. Some work for international organisations like the UN, NGOs and private sector companies. For most, the embassy is a reference point, a place which they frequently visit.

For Ravi, the embassy was much more than a source of stories. He had also joined music classes being held by the embassy in its new cultural centre. Yoga classes and cultural programs showcasing Indian and Afghan culture are on offer here.

The new cultural centre, located inside the embassy, symbolises what is different about the Indian presence in Afghanistan. The Indian embassy has an open door policy unlike most international missions which barricade themselves behind barbed wire and closed doors, a practice which has only intensified in recent days due to rising violence.

The year 2008 has been one of the worst ever with Afghan civilians paying with their lives for the ongoing conflict between pro-government and anti-government elements. According to estimates in just four days, from July 4 to 8, at least 250 civilians were killed or injured in violence, including those in the embassy blast. The list of activities prohibited by international organisations grows longer and longer adding to their isolation from local Afghans.

But the Indian embassy and most Indians stand out as different.

Located in the heart of Kabul, the Indian embassy is on a busy road, opposite Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior and its passport office. Public dealings in both these offices, and the large number of visa seekers at the Indian embassy make this area one of the most crowded, something the suicide bomber must have been aware of when he struck. Even after the blast not a single staff member of the Indian embassy left. They continued working there. Compare this with other embassies who relocate to secret hideouts on the basis of threat perceptions.

The embassy's decision to remain accessible to the public and its refusal to cordon off the road in front has been taken keeping the needs and convenience

*(Continued on page 27)*



The Foreign Secretary at the damaged embassy in Kabul



Construction of the Salma Dam

# Less money, more racism

**F**IVE years ago in one of the first letters I wrote for this column, I had praised the creation of the EU as a political entity that sought to encompass a larger mass of humanity within its civic body and thereby extend its domestic egalitarian spirit to all those who were accepted within this brotherhood. The right to this brotherhood was - and still is, deeply rooted in the historical xenophobia based on race, colour and religion as Turkey has - much to its chagrin - discovered in recent years. Even though declaring Christianity as a part of its official identity was bitterly contested by secular countries such as France, no one tries to mask that in reality it is indeed the case.

Less naïve now, I am far more pessimistic about the unveiling of the Mediterranean Union (MU), the sly brainchild of the pathologically ambitious French President, Nicolas Sarkozy. It is a political scheme befitting Sarkozy.

Designed to include all the nations littoral to the Mediterranean with France as its unquestioned head, it is ultimately linked to the EU itself. In Sarkozy's original blueprint the EU was to be there merely to provide the financial and political power from the background but without much real say in the decision-making process. Of course, this being the real world, EU big gun, Germany's Angela Merkel, wouldn't have such a con job foisted on them.

In the original it looks like a Napoleonic battle plan for a new French era of influence. The carrot of joining an extended form of the European Union was being offered to most of the old French colonies in North Africa and the Middle East to counter the other existing alliances like NATO and the EU itself (of which France is not only a member but the current President). Originally created to counter Turkey's rejection by the EU, it agreed to join only when promised that membership in the MU wouldn't automatically eliminate it from the EU.

In one grand loop the MU would contain the most powerful and resource rich countries in one of the most important regions in the world. Lowering of trade barriers within the MU would provide France control over the vast resources of the group and access to its market of 800 million people.

With the contentious nations of the Middle East as its members, France would also regain the diplomatic edge on the peace process it believes it once had - and still covets.

It has often been said that every national leader frazzled by the frustrating realities of everyday domestic issues escapes to grandiose fantasies of foreign policies. Unfettered by accountability to his constituents he can indulge in impossible schemes and not be answerable to anyone but history. And history has rarely been kind to such men. In just over a year after winning the French presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy has been voted the most unpopular first-term President in 52 years. And not all of it can be blamed on his 'bling bling' lifestyle or his supermodel wife. He would have got here, irrespective.

In neighbouring Italy his counterpart Silvio Berlusconi puts to shame all the Italians who have been trying hard like many other Europeans, to put their unsavoury fascist past behind them. That Italy, which, within the living memory of half its population saw the end of a despicable leader Mussolini, who had joined hands with Hitler to commit the greatest atrocities in human history,



Roma at their settlement in Rome. Europe's gypsies trace their origins to India

**The fire-bombing of the Roma people in Italy and the decision of Berlusconi's government to ID and finger-print them in future has not even made it to the inside pages of foreign newspapers. The response of Roberto Maroni, the Interior Minister was: "That is what happens when gypsies steal babies."**

has now restarted on its horrifying road to shame by its blatant persecution of the Roma and Sinti people (the gypsies) is not totally surprising.

That all the other European nations including the UK, France and Germany have been completely silent on the issue sends a chill down the spine when one imagines the sheer possibility of a rapid decline to the horrific madness of the 1930s. Unlike the atrocities of Africa, Asia, South America and other less 'civilised' places of the world the atrocities taking place in present-day Europe are rarely global news.

The fire-bombing of the Roma people in Italy and the decision of Berlusconi's government to ID and finger-print them in future has not even made it to the inside pages of foreign newspapers. The response of Roberto Maroni, the Interior Minister in Berlusconi's government to the fire-bombing and ethnic cleansing was a bone-chilling: "That is what happens when gypsies steal babies."

Yet this inhumane remark did not raise even a ripple among the European leaders who were seen back-slapping Berlusconi during the G8 summit a few days later instead of sanctioning him. No! Sanctioning is for the Ahmedinejads of this world who lack the suave sophistry of market-

trained spin leaders of powerful nations and threaten their monopolistic grip on the world.

The latest figures here in Europe show rampant increases in food prices in the last one year of over 20 per cent. The BBC reported that at the Farnborough Air Show, military purchases of planes continued to increase as though buyers had all the money they wanted.

The economic forecast for the developed world, both short-term as well long-term, is rather gloomy - and brings to mind something I once heard a wise man say: It is easy to be generous when you have plenty, real generosity is to be seen when you have very little. As the material quality of life is being negatively affected in the Western World (for the first time in modern history) signs of diminishing humanity, in all its forms, can be seen across the landscape.

## LETTER FROM EUROPE



Riaz Quadir in Versailles

# Dhaka goes for community radio

Civil Society News  
Kathmandu / Dhaka

A round table conference was held in Dhaka on July 9 to discuss the growth of community radio in Bangladesh. The meeting was organised by AMARC Asia-Pacific, in partnership with Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) and Mass Line Media (MMC).

AMARC is an international NGO which serves the community radio movement in over 110 countries. Around 90 participants representing organisations that have applied for community broadcasting licenses, policy advocacy, academics, women's rights activists, and representatives of donor organisations took part.

Kamrul Hasan Monju, Executive Director, MMC, provided a critical review of Bangladesh's community radio policy followed by discussions. Despite concerns with Bangladesh's community radio policy, most participants believed the immediate priority should be to establish some actual operating community radio services. They felt that the policy could be improved later once there was real experience to draw upon. Some participants preferred more immediate and vigorous criticism of the policy.

Ashish Sen, Vice President for AMARC Asia and Pacific and Executive Director of VOICES, India, presented arguments in favour of the role of community radio in facilitating economic development and poverty alleviation. A key point raised in the meeting was about women's under-representation at all levels of decision making in Bangladesh, including the community broadcasting sector and that priority should be given to support women led community

**The Bangladesh government has decided to issue licenses to set up 116 community radios stations which will start operations soon.**

radio projects. Dr. Kaberi Gain of the University of Dhaka and Farjana Akter of VOICE made presentations in promoting gender equality in community radio. Raghu Mainali, Coordinator of Community Radio Support Centre, Nepal and Vice President of AMARC Asia-Pacific led the discussion on good practices regarding community radio business plans for sustainable growth of the sector.

The Bangladesh government has decided to issue licenses to set up 116 community radios. These community radio stations will start operation within two months, said the concerned authority.

Primarily 116 organisations have been identified as eligible for license of community radio in a meeting of the National Regulatory Committee held in the Ministry of Information on 15 July.

The Information Ministry will start issuing license after allocating frequency for the community radio stations by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). The Central Monitoring Committee headed by Director General of Bangladesh Betar will monitor the community radio activities.

Primarily it is impossible to allocate frequency for more than five community radio stations in the coastal districts and more than three in other districts.

Moreover, it will take only two months to allocate frequency after completing all processes it was stated by the ministry.

Information Secretary Jamil Osman said the government would try its best to issue licenses by completing the necessary process as early as possible. Initiatives will also be taken to create awareness among the people of this new mass media in the country.

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(Continued from page 25)

of the public in mind. "Such open accessibility along with the greater interaction that Indians working on government aided projects have with locals carries with it a greater risk," points out Jayant Prasad, India's ambassador in Kabul.

The Indian embassy prides itself on the fact that it spends a miniscule proportion of its budget on security and salaries. Other major donors like USAID, DFID, EC, World Bank and ADB spend nearly 65 per cent of their overall budget on security and salaries.

The difference is noticed by Afghans who often see vast sums of their aid money returning to the donor country.

Though not a traditional donor, India has adopted other best practices in the delivery of aid, which currently amounts to a total pledge of \$750 million. Low overheads are combined with multi-year funding. This strategy helps India carry out long-term projects.

Many other donors have short annual budgetary cycles. This results in short implementation periods for their projects, sometimes as little as a few months and with no maintenance built in.

The major portion of Indian funding is going towards building infrastructure projects including roads and power projects. Some of these are: a transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri in the north to Kabul, a substation at Kabul to import power into Afghanistan, reconstruction of the Salma dam power project and construction of 218 km of road from Zaranj to Delaram one of the most difficult sectors, to facilitate transport of goods from Iran.

The importance of these projects can be understood while living here. In its seventh year of reconstruction even the capital, Kabul, has only a few hours of power at the best of times. This drops to two hours every fourth day in peak winter. The production of goods, dependant on power and road links, is at a minimal, causing over dependency on imports. Because of bad roads the cost of transportation is high and this, in turn, escalates prices of day to day goods.

Indian aid differs in other ways too. The short implementation cycles of most major donors causes high dependence on imported technical expertise with limited scope for capacity building. Year after year, highly paid international

consultants are brought in. But Afghan capacity to take over tasks remains undeveloped.

