

Civil Society

INTERVIEWS



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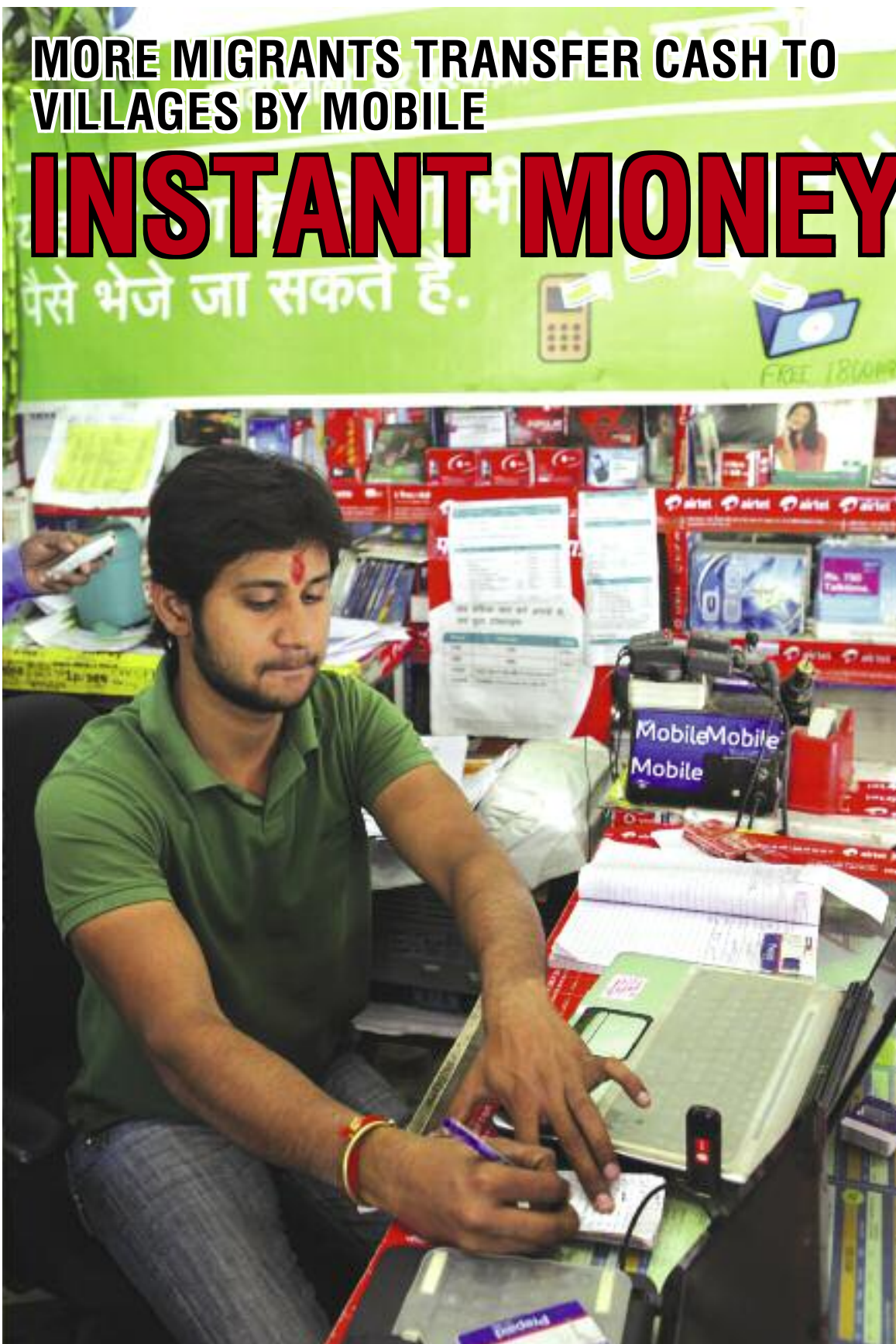
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IN WILD COMPANY

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MORE MIGRANTS TRANSFER CASH TO VILLAGES BY MOBILE

INSTANT MONEY





Project Muskaan Pumping Excitement into Rural Primary Education

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

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

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

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

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

We are Jubilant.