India has recognised this lacuna. It has initiated projects to enhance Afghanistan's greatest wealth -- its human resources. India provides 500 scholarships to university students to enable them gain access to high quality education in India and it has deputed 30 Indian civil servants in various ministries and vocational training centres located in Kabul.

"India's program is aimed at long term stabilisation, institution building, strengthening economic growth, integrating Afghanistan in SAARC and reviving Afghanistan's role as a land bridge connecting south and Central Asia and China," says Sandeep Kumar, Deputy Chief of Mission at the embassy who is in charge of Indian aid. Kumar, in an earlier interview, pointed out that the embassy carries out its aid delivery with a small number of people unlike other missions.

The embassy operates under a tight budget. So much so that diplomats use a car pooling system to travel to work and back. Sandeep Kumar was waiting his turn for the car when he heard and felt the blast that shook the embassy nearly 500 yards away. The bomb had targeted the vehicle that was bringing his colleagues to work. It killed them as well as his favourite driver, Niamuatulah.

Niamat liked driving Sandeep everywhere and was especially looking forward to taking him to the Afghan annual body building competition, something Sandeep has been participating in regularly. In an extraordinary show of strength, and urged by embassy colleagues including the ambassador, Sandeep did go to

the competition the next day to say publicly that Indians and the embassy stood in solidarity with the Afghans. He was greeted with a big round of applause.

The fact that the rest of the international community was hunkered down was not lost on the Afghans. Sandeep was presented with a *chaupan*, the Afghan equivalent of a *saropa* or turban, the highest accolade of respect. The message on the day following the attack was simple: India was not going anywhere. Indians were here to stay and they would continue helping rebuild Afghanistan, no matter what.



Road building in progress

**India has adopted best practices in the delivery of aid, which amounts to around \$750 million. Low overheads are combined with multi-year funding.**

# Perspectives

## CATCHING TRENDS

**Have an idea? Perhaps a lost cause? Tell your story or just express an honest opinion in these pages.**

## Govt gives peanuts for rice

MILINDO CHAKRABARTY

The Government of India announced the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy in June this year. In deference to the recommendation made by the Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices (CACP) that the MSP be fixed at Rs 1,000 per quintal, the government settled for a toned down rate of Rs 850 per quintal.

Farmers are not happy. State governments are not happy either, especially the Kerala government. As a commentator noted, this is the single occasion during the last seven years when the government fixed an MSP below the one recommended by CACP. The divergence appears a little more striking at a time when grain prices the world over are soaring and the State has placed restrictions on the export of paddy.

CACP recommends the MSPs annually for all major agricultural products. It considers a host of factors associated with the production of a particular crop before arriving at a 'reasonable' crop-specific support price that will be applicable uniformly across all states in India.

Obviously, the main factor that should rationally weigh on the mind of the CACP is the cost of cultivation. Given the fact that agricultural production requires a varied basket of inputs, with some coming from within the household while the rest are purchased from the market, the cost of cultivation estimates for a particular crop will vary depending on whether the inputs provided by households are factored in or not.

A farmer uses his own land, agricultural machinery and labour from members of his household for cultivation along with other inputs like seeds, water, manure, fertilisers and pesticides that may be procured either with cash or in kind from the market. He may also lease in land from others.

To summarize, the different inputs used by the farmer are as follows: First, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, purchased or procured in kind. Secondly, land – both owned and leased. Thirdly, labour within the family and from outside. Fourthly, capital. And fifthly, the farmer's own managerial efforts.

Use of all these inputs involves cost on the part of the farmer. Some of these costs are visible as they are made against inputs procured from outside the



**The Kerala farmer got nothing for farm labour or for his own managerial effort. If one calculates the true cost of paddy cultivation in the state, the farmer's MSP should have been Rs 801.09 per quintal. More and more farmers are now finding themselves in this soup.**

household. But others are not since these are managed out of household resources like family labour, rent towards own land, use of capital assets owned by family members, managerial efforts by the farmer etc.

All the above mentioned inputs must be factored in to arrive at the correct cost of cultivation while deciding the MSP. Unfortunately, this is not so. In 2003-04, the CACP fixed the MSP at Rs 550 per quintal for paddy. But for most states this rate did not factor in all five inputs and was therefore much below the real cost of cultivation. Exceptions to this rule have been Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, where the cost of cultivation of paddy is lower due to several reasons.

In most states the farmer's own labour and that of his family is left out while calculating the MSP. For instance, in Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the declared MSP did not factor in the farmer's household labour or his own managerial efforts. In Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and marginally in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab, family labour is priced at a wage less than the statutory minimum wage. In Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, family labour does not even get paid at the existing market wage rate. In Assam, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal, risks in production were not calculated.

Kerala's paddy farmers are the worst off. During 2005-06, the MSP for paddy was announced at Rs 570 per quintal. At Rs 594.47 per quintal the Kerala farmer merely received rental value of his own land and the return on investments he made on capital assets like tractors, threshers, irrigation facilities, storage facilities etc.

He did not receive compensation for short term investments he made in seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, pesticides. He got

nothing for farm labour or for his own managerial effort. If one calculates the true cost of paddy cultivation in the state, the Kerala farmer's MSP should have been Rs 801.09 per quintal. Now more and more farmers in different states are finding themselves in this soup.

*(Continued on page 31)*

# Smart Persian Wheel

AMITANGSHU ACHARYA

What exactly is a Persian Wheel? Also known as Rahat (in Urdu) or Saqia it's a simple water lifting device which has a number of small pots attached to a long chain. Two gear wheels make up the system. As the first one revolves, the pots fitted to the other wheel dip and pick up water from the well, and soon after pour it to a metallic shaft at the 'well head'. This shaft empties the water into an intricate network of troughs that distribute it through the cropped area.

It is believed that the technology of the Persian Wheel originated in Egypt and the Middle East. As the world shrank through extensive trade, the technology spread to India and China. Babur's memoirs, the *Babur Nama* (1526-1530), mention the Persian Wheel.

Noted historian Ananda Kumaraswamy, however, has another take. He traces extensive reference to the Persian Wheel in ancient Indian treatises such as the *Panchatantra*, *Rajatarangini* and *Prabandhachintamani*. He believed that the Persian Wheel was actually an 'Ara-ghatta or 'potter's wheel' and that it originated in South India. The more popular 'rahat' is a corruption of 'arhat' which is borrowed from 'Ara-ghatta', a Sanskrit word, says the historian.

Whatever its origins one thing is clear: the Persian Wheel brought about rapid growth in farm productivity. While the well provided freedom from dependence on alluvial plains, the wheel ushered in a creative solution to harnessing static well water. Apathy during the colonial era and finally the pump revolution in post independent India almost erased the Persian Wheel from the rural landscape. It managed to survive in remote regions either because alternate systems in such regions were still inaccessible or because in a particular hydro-geological regime it was the best fit.

Srikantaiah Vishwanath, founder of Rainwater Club, Bangalore, has been deeply involved in understanding the Persian Wheel system in Karnataka. His investigations led him to Kolar district which has the highest number of wells and tanks in the state. Historic records indicate that at one point of time around 60,000 wells existed here. Out of this 25,000 had the Persian Wheel attached to them. Needless to say, they no longer dot the Kolar landscape.

Except, that is, in Shivgange, a village located in Shatashruna hills. Here Thimmarayyappa and a handful of other farmers still use the Persian Wheel to irrigate their average sized plots. Amidst the reddish soil and towering white boulders, the rusty Persian Wheel enjoys an organic existence. The relative height of the water table and the lack of electricity had kept the Wheels functional.

However, these systems are now under threat. The biggest drawback of the Persian Wheel is that it is unable to draw water when the water table is low. The entry of bore wells in surrounding farmlands heralds the end of Thimmarayyappa's idyllic world. Subsequent lowering of the water level will lead to a domino effect amongst farmers. Gradually, one Persian Wheel after the other will fall into disuse as all will enter the pump race to survive.

Vishwanath's work is primarily to ensure that sustainability in the Shatashruna hills does not get replaced with an extractive paradigm. Under his aegis, the Rainwater Club entered into a dialogue with farmers and is working on minor repairs that will allow the Persian Wheel to remain functional. Understandably, reviving the lost glory of the Persian Wheel is an impossibly difficult task, and may be taken as foolhardy romanticism.

However, a study being conducted by Dr Himanshu Kulkarni, a geo hydrologist and founder of the Advanced Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (ACWADAM), a Pune based NGO, may provide the Persian Wheel a much needed scientific rationale.

A chance sighting of a functional Persian Wheel in Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, led Himanshu to initiate a serious study on the discharge rate of the Persian Wheel. Even though it's in a nascent stage, initial results clearly indicate that the Persian Wheel ensures optimal output from a well as it factors in well dynamics, unlike a pump. Since the wheels are animal driven, the farmer can throttle the extraction or regulate discharge of water from the well.

The pump, on the contrary, has a range and can drain out a well completely if not monitored. From the sustainability lens, it seems the Persian Wheel scores over the pump. The pump never tells the farmer how much water is available. Its failure to do so facilitates over extraction.



**In Shivgange village Thimmarayyappa and a handful of farmers still use the Persian Wheel to irrigate their average sized plots. Amidst the reddish soil and towering white boulders, the rusty Persian Wheel enjoys an organic existence.**

The Wheel, however, works in a fine balance. Since one can see the water table fluctuate, one can adjust cropping patterns and domestic use accordingly. Most significantly though, Himanshu thinks that the Persian Wheel is based on the concept of steady state pumping (the most efficient condition under which a well can be pumped). This is an idea that was completely lost when the abstraction syndrome set in with the demand to extract as much water in as short a time as possible.

Sadly, such scientific discourse holds little value for farmers in Shatashruna hills who are pushed to adopt unsustainable technologies to eke out a living.

Both Vishwanath and Himanshu agree that reviving the Persian Wheel is out of question. But then what would keep such systems ticking, at least to remind us of our own mistakes? One can think of working out an incentives mechanism through ecotourism. The scenic landscape of Kolar, which already has tourist attractions like rappelling and active indigenous theatre groups, can attach the Persian Wheel to an overall package with homestays and local cuisine thrown in. Such initiatives can be spread to other parts, especially Udaipur, Bhilwada and Dungarpur in Rajasthan where the Persian Wheel still exists and is operational.

# Murderous waters of dams

HIMANSHU THAKKAR

**T**HE popular perception held till recently and carefully nurtured by proponents of big dams over the years, is that dams control or help moderate floods. In theory, it sounds possible. However, in practice that perception won't stand up to scrutiny if actual experience with dams is objectively assessed.

This June, we saw floods in Assam and in the eastern states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa. And dams played a significant role.

In Assam, the floods severely affected Lakhimpur and surrounding districts due to a number of tributaries of the Brahmaputra, the big contributors being the Ranganadi and Dikrong. As the Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Kumar Gogoi, publicly stated the sudden release of large quantities of water from the upstream 405 MW Ranganadi hydropower project contributed significantly to floods in these two tributaries. The floods led to washing away of embankments, the National Highway and the submergence of vast stretches of land and houses, displacing thousands of people.

There is no doubt that the Ranganadi and Dikrong Rivers were experiencing floods due to rainfall in their catchment area. However, the surge of water added by the Ranganadi HEP in all probability exacerbated the situation and made the floods even more destructive. No information or warning was given to downstream areas before making these releases, nor was it deemed necessary to assess the flood status in the downstream areas and what the impact of such releases there would be. The Chairman of the North Eastern Electric Power Company, the operator of the Ranganadi project said that it was not possible to inform the downstream areas before such releases!

Now information about rainfall and river flows in the upstream and downstream areas is easily available. Relatively accurate prediction of rainfall over the next shorter time period is possible. One would expect the operations of the dams to take these into consideration. That is the least one expects from dam operators, considering the huge destructive potential of releases from these large dams.

Sadly that is not the case today. Isn't this deplorable to the extent of being criminal?

In eastern India, the Jharkhand districts of Saraikela, Jamshedpur and East Singhbhum, in West Bengal the district of Paschim Medinipur and in Orissa the district of Baleshwar were the worst affected. All these districts are in the Suvarnarekha river basin. In West Bengal, the Minister for Water Resources and it's Finance Minister have stated that the sudden release of over 3.5 lakh cusecs of water from the Chandil dam on the Suvarnarekha River in the upstream Saraikela district was responsible for converting the floods into a destructive force. There is no doubt that there was heavy to very heavy rainfall in these areas in the third week of June. The sudden release of a huge quantity of water from the Chandil dam worsened the flood and it washed away highways and railway tracks and submerged acres of land. People and cattle died and millions were displaced.

Here, too, there was no information or warning provided to downstream areas about water releases from the dam. Nor was there any consideration of the impact such releases would have during high rainfall in the downstream areas. It is disturbing to note that releases from the huge Chandil dam were happening in the first fortnight of the monsoon when one expects the dam to be relatively empty. It is equally scandalous to learn that according to the Union Ministry of Water Resources, Chandil is one of the "reservoirs constructed with exclusive flood control storage".

These are not the first instances when sudden releases of high quantity water from large dams have lead to destructive floods in downstream areas. In August 2006, Surat city on Tapi River in South Gujarat experienced the worst floods in its history due to the sudden release of seven to 10 lakh cusecs of water from the upstream Ukai dam. At least 150 people were killed, 80 per cent of the city was

under water and over 20 lakh people were trapped in the flooded city without food, drinking water, milk, electricity or communication for four days.

That flood was completely avoidable if the dam operators had started earlier releases of water, taking into consideration the available information about continuous heavy rainfall in the upstream, storage situation at the Ukai dam, timing of high tides when the river is unable to discharge to its full capacity and the carrying capacity of the downstream river. A people's commission on floods, headed by the former acting Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court, Justice RA Mehta concluded that there is clear case of criminal negligence and the dam operators are liable to be prosecuted for culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

In the same year, large parts of the Mahi and Sabarmati basins in Gujarat experienced flood disasters due to

sudden releases of large quantities of water from upstream dams. These instances of flood disasters could have been avoided if the dam operators had gradually released water from the dams, considering the available information about rainfall in the upstream catchments and downstream areas of the respective dams, rather than waiting for the dams to be filled up and than suddenly releasing huge quantities of water, even as the downstream catchment was experiencing heavy rainfall.

In another deadly instance, on October 1, 2006, at least 39 people were killed in Datia district in Madhya Pradesh when suddenly a large amount of water was released from the upstream Manikhedha dam on Sind River in Shivpuri district. There was no

warning prior to these sudden releases and hence unsuspecting people crossing the river were washed away. Earlier, in April 2005, in yet another cruel incident, at least 70 people were killed at Dharaji in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh due to sudden release of a huge quantity of water from the upstream Indira Sagar Dam on the Narmada river.

The sudden release of 2.5 lakh cusecs of water from Jayakawadi dam in Godavari basin, Maharashtra in August 2006 led to floods in Nanded, Parbhani, Beed and Jalna districts. In fact, dam induced floods were so widespread in Maharashtra in 2005 and 2006, that the Maharashtra government, in January 2007, appointed a committee to tackle this issue. The Terms of Reference of the committee acknowledged the role played by dams in flood disasters, "Simultaneous releases from a number of dams in the same basin aggravated the flood situation further... The abnormal flood situation compelled release of water more than the downstream river channel capacity."

Similarly, the report of the Working Group on Agriculture for the 11th Five Year Plan acknowledged that mismanagement at dams can induce floods, "There are apprehensions that recent floods in central and western India were due to improper planning, coordination and management of water releases from reservoirs."

When these issues are raised before the proponents of the 'dams-control-floods' theory, one retort we often hear is: But how can dams create floods? They only pass on the water that comes from the upstream.

Sounds logical?

Again, it won't stand up to scrutiny. The very nature of flow dynamics in the downstream area changes once a dam is in place. How the dam is operated crucially decides what will be the experience in downstream areas. Regrettably, how the dam is operated is not in the public domain. So we don't even get to know how the inflows, storage and outflows at the dam changes with time (and days) and on what basis decisions about certain outflows at certain time are taken. It should be mandatory to put up such information daily in the public domain.

Is this asking for too much?

Until this is achieved, there is little hope of change. And dam operators will literally get away with murder, as has happened in the numerous cases listed above.



# Rich Mumbai's starving children

SIMPREET SINGH

Today we find ourselves in an ironical situation surrounded by innumerable contradictions. Some of these incongruities are so wide they hardly seem to represent reality. It seems we are looking at pictures of two planets. Lost in the rhetoric of 8 per cent growth and a rocky Sensex we seem to have forgotten that India has the largest population of malnourished children in this world.

The latest report of May 2008 by the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) of Maharashtra points to a shameful fact: 49 per cent of Mumbai's children are malnourished. It is nothing short of irony that Mumbai, the financial capital which claims to contribute more than Rs 35,000 crores annually as direct taxes to the Union government has so many hungry children.

From the Prime Minister to the Chief Minister, everyone has been making statements of transforming Mumbai into a financial hub, a world class city, but half its children are malnourished! Recently the authorities came out with a Rs19,525 crore Mumbai Metro Plan. Even if a fraction of this amount is spent on the welfare of the underprivileged only then can Mumbai claim to be a world class city. Otherwise, after a few years Mumbai could boast of a 'world class' metro but how would it explain the presence of these malnourished bodies and souls?

The admission of children with malnutrition has brought to light the destitution and deprivation being faced by the urban toiling masses who have been forced to migrate out of rural areas because of big dams, mega projects or capital intensive agricultural practices. The poor find themselves in an urban space where their labour is required but their existence is negated, where what is at stake is their survival and not rights though these are guaranteed by the Constitution and thus enforceable.

All over we find the State in denial mode, absolving itself of all responsibilities towards the hardworking poor, to their needs, their aspirations and their rights. Malnutrition in Mumbai clearly reflects the existence of poverty amidst plenty, of skewed and distorted development leading to an island of prosperity in a mainland of poverty.

Mumbai and other cities are being marked by processes which are pushing the majority of dwellers into a state of permanent vulnerability. Slum demolitions, eviction of hawkers, closing down of public services like municipal schools, hospitals, public educational institutions, closure of public transport are the modus operandi being followed.

Cases of malnutrition are definitely not due to scarce food production or poverty alone. Rather malnutrition is the result of misplaced priorities and distorted development. The Audit Report of CAG of 2007 pointed out that for six consecutive years, from 2001 to 2006, the state government of Maharashtra reg-

ularly lifted much below its allocated share of food grains from the central pool. For this period the allotment of wheat and rice by the Union Government was 189.9 and 107.9 lakh metric tonnes respectively. But Maharashtra lifted only 61.33 and 35.08 lakh metric tonnes of wheat and rice.

Shockingly, the Audit Report of CAG reveals that during the same period, the state's Food and Civil Supplies department made 'savings' of Rs 2,956 crores.

Isn't it criminal that when nearly 50 per cent of the city's children are suffering from malnutrition, the department was taking less food grain from the central pool?

Should it not have lifted all the food and made sure it reached the children? Or maybe then the authorities would not have been able to showcase their 'surplus' or 'savings' of Rs 2,965 crores, which today they have to, thanks to the World Bank dictated Maharashtra Fiscal Management Bill 2005. The answer to this riddle needs to be found.

It is a known fact that the urban poor pay more for basic services than the rich or middle class, be it for water, sanitation, health or rations. But the middle class intelligentsia and the media not only downplay this fact but propagate myths about slum dwellers getting these services for free.

For a can of 30 litres of water, slum dwellers have to pay between Rs 3 to Rs 5 and spend two or three hours daily to collect it. This burden invariably falls on women and the girl child. Ironically under the influence and directions of funding agencies concepts like 'user fee charges' are being pushed, as if earlier slum dwellers were getting services for free. These models are being propagated under the excuse of bringing in efficiency and transparency, ignoring the fact that essential services would become inaccessible and unaffordable for the poor and impair their lives.

The Right to Life enshrined under Article 21 of our Constitution essentially includes the Right to Food. Therefore, the State is obliged to provide, in addition to all other basic requirements, balanced healthy nutrition. This has been clearly stated under Article 47 which says: "The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties."