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



www.jubilantbhartiafoundation.com

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Remittances by migrant workers in cities to their families in villages have become a huge business opportunity for mobile commerce companies.

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Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

The tech fix

TECHNOLOGY, when used well, is a leveller and speeds up inclusion. It makes it possible to leapfrog over seemingly unbridgeable gaps in development. The spread of telecom is of course the biggest example. Now that owning a phone is no longer a privilege, it has become easier for people to get on with their lives. Migrant workers in cities may not have bank accounts because of the sloth and elitism that ails our banks. But by using their mobile phones to transfer money to their families in their villages, these migrants, many of them earning small sums, have already had their first taste of safe and efficient financial transactions.

We chose the mobile money transfer business as our cover story this month because it is an example of how technology and entrepreneurship make a potent combination in providing access and driving growth. When it comes to dealing with large numbers and old backlogs, the solutions will have to be found in new efficiencies. Affordable housing, renewable energy, remote diagnostics are some of the other areas where much can be done by treating them as underserved markets. Only entrepreneurs are capable of the speed and inventiveness needed for seeking out volumes and bringing down costs so that the maximum number of people benefit in the shortest possible time.

What then should the government's role be? It should ensure honest and vigorous regulation. It should also draw the line for what should be treated as a market and what should be delivered to citizens as their right through good governance. Universal health care, education and supply of foodgrain should be areas where the government stays responsibly in charge because privatisation has led to growing disparities. The solution clearly is not in abdication or even public-private partnerships, but in a more creative use of the capacities in the country.

This issue of *Civil Society* also tracks the rather complex dialogue on the Lokpal Bill and the divisions it has created among activist groups. A law seems some distance away right now with many of the basic issues yet to be taken up let alone resolved. Another law which is proving to be tricky is the one on land acquisition and rehabilitation. The drafting of both laws show the need for better pre-legislative consultation, a point made in our cover story on the Lokpal last month. Many buy-ins are needed.

We caught up with Dr Binayak Sen in Delhi shortly after his release from jail. Dr Sen's contribution to public health is often overlooked in the midst of the controversy over the unsubstantiated treason charge levied against him. In his interview with us he speaks about health care in India and the challenge of raising the nutrition levels of almost half the country's population. His is a voice that needs to be heard.

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IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR



LETTERS



Lokpal Bill

Your story on the agitation over the Lokpal Bill gave us an inside view of the differences between civil society groups over this legislation. Your magazine is the only one to have given us this information. Thanks.

Shashi Kumar

You covered the Lokpal issue very well. It gave us the views of both sides – Arvind Kejriwal as well as the NCPRI. The two groups have dif-

ferent styles of drafting legislation. You gave us both perspectives without ostensibly passing judgment. This is not an easy task to do. Congatulations!

Anand Narayan

For the first time I came to know NGOs have serious differences between themselves. I always thought they spoke together on such issues. For the sake of the country both Arvind Kejriwal and Nikhil Dey should unite and draft the Lokpal Bill. Then we will get a strong bill and it will be passed by Parliament. Divisions in the sector will only embolden the corrupt.

Anand Sahai

Journalism

I enjoyed reading your interview with Sanjaya Baru. He expressed the views of many Indians. TV news needs to improve. Many times channels go on repeating shows they have telecast before. Sometimes an old interview is replayed. They treat the consumer with utmost contempt. The Indian middle-class is not that dumb.

Amita Jacob

I agree with Sanjaya Baru that com-

petition has not improved the quality of programmes telecast. The problem is that rich people invest in the media to either promote their political or commercial interests. They don't start TV channels to practice good journalism. There is no idealism involved.

Mani P

Drought-proofing

The story about the Nagara family sharing its knowledge about drought-proofing with other farmers was very inspiring. Thanks for profiling this selfless man.