The citizen's right to food has been clearly reiterated by various interim orders of the Supreme Court in the ongoing Right to Food case. The Maharashtra government instead of resorting to band-aid solutions needs to focus on the recognition and provision of the developmental rights of employment, educational opportunities, mandatory access and provision of affordable housing, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and improved medical care for the impoverished sections of our society.

*(Based in Mumbai, Simpreet is an activist with Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan a constituent of National Alliance of People's Movements) Contact: simpreetsingh@gmail.com*



*(Continued from page 28)*

An important issue that should not escape our attention is that the cost of production of paddy is not uniform across states. It varies from a low of Rs 487.23 (if all inputs are factored) in Punjab to a high of Rs 801.09 in Kerala.

Several factors may contribute to such variations in the cost of cultivation across states. The inputs – land, labour, capital – are not available at uniform prices in all states due to variations in state policies and market conditions. For example, the price of labour in Kerala is higher than that in other states, because not only is the minimum wage pegged at a higher rate but the supply of labour to the domestic agricultural sector is also reduced due to better employment opportunities elsewhere.

Similarly, yield of paddy per unit of land may not be the same across states because of variations in land fertility or even state policies. Farmers in Punjab neither pay for irrigation water from existing canal systems, nor do they pay for electricity that energizes pumps to lift groundwater for irrigation. Farmers elsewhere are not so fortunate and end up spending more to produce the same amount of paddy.

We have got to find answers to a couple of questions immediately.

Should MSP for a crop be uniform all over India despite variations in the cost of production? A uniform MSP will obviously help farmers who can produce the crop at a lower cost, and is in tune with the argument for a competitive, market-dominated production framework.

However, a competitive output market is efficient when the input markets

are competitive as well. Given the fact that input prices are not uniform across the states due to several reasons – natural, state-induced or market-led – a uniform MSP for output may not indicate efficiency and does not augur well for India's food security.

A state-specific MSP factoring in regional variations in input prices is the requirement of the day. One may like to recollect that our poverty alleviation programmes also started with a uniform poverty line considered as a benchmark. Later, we shifted to state-specific poverty lines. Farmers across the country should also expect the same spirit from the powers that be.

Another important factor that CACP apparently considers while recommending the MSP for crops, is the international price situation. With international grain prices moving northwards at a rapid rate, it is unfortunate that millions of Indian farmers engaged in paddy cultivation are not being rewarded properly by the Government.

This has serious implications for the food security of the country as given the slightest opportunity farmers will not hesitate to shift from paddy cultivation to producing more rewarding crops. They could also end up converting land use from agriculture to other ventures – urbanisation, industrialisation or infrastructure development.

Obviously, those implementing such projects will pay some compensation to the farmers. But at the end of the day, the promoters will go laughing all the way to the bank while the farmers, bereft of their land and with no other skills and assets, will add to the ranks of those living miserable lives.

# Reviewer

## THE FINE PRINT

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## Osian-Cinefan's climb to fame

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Indu Shrikent and Latika Padgaonkar

**Madhu Gurung**

New Delhi

**A**N air of expectation is palpable at Siri Fort, the venue for Osian's 10th Cinefan Festival of Asian and Arab cinema. All four auditoriums are packed. Crowds mill around.

This film festival has created a platform for directors, actors and writers to bring in their films from countries once considered not easy to tap into like Iran, Egypt, Turkey, China, Taiwan, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Japan and Pakistan.

The films enthrall and give glimpses of the lives people in those countries lead. They spawn ideas and create a climate for movie buffs, critics and ordinary people to come together for the love of cinema in an easy paced atmosphere.

More than a decade ago, Aruna Vasudev, a well-known movie critic, had the foresight to start a quarterly journal called *Cinemaya* that talked of Asian cinema. Till then, cinema from Asia had been written about mostly by critics in the West. The journal got film makers across Asia to write and talk of their work and this was then translated for the journal into English. *Cinemaya*, for the first time, gave Asian cinema and its genre of film making a voice.

As the journal grew so did the need for an Asian film festival. In 1998, under the aegis of Aruna Vasudev, a three-day Asian film festival called 'Cinefan' was held. By 1999, Cinefan garnered the support of the Delhi Government and the Network for

the Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC) to present Delhi's discerning audience with a cache of 27 Asian films. The spotlight was on films from Japan. The festival celebrated 30 years of 'New Wave' cinema, as art cinema was called in those days, with films from Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Ketan Mehta, Mrinal Sen and Jahnu Barua.

In 2000, Cinefan paid tribute to Smita Patil by showing nine of her films. Each year since then, the festival has been screening cross-cultural encounters, showing films on Asia by non-Asian film makers.

In 2004, Cinefan merged with Osian and became Osian-Cinefan. In the same year, Arab cinema entered the festival in a special section called Arabesque. Over time Arab cinema became an integral part of the Osian-Cinefan film festival.

Each year the festival focuses on different themes. Some of the themes it has depicted include martial arts, comedy and films on the Buddha to

celebrate his 2,500th birth anniversary. The festival also commemorated the 1857 Mutiny with a section called 'Hymn of Freedom'.

This year there has been a change of guard among the organisers. Aruna Vasudev, whose brainchild the film festival was, has stepped down as the adviser of Osian-Cinefan and Latika Padgaonkar and Indu Shrikent have become its joint directors.

Both women believe they have come a long way in the ten years of the Osian-Cinefan film festival. In a crowded reception lounge, celebrities like Aparna Sen hold forth on cinema before a posse of journalists. Dotted across the room other reporters are busy chasing their interviews with Arab and Asian film makers.

"Thanks to our working on the journal, we knew Asian cinema," says Indu, smiling. "We knew the directors and we were familiar their work. When the Turkish director, Nuri Bilge Cilan was making his film, we were already in dialogue with him to get his film to the festival. After joining Osian, we had greater financial backing and the freedom to invite the best films. We have introduced new film makers from Asian and Arab countries and there is a noticeable familiarity with their work among the audience. We have also taken pains to build the new generation of film makers and showcase their films in our 'First Feature' section. This was under our competitive category."

Osian also honours film makers with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Writers, scriptwriters and critics are honoured with the Aruna Vasudev Lifetime

Award for Writing.

Since 2004, the festival has been hosting a 'Talent Campus' which gives aspiring young film makers a chance to interact with well known film makers. This year the festival introduced short films of 40 minutes duration. Out of 42 films being shown, 13 had their world premiers at the Osian-Cinefan film festival.

Both Indu and Latika say each year Osian- Cinefan adds a new range of activities creating not just zest for cinema but a climate for viewing films. The activities include seminars, conferences and panel discussions on different aspects of film making.

In 2007, following the setting up of a literary agency, the festival holds discussions on films based on novels in Mumbai and Delhi. Here, literary writers, script writers and film makers, interact with people. The festival now starts in Mumbai and ends in Delhi.

Indu and Latika say they have also curated different sections of the festival. Latika, who curated the section on intolerance, points out, "Over the years we have been receiving a growing number of films on intolerance, ranging from religious fundamentalism, violence against women, political intolerance and social and political aspects of intolerance. We began seriously looking at the meaning of intolerance and how it translated into cinema. This session falls under our competitive section."

The Osian Cinefan festival has also launched the Film Fund Osian's Originating Development (FFOOD) to help young film makers experiment with new forms of cinema. By 2009, this festival will have its own Osian Cultural Complex called Osianama. "We will create a culture of cinema where we will show such films throughout the year in dialogue with other art forms," says Latika. "In India there are no institutions or events that bring the connectivity

**Indu and Latika say each year the film festival adds a new range of activities creating not just zest for cinema but a climate for viewing films. The activities include seminars, conferences and panel discussions on different aspects of film making.**

between cinema and different art forms. Osianama will be that cultural complex." Indu agrees, "We now have an increasing number of people who come to watch the festival. They recognise the work and names of Arab and Asian film makers. We have also opened up the market for such films. We have distributors lining up to buy these films. They want to show them on television and even release the films in theatres," she says.

The two women cannot stop beaming as they look around the milling crowds. "Thanks to the hype the festival has created over the years, we have brought in a climate and love for cinema," they say. The audience, packed into all four auditoriums of Siri Fort, seemed to endorse her words.

## Dance with a wheelchair

**Sejal Mahendru**  
New Delhi

**T**HE Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC) in New Delhi has introduced dance therapy for the first time in India. The therapy is for patients with spinal cord injuries.

Dance therapy is based on the belief that the mind and body work together. "Dance therapy as a medical facility had been restricted to western countries. It has been taken up for the first time in Asia by us," says Dr Deepti Aggarwal, head of department of Homeopathy and Lifestyle Management at ISIC.

"It is for patients who are suffering from paraplegia or quadriplegia, that is, their limbs have stopped functioning. They are wheelchair-bound so they feel dependent on others and possess low self-esteem. Dance sessions not only improve their muscle coordination and control on the wheelchair, but also do wonders for their confidence. They realize that they can do whatever an able-bodied person can do," Dr Aggarwal says.

Dancing along with music helps patients relax, teaches them to propel the wheelchair and also helps fight depression.

The dance therapy sessions were introduced around six months ago. The dance sessions are held once a week for an hour. The instructors are professional trainers from Shiamak Davar's dance institute. On an average, there are 15-20 students per batch. Each wheelchair-bound patient has an able-bodied partner, who lends supports them. The instructor's movements have to be in sync with the patient's.

"We mostly have in-house patients in these classes, but some rehabilitated patients also participate. Initially when we started, patients were skeptical and reluctant to join but now they look forward to these sessions. Even those who have been rehabilitated are showing a keen interest. The zest of the patients is inspiring," says Dr Aggarwal.

Dance trainer Vibhakar says, "This has been a wonderful experience. It makes me really happy to see the smiles it brings on the patients' faces."

Rajiv Virat, a rehabilitated patient who is now a wheelchair skills instructor at ISIC, and attends the dance therapy sessions says, "Dance therapy has been a great experience. It provides us with a vent for doing something constructive

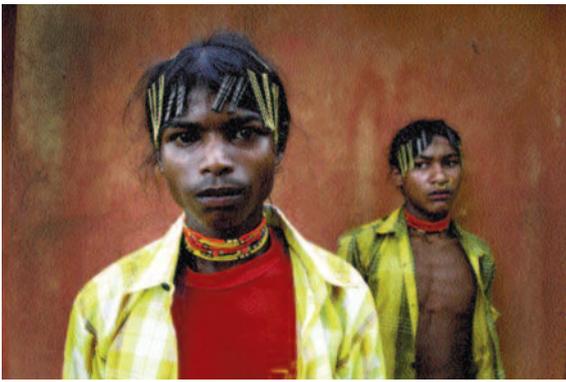
and puts wheelchair-bound patients back into society. We no longer feel shy to interact with able-bodied people." Virat has been suffering from paraplegia for the past five years. He is an athlete and has taken part in several wheelchair marathons. "Dance therapy is creativity at its best. People laugh and smile in these classes. For the patients, it is a welcome break from the grilling routine of exercises which they have to follow," he adds.



**A dance therapy session**

Pragya, another rehabilitated patient is now a yoga therapist and peer counselor at ISIC. She joined dance therapy sessions when they first began. "It has given patients something to look forward to. Dancing to music is therapeutic as it relaxes the mind and takes your mind off the pain. It teaches patients to propel the wheelchair and often patients dance with their able-bodied partners at parties."

For Pragya, who has been on a wheelchair for three years, her positive outlook and family's support have been instrumental in helping her cope with life after her injury.



Photographs by JASON TAYLOR

# Green hill or black pit?

**Parvinder Singh**  
New Delhi

**M**EMBERS of the Kondh community from Niyamgiri in south Orissa travelled to Delhi to attend an exhibition of photographs called, Against the Wall which depicted their struggle to save their sacred mountain Niyamgiri from being destroyed by mining.

"We will die but not leave our home and our god. Without our mountain, our god Niyamraja, there is no life for us," said Malari, 36, standing amidst photographs by Jason Taylor and Sanjit Das. The exhibition, organised by Action Aid, came on the eve of a Supreme Court hearing on 18 July to consider proposals by UK company Vedanta for bauxite mining in the area.

Malari, a mother of two children, attended with a three-member delegation of Kondhs to highlight the destruction that will take place if the central government permits mining in one of India's richest ecosystems.

Niyamgiri is protected under Section 18 of the Indian Wildlife Act as an area of extraordinary natural beauty. The forest covering the mountain has been officially recognised for its rich wildlife population. It was proposed as a wildlife sanctuary by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1998. In 2004, the Orissa government declared it an elephant reserve. Elephants, sambhars, leopards, tigers, barking deer, several varieties of birds and many endangered species are found there.

More than 75 per cent of the Niyamgiri hill is covered by thick forests. It has more than 300 species of plants and trees, including 50 kinds of medicinal plants. The forests are yet to be surveyed properly for their rare flora and fauna but already the refinery chimney is belching out a steady flow of black smoke across the hillside.

Bauxite mining and the refinery will destroy the culture, religion and livelihoods of the Kondh community, one of many tribal groups accorded special status in the Indian Constitution.

Over the last year, Niyamgiri residents have travelled to Bhubaneswar, Delhi and even the Annual General Meeting of Vedanta in London to raise their concerns, not only over the impact of Vedanta's refinery but also plans to mine bauxite from hills they hold sacred.

In a damning 2005 report, a Supreme Court panel, the Central Empowered Committee, accused Vedanta of violating environmental guidelines. It said Vedanta had "deliberately and consciously concealed the involvement of the forest land in the project".

In addition to environmental concerns, two of India's strongest Constitutional guarantees will be overturned if mining goes ahead: The right of a 'primitive tribal group' to their territorial integrity and to decide on their own path of development (Indian Constitution Schedule V) and the right to religious practices and beliefs (Article 25).

"The Niyamgiri campaign symbolises the struggle of indigenous communities, living in sustainable ecosystems, that are facing eviction and destruction of their land, water and air for mega projects and mega profits," stated photographer Jason Taylor. "These images of Kondh people and their forest will hopefully give a sense of what could be lost if mining is allowed," added Sanjit Das.

Environmental experts have warned that strip mining of bauxite at the top of Niyamgiri would have a devastating impact on the flora, fauna, river systems and food production capacity of the mountain environment. A study of the proposed project by the government-run Wildlife Institute of India (WII) concluded that mining could trigger, "irreversible changes in the ecological characteristics of the area".

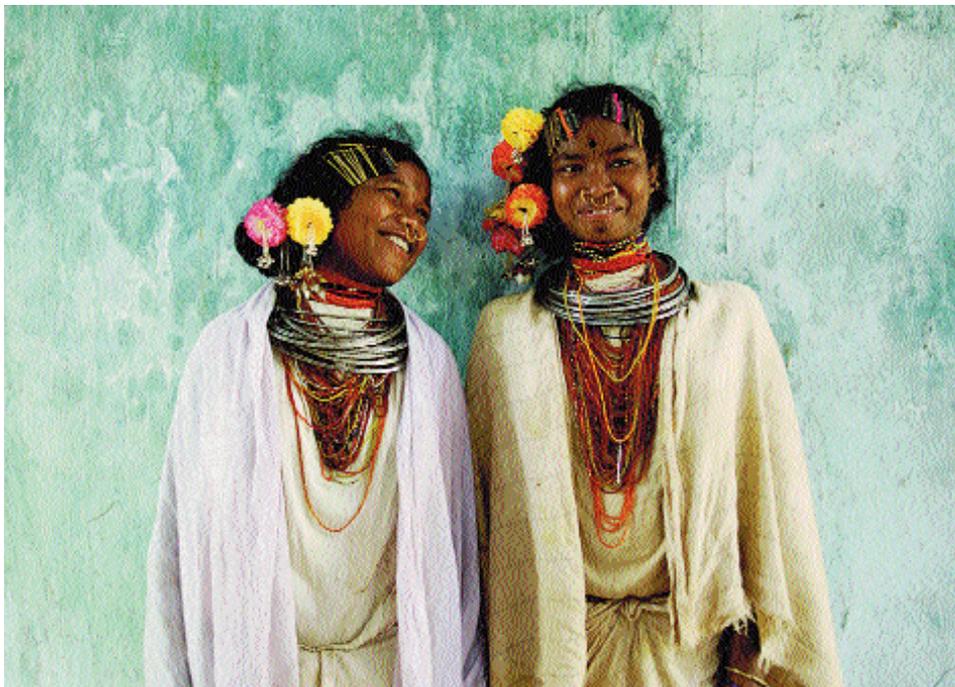
The WII report warns of the damaging consequences that bauxite mining on Niyamgiri could have on its hydrology, and consequently on the water systems that sustain the lush vegetation and provide drinking, washing and irrigation water to communities living in and around the mountain and to those downstream. The report notes:

"It is believed that the bauxite layer which is formed through leaching also acts as a layer for imbibing water and releasing it slowly throughout the year. It is anticipated that

the removal of this layer of bauxite will impact ground waters in the region, and consequently the quality of the forest habitat... This will eventually make the habitat drier and reduce its potential for productivity and biodiversity."

Bhima from the Belamba village in the district of Kalahandi, which is notoriously drought prone, says: "We will not get water even if we dig deep. It is only because of Niyamgiri that this area gets water."

*Parvinder Singh is a Project and Story Manager with ActionAid*



**More than 75 per cent of the Niyamgiri hill is covered by thick forests. It has over 300 species of plants and trees, including 50 kinds of medicinal plants. The forests are yet to be surveyed properly.**

# Living

## BODY & SOUL

**Be different, look within. There is always more to life. Reach out to alternatives. Heritage, eco-tourism, green cures, traditional foods, buy from NGOs, spiritual talk, organic counter, where to donate, where to volunteer, web watch.**

## Village of bird lovers

**Susheela Nair**  
Chennai

From Chennai we drove 86 km down National Highway-45 to reach Vedanthangal in Chinglepattu district of Tamil Nadu. Like other tourists we had come to feast our eyes on avian beauties from far-flung regions.

Vedanthangal is India's oldest bird sanctuary spread over 74-acres. It has a lovely lake called Karikili. But what is truly remarkable about Vedanthangal is that it is gently protected by villagers and not by the power of the gun. Residents of Vedanthangal along with five villages adjoining the sanctuary enjoy a special relationship with the migratory birds who flock here.

Conservation through community participation is the main agenda of the villagers. They wait for the birds to return, year after year. Their care and concern can be gauged by the increase in birds every year. Nowhere else in Tamil Nadu do so many thousands of birds of an amazing variety, breed in such close proximity to a village visible almost entirely from the tank-bund, says an old-timer of the village.

As though guided by natural instinct and their biological clock, birds of all sizes and hues come to nest in the serene setting of the marshy Vedanthangal Lake from November to March after the north-east monsoon. The lake is surrounded by trees: Barringtonia, Nilotika and Terminolia.

Raucous cries fill the air. There is the hustle and bustle of nesting and feeding. We were fascinated by the frequent overhead flights of birds in arrow-head formations setting out at dawn and returning home at twilight from their feeding grounds. From the watchtower we had a panoramic view of a large mixed heronry—open-billed storks, grey herons, pond herons, night herons, black ibises, grey pelicans, darters, spoon bills, night herons, cormorants, grey ducks, teals, snake birds and painted storks snugly settling down on nests to begin breeding with amazing clockwork precision.