Soumya

No doubt this is an inspiring story. We have many enlightened farmers in India but their work is not highlighted. Today the image of the farmer among the middle-class is one of an impoverished man. A lot of it has to do with policies.

Prabha Hegde

New university

The Azim Premji University has set out to do a great job. Our education system needs a flow of information. Most institutes are diverting students from Hindi or regional lan-

guages to English medium whereas the approach mentioned by the Azim Premji University should be the real one.

Harvendra Singh

The university should do well. But they should not restrict themselves to admitting people from small towns and villages. Everyone should be welcomed to join.

Paramjit

It is a new age idea and it will benefit India. Soon other countries will want to copy it. There is a scarcity of change-leaders round the world.

Jillian

Organic café

Brownie is an awesome concept. It is a new way of making people take to organic products. Vishal, all the best in your endeavour!

Mayank Kumar

We should have many more organic cafes and restaurants in India. It will encourage our farmers to adopt better methods of agriculture, use less chemicals and earn more money for their produce.

Bharati Sinha

INTERVIEW Large sections of our population face famine,

'37 per cent Indian adults are under-nourished'

Civil Society News
New Delhi

Dr Binayak Sen has recently been in the news for charges of sedition under an archaic law. But it is really his long-standing work as a physician and a champion of linking health care to social and economic justice that should be the focus of national attention.

Dr Sen and his wife, Ilina, have spent a lifetime working among the tribal people of Chhattisgarh. From the Shaheed Hospital, which is run by mine workers, to the training of community health attendants, the Sens have shown that a public health system in a predominantly poor country must remain focused on innovations at the bottom.

Better health for the majority depends on access to medical facilities, food and natural resources like water. The true test of India's growth model is to provide such access to rich and poor alike. At present, disparities are huge and delivery mechanisms serve very few.

Dr Sen has been asked to advise the Planning Commission on nutrition based on his experience in tribal areas. The Ashas, village-level health workers, under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) are in fact modelled on the Mitandin programme which Dr Sen implemented in Chhattisgarh.

Dr Sen became vice-president of the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) in 2002 and his work led him to investigate deaths in police custody, Maoist violence and fake encounters and the atrocities of Salwa Judum, the militia raised by the state government to fight Naxalites, pitting people against people.

Dr Sen is resolutely in favour of only peaceful means of protest. He opposes the use of violence by the Maoists. He is equally opposed to violence by the State and has been critical of Salwa Judum. However, his activism resulted in the Chhattisgarh government arresting him on charges of sedition and accusing him of being a supporter of the Maoists.

It has taken a sustained campaign by civil rights groups to bring to light the hollowness of the case filed against Dr Sen. On 15 April Dr Sen was granted bail by the Supreme Court after being sentenced to life imprisonment by a Chhattisgarh trial court. The Supreme Court said that the evidence on record does not establish a case of sedi-

tion against Dr Sen.

Edited excerpts from an interview taken in Delhi as Dr Sen, just out of jail, prepared to spend some time with his wife and two daughters.

We have a National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in India, but it does not seem to have made much of a difference.

I haven't studied the NRHM but I can tell you about nutrition. Half the world's malnourished children live in India. More than 45 per cent of Indian children under five are malnourished by weight.

Among adults, the National Nutrition

'We are now in a unique phase of India's history where dispossession of the poor and handing over their resources to the rich is a legitimate way to secure national economic growth.'

Monitoring Bureau tells us that 37 per cent of the adult Indian population has a body mass index (BMI) of below 18.5, which is representative of chronic under-nutrition. This 37 per cent is not spread evenly across the country. So, if we disaggregate the data, we find that 50 per cent of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 60 per cent of Scheduled Tribes (STs) have a BMI which is below 18.5.

Such indicators tell us that large sections of the population are suffering from chronic under-nourishment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), any community in which 40 per cent of its population has a BMI below 18.5 is experiencing famine. Going by this criterion, large sections of our population are walking with famine on their side. This is the situation we face.