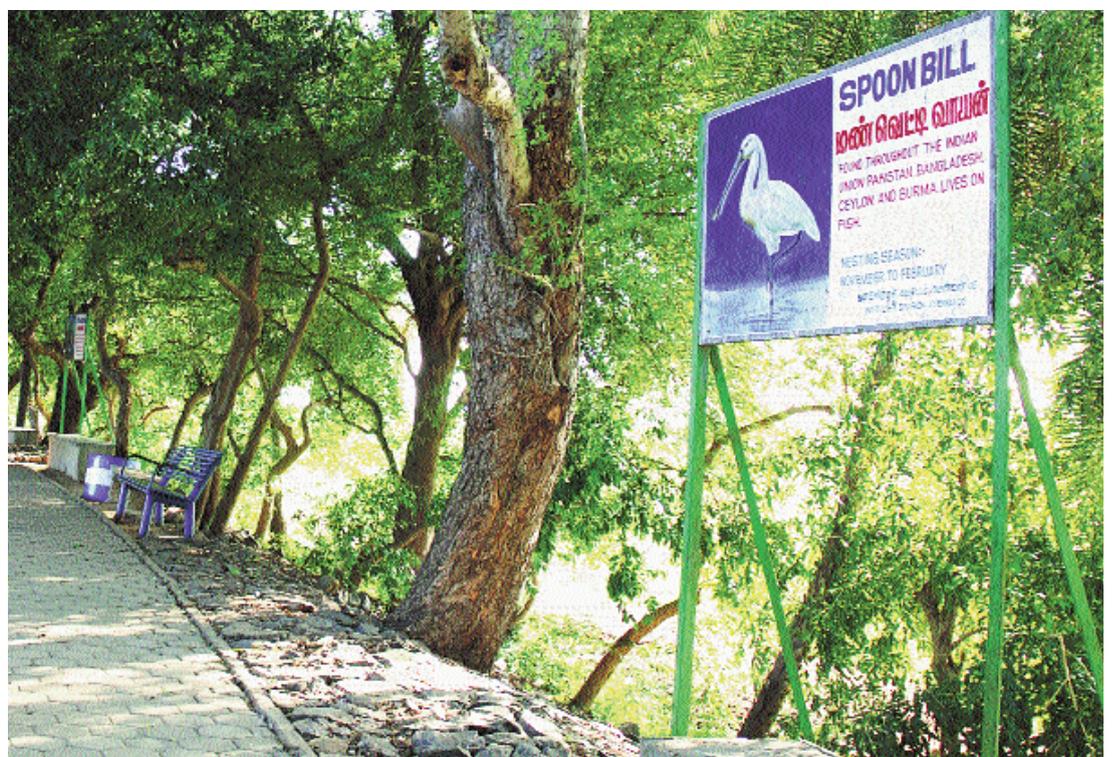
During the season one can spot 18 species of migratory birds from all over the world. Along with local species, the sanctuary has about 26 varieties of birds. Black winged stilts, spotted billed or grey pelicans and coots are some of the indigenous birds visiting Vedanthangal for feeding. The pariah kite, Brahminy kite, harrier, white scavenger vulture, short toed eagle and the house crow are some of the scavengers and predators seen at Vedanthangal. The population of migratory birds swells to around 40,000 by mid-

(Continued on page 36)

Photographs: SUSHEELA NAIR



Painted storks at Vedanthangal bird sanctuary



A cobble path to stroll down at leisure

# For that perfect vision

## GREEN CURES

### Ask Dr GG



*Dr GG Gangadharan is one of India's best known Ayurvedic physicians. Currently, he is deputy director of the Foundation for the Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) in Bangalore. In this column, Dr GG, as he is popularly known, answers queries from readers seeking effective alternative remedies.*

**My 11-year-old daughter failed her class last year. We were very angry and scolded her quite a lot. But we also consoled her and tried to encourage her. Her teacher says she is doing very badly in school because she is suffering from anxiety. She is going for counselling but please tell us what we can give her**

**which would make her more happy and at ease.**

Eleven years is a very delicate age to consider any counselling. If her milestones were normal during her developing years, a good diet, proper environment for study and some Ayurvedic preparation can definitely help. I am not dwelling into the counseling part but I would strongly advise you give her Kalyanaka Gritham one teaspoon warm in the morning on an empty stomach. At bed time give her one teaspoon of Saraswatha Ghritham warm followed by warm milk. If she is lean and underweight give her cashew and badam (soaked), if affordable. If you can grow Brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*) in your home give her a paste of it, the size of a gooseberry, before breakfast. Do not give spicy and deep fried items to children who lack concentration. Give lots of steamed or cooked vegetables. Apply Sudhabala thailam on her head everyday before bath.

**My eight-year-old son is bubbling with excessive energy. He cannot concentrate on his homework and he does not listen to me. He just cannot remain still. Please tell me what I can give to calm him down.**

Children with excessive energy should take body massage with Ksheerabala

thailam regularly or at least once a week if everyday treatment is difficult. For improving concentration give him Panchagavya Ghritham one teaspoon in the morning on an empty stomach and at bed time. If you can get Sankupushpi Root (*Clitoria ternatea*), white flowered not the blue one, take 10 gms of it, boil in one glass of milk with equal quantity of water, reduce to half, filter and give with sugar before 6 pm. Reduce deep fried, spicy food and food with yeast. Try to divert his attention to extra curricular activities like music, tabla, flute or any instruments into which he can channelise his energy creatively. Make him do some deep breathing exercises.

**My 15-year-old daughter refuses to eat even one full meal. First, she said she was worried about her figure and wanted to be slim. We did not insist. But she has lost several kilos and looks rather thin. Now she says she does not have an appetite and has lost all interest in food. Please help.**

I don't know what her weight is at present. If she is painfully thin give her Abhayanga at home with Shashtika thailam available in the market. To improve her appetite she should take before food one teaspoon of Ashta Choornam followed by 30 ml of Balarishtam. If she is a non-vegetarian, encourage her to take mutton soup with pepper and green chili. Give her products of urad dhal like vadai, steamed food like idli, and steamed root vegetables like Colocacia, and Tapioca to improve her weight and appetite. Also give her everyday one gooseberry size of curry patta paste in the morning with one pinch of pepper. This will definitely improve her appetite and weight.

**I am a 42-year-old male. For many years I have been an alcoholic. Now thanks to the support of an NGO I have left alcohol. However, the truth is I still crave for a drink every evening. Does Ayurveda have anything which can bring my craving for alcohol down?**

In this condition take for 41 days one gooseberry size fine paste of Kizharnelli (whole plant), which is available every where in the morning. Take in the evening and at night 30 ml of Sreekandasavam. For 2-3 weeks take one full orange after peeling the skin at 6 am, 9 am, 12 pm, 3 pm and 6 pm. That is, five oranges a day. This is part of a secret formula to get out of the craving for alcohol. At FRLHT, we provide in-house treatment for alcoholism.  
E-mail: [vaidya.ganga@frlht.org](mailto:vaidya.ganga@frlht.org)

## Village of bird lovers

(Continued from page 35)

January. But over the years, 115 species have been spotted at the lake.

The devotional zeal of the villagers in protecting the birds nesting in their tanks dates back to many centuries. Archival records prove the existence of a happy relationship between the birds and villagers. According to historical documentary evidence when local villagers complained to the collector, Lionel Place about the indiscriminate shooting of birds by British soldiers, he reacted positively to this spontaneous protest and issued an order prohibiting the shooting of birds in the entire village.

The Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary was granted legal protection in 1798 and recognised as a sanctuary in 1936. Then, in 1962, it was accorded the legal status of a reserve forest under the Madras Forest Act. Subsequently in 1972, the entire lake was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary under the Wildlife Protection Act.

Generations later, the villagers continue to protect their sanctuary with the same fervour. The agrarian community takes utmost caution not to disturb nesting birds. They prevent any noisy activity from taking place near the sanctuary. Even marriages and festivals are a silent affair in the months that birds come to nest.

"We neither disturb the birds nor do we allow visitors to disturb them. We are also aware that as per rules, there can be no industrial activity or multi-storied buildings in the six villages surrounding the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary. It will cause noise pollution and disturb the movement of birds," says Govindaraju, a farmer.

During the monsoon the Karikili Lake overflows with water. Rainwater also accumulates in 60 ponds adjoining the paddy fields. There is an abundant supply of aquatic prey like fish, tadpoles, frogs, water insects and snails for birds to feast on. The water around the trees ensures natural protection to the birds from most predators such as pariah kites, crows, snakes and so on. With the onset of summer, the water starts receding in the tanks signaling the departure of birds in batches after completion of their breeding cycle.

The birds are a visual treat for naturalists. They also play an important role in enriching the lake with plant nutrients. The villagers are aware of the symbiotic relationship between their crops and the birds. The high density of birds ensures plentiful bird droppings into the waters of the lake. It converts silt into rich manure, a greenish liquid called *guano* which is a natural fertilizer.

It has been scientifically proved that the fields of Vedanthangal enriched with *guano* fertiliser yield better crops than neighbouring villages. Therefore, the use of harmful chemical fertilisers is minimised. With the birds devouring the pests, pesticides are also not required. This mutually beneficial relationship has resulted in an increase in the population of birds. Vedanthangal is recognised as one of the best breeding zones for birds.

Every year the Forest Department buys 100,000 baby fish from the Fisheries Department to ensure the lake is well stocked. During our visit we observed officials releasing the fish into the lake. About 500 trees are also planted annually for roosting as well as for nesting material on artificially creating mounds. While the egrets and storks prefer the dry twigs, the cormorants are more selective. They dive underwater and come up with wet twigs to make their nests soft.

A lot remains to be done. But the funds the Forest Department receives are inadequate to meet requirements for the upkeep of the sanctuary. The understaffed Forest Department has its hands full, tackling encroachers and stray cattle and preventing vandals and picnickers from disturbing the birds.

The sanctuary needs a new telescope for the watchtower. If cameras are fitted at the lake and connected to the interpretation centre, visitors can see the birds. Sadly, bird watching isn't yet a culture among the middle class. A bird sanctuary is not the same as a Bacchanalian holiday spot. Birds need absolute silence and privacy to settle down. Humans who come here can meditate, enjoy nature and be at peace.

**FACT FILE:** Vedanthangal is located 86 km from Chennai. Nearest airport is Chennai and nearest railhead, Chinglepet (45 km). The best option is to drive down from Chennai along NH 45.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Forest Department Rest House in Vedanthangal. Contact Forest Department, Chennai at 044-24321471.♦♦♦♦♦

# ARTISAN'S ART

The Dastkari Haat Samiti was founded by well known social activist Jaya Jaitly in 1985. It is a national association of artisans who work together to increase awareness and respect of traditional artisan skills. The Samiti strives to improve the incomes of artisans. Its members come together on a common marketing platform for the development and sustenance of their livelihoods. In the process, the artisans contribute towards preserving India's invaluable cultural resources.

We present attractive products made by them. There are paintings done on paper and cloth by the Gond tribe of Madhya Pradesh. They convey their image of a magical universe with fine dots, lines and colours. The community is experimenting with new ways of telling ancient stories, demonstrating its desire to modernise traditional art.

Then, there are pattachitra paintings from Orissa. Here, manuscripts and figures are etched on dried palm leaves. Colours for the paintings are extracted from stones and minerals. There are murals and art works done on canvas and silk. These have stylized figures of gods and goddesses in classical poses, surrounded by flora and fauna.

Madhubani paintings from Bihar are now well known. Originally painted by women during festive occasions on the walls of their homes, many artists from this community have become recognised internationally. They now paint contemporary themes on canvas, paper, cloth and wood.

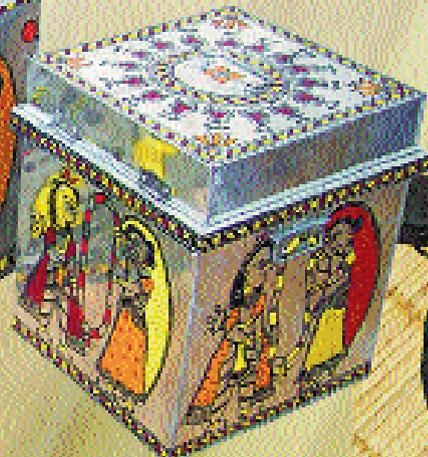
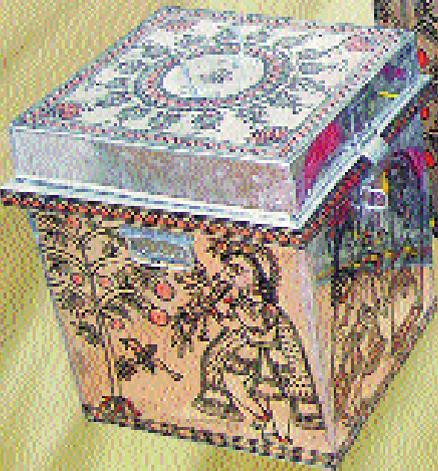
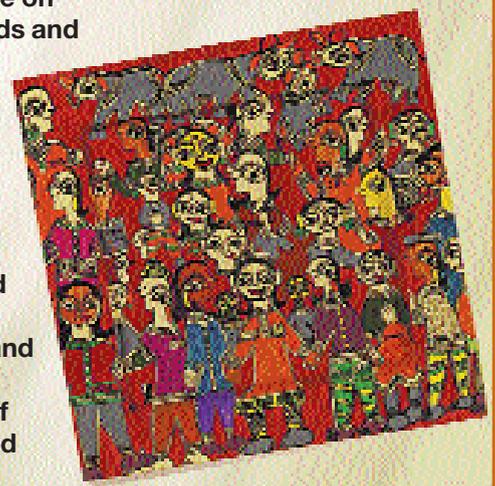
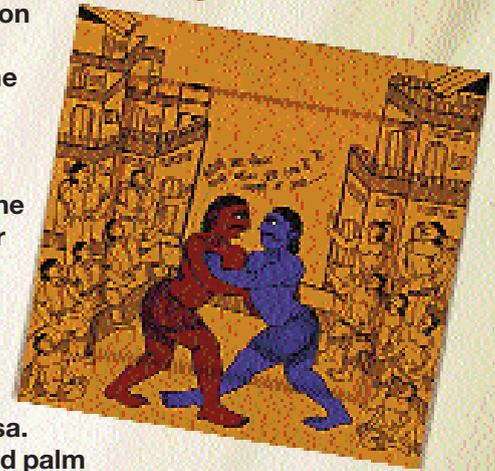
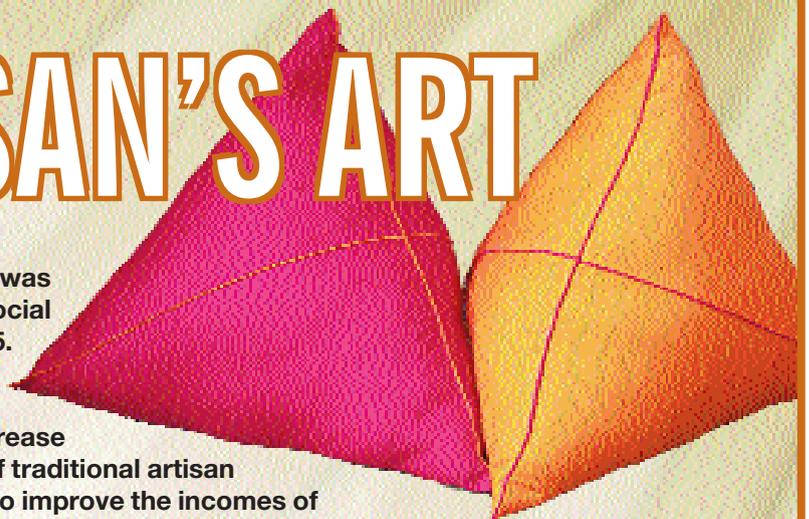
Woodwork with inlaid designs in silver, copper and brass, called Tarkasi, is a traditional craft of Rajasthan, developed for the nobility. The doors of temples, forts, palaces and havelis were decorated with such intricate ornamentation.

**For sales enquiries contact:**

**Charu Verma**, Dastkari Haat Samiti, 6/105 Kaushalya Park, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110016.

Phone: 011-26852373, 26568373.

E-mail: [dastkarihaat@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dastkarihaat@yahoo.co.in)  
[dastkarihaat@gmail.com](mailto:dastkarihaat@gmail.com)



# Be kind to yourself

SAMITA RATHOR

Explore ahimsa as a way to achieve harmony with the environment, peace within yourself and compassion for all. Thich Nhat Hanh says: "The essence of non-violence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics and techniques for a non-violent struggle arise naturally. Non violence is not a dogma; it is a process."

There is a great deal of rage, violence and destruction in the world around us. Our strength and responsibilities lie in transforming our lives and the impact our lives have on those around us. The less violent we are in body, mind and spirit, the more kindness we will experience. Remember the law of cause and effect. It is the prime law that runs the universe. Every spiritual and scientific teacher has sought to teach it. They may have said, you reap what you sow, or you get what you give, or what goes around comes around, or karma, or consequences, or every action has an equal and opposite reaction, or many other similar statements. Quantum physics is now teaching us how this works on a sub-atomic level. So if we give violence, we will receive violence. The question is do we really want to be in a situation like that?

The heart of Patanjali's teachings is the Ashtanga Yoga (eight-fold path of yoga). These are suggestions for living a better life through yoga. The eight limbs of Patanjali are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Yama or ethical disciplines consist of ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya and aparigraha.

The practice of ahimsa is one of being non-harmful in your thoughts, words, and deeds. In Sanskrit himsa is doing harm or causing injury. The "a" placed before the word negates it. Ahimsa is the process of non-violence, harmlessness, non-injury, and the absence of resentment. In today's fast moving life it is very easy to get caught up and disregard ethical modes of behaviour towards ourselves and others.

We may not aggressively attack people, animals or things, but even unconstructive feelings about such actions are a form of violence. Ahimsa is the practice of trying to reduce the amount of violence not only within ourselves and our lives, but also in the world around us. Ahimsa does not mean physical violence towards a living creature but how we deal with each and every situation in our

## SOUL VALUE

### THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE

WEALTH WITHOUT WORK,  
PLEASURE WITHOUT  
CONSCIENCE,  
KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT  
CHARACTER,  
COMMERCE WITHOUT  
MORALITY,  
SCIENCE WITHOUT HUMANITY,  
WORSHIP WITHOUT SACRIFICE,  
POLITICS WITHOUT PRINCIPLES.

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

lives. The way we talk, eat, sleep, walk, interact with others and ourselves. Even too much sleep or too less sleep is a form of violence.

Many of us do not realise how harmful we are being to ourselves (and sometimes inadvertently to others) with simple, negative thoughts. Generally, when we start to be judgmental about something, we are becoming harmful in our thoughts. Begin practicing ahimsa by having a more compassionate or tolerant attitude towards yourself. By adopting a more loving attitude towards yourself, you will positively affect those around you.

There are also some very simple actions that we can begin to cultivate in our lives to reduce the amount of suffering that we cause.

We should be aware of some facts about how animals are killed, under very unhygienic and brutal conditions. Remember the 2004 tsunami. The animals moved to a safety zone a few hours before the tsunami disaster occurred. Animals are that intuitive and sensitive. When an animal is to be killed he is very aware of that fact. In the moment of fright the animal secretes harmful toxins. When we eat this toxic meat we are assimilating those harmful toxins. These can lead to high levels of uric acid

causing kidney, bone and psychological disorders like aggression. The reality of today's meat, dairy, egg, and poultry industries is that millions of animals are painfully restrained, fed unnatural and medicated feed, often tortured while alive, and brutally murdered. Most of us have pets or have some sort of interaction with one. Farm animals are no different, and eating meat and dairy contributes to one of the most violent and sorrowful industries today.

Putting others down who are less able is no laughing matter. It is one of the most severe forms of violence. Ridiculing someone is a quality which clearly exhibits how insecure one is. These are all forms of violence.

Verbal abuse is another form of violence. Today it's considered fashionable to use swear words. It is a clear sign of insecurity and lack of respect for one's own self. Elimination of inappropriate words in daily life could be a very positive step towards coming practicing ahimsa.

Non-violence is accepting and learning from the experiences of others with an open mind. It only widens our perspective of life and helps us to deal with ourselves and the situations we face in a more effective manner.

## WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

### CanSupport India

Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12, R.K. Puram, Near DPS School, New Delhi-22  
Tel: 26102851, 26102859, 26102869  
E-mail: cansup\_india@hotmail.com

### Rahi

Rahi is a support centre for urban middle class women suffering from the trauma of incest. It provides information, individual support, group support and referrals. Through workshops and peer educators they help survivors and spread awareness. Contact: H-49 A, Second floor, Kalkaji, New Delhi-3  
Phone: 26227647

### Association for India's Development (AID) – Delhi Chapter

AID works for the environment, children, women's issues, education, and health. They also undertake fund raising. Contact: Anuj Grover B-121, MIG Flats, Phase-IV, Ashok Vihar Delhi-110052 Phone: 9818248459  
E-mail: anuj.grover@gmail.com

### Youthreach

A volunteer team at Youthreach helps to match your skills and interests with the needs of their partner organisations. This exchange is monitored and facilitated from beginning to end by the volunteer team. The team also partners other non-profit organisations that are working with children, women and the environment.

Contact: Preeti or Priyanjana at 11 Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi - 110 017  
Phone/Fax: (011) 2653 3520/25/30  
Email : yrd@youthreachindia.org

### Deepalaya

They work with economically, socially deprived, physically and mentally challenged children. They believe in helping children become self reliant and lead a healthy life. Deepalaya works on education, health, skill training and income enhancement. Contact: Deepalaya 46, Institutional Area, D Block Janakpuri, New Delhi - 110 058  
Phone: 25548263, 25590347  
Website: www.deepalaya.org

### Mobile Crèches

Mobile Crèches pioneered intervention into the lives of migrant construction workers by introducing the mobile crèche where working parents can leave their children. They work in the following areas: health, education, community outreach, networking and advocacy, resource mobilisation and communication. You can volunteer by filling out a simple form online. Contact: DIZ Area, Raja Bazaar, Sector IV New Delhi - 110001  
Phone: 91-11-23347635 / 23363271  
Website: www.mobilecreches.org

### The Arpana Trust

Arpana is a charitable, religious and spiritual organisation headquartered in Karnal, Haryana. They work with rural communities in Himachal Pradesh and with slum dwellers in Delhi. Arpana is

well known for its work on health. They have helped organise women into self-help groups. These SHGs make beautiful and intricate items which are marketed by Arpana. For more details: Arpana Community Centre, NS-5, Munirka Marg Street F/9, Next to MTNL, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-57.  
Phone: (Office) 26151136 and (Resi) 26154964

### HelpAge India

HelpAge India needs volunteers from doctors to lay people in all our locations. Older people love to talk to younger people and need emotional support.

We require volunteers in Delhi and Chennai to survey older people staying alone in homes, who could use our Helpline for senior citizens. If you wish to volunteer please email Pawan Solanki, manager at pawan.s@helpageindia.org or write to Vikas, volunteer coordinator, HelpAge India.

### Vidya

We work with the underprivileged sections of society primarily with children and women of urban slums. Our areas of focus are education, health awareness, micro enterprise, skill training, and youth management. Contact : Mrs Mala Goyal D- II 2442 Vasant Kunj New Delhi - 110070  
Phone Nos : 41740019, 46065056, 98 101 50725  
website: www.vidya-india.org

## WHERE TO DONATE

### Indian Red Cross Society

The society provides relief, hospital services, maternity and child welfare, family welfare, nursing and community services. Contact: Red Cross Bhavan, Golf Links, New Delhi-3 Phone: 24618915, 24617531

### Child Relief and You (CRY)

CRY, a premier child rights organisation, believes that every child is entitled to survival, protection, development and participation. You can sponsor a child's education, healthcare, or a health worker and a teacher. Website: www.cry.org

### Vidya

We work with the underprivileged sections of society primarily with children and women of urban slums. Our areas of focus are education, health awareness, micro enterprise, skill training, and youth management. You can give your valuable support by donating for a good cause through sponsorships or providing school building funds or supporting any specific programmes. Contact : Mrs Asha Mirchandani D- II 2442 Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070  
Phone Nos : 41740019, 46065056, 98 181 88449; website : www.vidya-india.org

### HelpAge India

HelpAge India is involved in the care of the poor and disadvantaged elderly in 55 locations across the country. They organise primary health care at village and slum level through 53 mobile medical vans, care of the destitute elderly through Adopt a Gran programme with 222 voluntary agencies, Helplines and income generation for the elderly. Their recent programmes are in the tsunami affected regions and in Kashmir for the rehabilitation of the elderly affected by the earthquake disaster.

HelpAge serves more than a million elderly in India. If you wish to donate or adopt a granny, please donate online on our site [www.helpageindia.org](http://www.helpageindia.org) or send an email to [helpage@nde.vsnl.net.in](mailto:helpage@nde.vsnl.net.in)  
Address: HelpAge India, C-14 Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi- 110016  
Chief Executive: Mathew Cherian - [mathew.cherian@helpageindia.org](mailto:mathew.cherian@helpageindia.org)

### Bharatiya Academy

The Eco Development Foundation and the Soni Foundation Trust have set up the Bharatiya Academy which runs a school for underprivileged children and for children of defence employees serving on the border who are victims of violence and war. The school is located in Tashipur, Roorkee, Hardwar district and has 115 children on its rolls. The school requires money for buildings and sponsors for the children. Temporary buildings have been made by the Bengal Sappers regiment. Teachers are also required. Contact: Soni Foundation Trust, F-2655 Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017  
E-mail: [kcjcodev@rediffmail.com](mailto:kcjcodev@rediffmail.com)  
Phone: 0124-2360422

### Smile Foundation

A national development agency with offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore & Kolkata, is well known for its work with over one lakh children & youth through various projects with focus on Education, Health & Empowerment across 15 states of India. You can give your valuable support for our various programmes like - Twin e-Learning, Smile on Wheels, Individual Support Programme, Swabhimana, etc. Visit us : [www.smilefoundationindia.org](http://www.smilefoundationindia.org)  
Contact : Smile Foundation, B-4/115, 1st Floor, Safderjung Enclave, New Delhi - 29  
Phone: 41354565, 41354566  
[info@smilefoundationindia.org](mailto:info@smilefoundationindia.org)



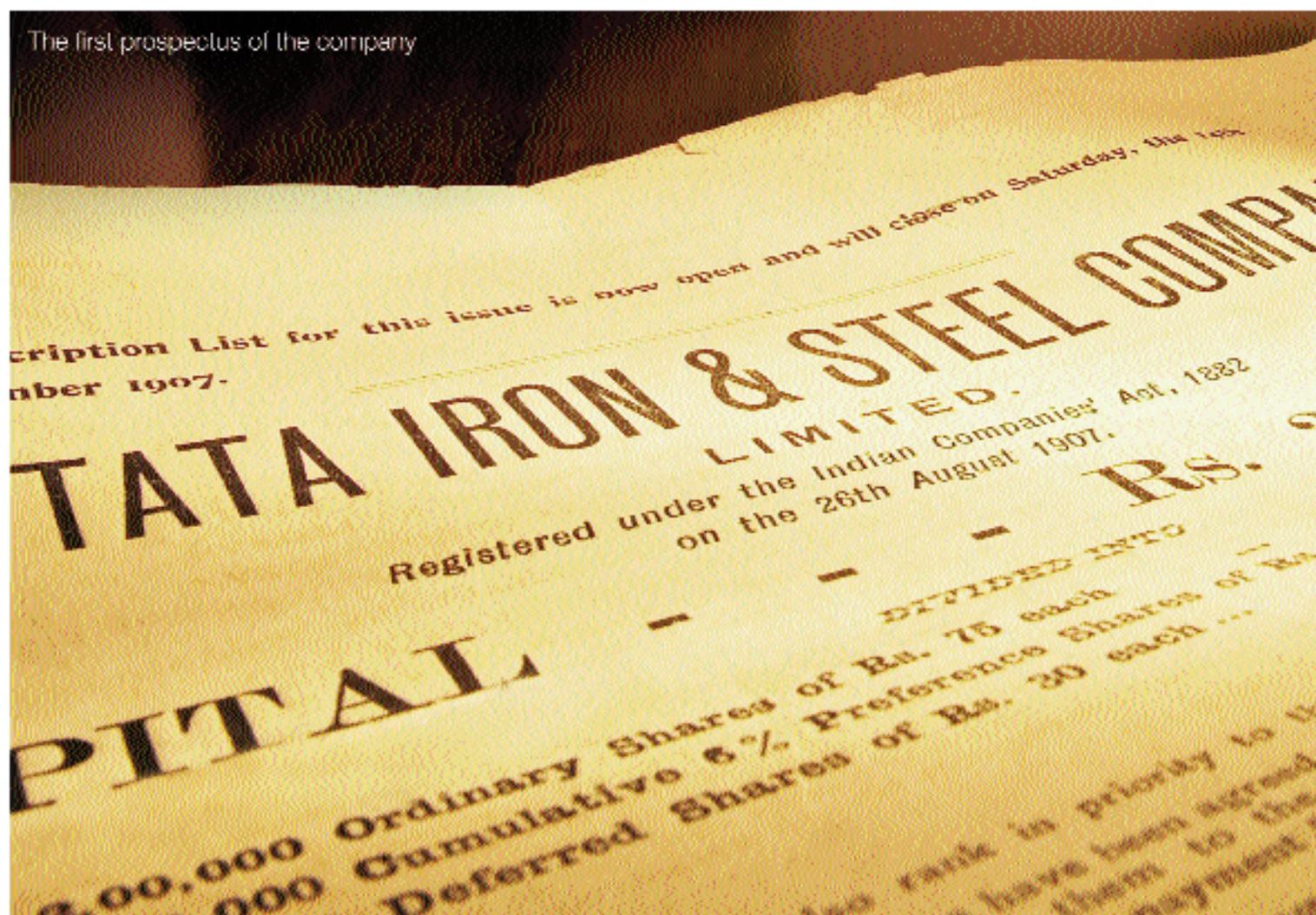
# Celebrating a hundred years...

of values as enduring  
as the steel we make

26th August, 1907 was a momentous day in the history of our nation. It marked not just the formation of our company, The Tata Iron & Steel Company Limited, now Tata Steel, but the birth of the Indian Steel Industry. Since then, never losing sight of the values propounded by our Founder Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, we continue to create wealth and well-being for the communities and the nations where we operate. Making business a tool to improve the quality of life, we follow the highest standard of corporate governance, delighting customers, reinforcing the trust all stakeholders repose on us, filling every member of the Tata Steel Family with pride.

On our hundredth year, we continue to enhance India's stature on the global stage and look forward to enriching more lives across more communities for another hundred years and more.

The first prospectus of the company



## TATA STEEL



1907 - 2007