It's getting worse because per capita grain consumption, according to Utsa Patnaik (the economist) has declined since at the top end of the scale the consumption of grain has been increasing both directly and indirectly in the form of flesh. So the actual decline in the consumption of the poor is

greater than what has been revealed by figures.

It is our experience that poor communities are able to survive because of their access to common property resources like land, water and forests. But we are now in a unique phase of India's history where dispossession of the poor and handing over their resources to the rich is a legitimate way to secure national economic growth.

These processes have occurred in the last 500 years in other countries. We are now seeing them happen in India. But because we cannot go colonise other countries like the European nations did, the Indian propertied classes are targeting their own people and the State is standing guarantor to this process.

The title of our investigation into Salwa Judum in 2005 was: *'When a State Makes War on its Own People'*. Operation Greenhunt is just that – the State making war on its own people.

But the Union government does appear to be worried. Efforts are on to strengthen the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), add workers to the anganwadi, etc. Won't all these initiatives make a difference?

The proof of the pudding, almost literally, is in the eating. If malnutrition figures are going to remain the same or get worse, then we have to question the strategy the State is adopting. The levels of malnutrition that we see are actually compromising the ability of these populations to combat a host of diseases including infectious diseases like malaria and tuberculosis. One of the most important things we need to do to tackle malaria and TB and other infectious diseases is to actually increase the immunological status of the population with nutrition.

What would you say is the solution in the next five years?

First of all there is no such solution you can implement in the next five years. Secondly, we have to confront the issues of inequity, injustice and war. We have to ensure that those situations are reversed. As human rights workers we are against violence and we are committed to peaceful solutions. Whatever measures we take will not leave the propertied classes unaffected. The distribution of resources in the country has to change. The Supreme Court has said we cannot have a nation where there are two categories of people. It is something we need to pay serious attention to.

says Dr Binayak Sen

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Dr Binayak Sen

If you want to know what to do immediately, well, the right to food campaign has been asking for a universal Public Distribution System (PDS). That would be a good thing to do. Certain useful changes have been made in the PDS in some parts of the country. Also, you need to extend the PDS so that the actual nutritional status of people becomes more secure. The amount of food being distributed, which is 35 kg of grain, does not meet the requirements of a poor family of five. What is happening is that the BPL population has to make up the deficit by buying grain at exorbitant rates from the market.

Amongst malnourished children the biggest problem we face is low birth weight. From the time the baby is born he/she is already suffering from a

deficit. Are you going to make up that deficit or prevent it? That means the nutrition of our mothers has to improve. It cannot happen with 100 iron tablets during pregnancy. Mothers need enough food of quality to ensure macro-micro nutrient deficits are targeted. It is only then that we will have healthy mothers and healthy babies being born. The Scandinavian experience shows once you have healthy babies of 2.5 kg the child is already on the path to good health.

The NRHM has now created a large network of Ashas in villages. Won't they make a difference?

Actually this concept of Ashas came from the Mitadin programme which means 'woman's

friend.' We had been working on training and deploying health workers. Other NGOs too had been working on this concept. Both Ilina and I were part of a group set up by the Ajit Jogi government after the formation of the state of Chhattisgarh along with senior government officials who formulated the Mitadin programme. We implemented this programme in two blocks under the BJP administration as well.

We believe it is very important, especially in areas where the population is scattered, to have early access to trained health providers who will be able to respond to the health needs of the people in villages and urban communities.

But at the same time the Mitadin programme does not do away with the need to have qualified accessible well-equipped rural healthcare facilities that will be able to respond to the needs of the people as and when required. In particular we have been very concerned about births taking place in institutions. In Chhattisgarh and elsewhere we have seen that institutional facilities are even more primitive than what is available to the woman in her own home. At least the cycle of infection does not exist there. But in these institutional facilities there is no equipment to ensure an aseptic environment and infection can be easily transmitted.

Some of my bitterest experiences have been with such institutional facilities. In Chhattisgarh we did a census under structural enhancement of health care facilities available to the people.

The state has about 25 million people and 16 districts. We were looking at finding public sector healthcare facilities which were equipped to handle emergencies in childbirth. We took the caesarian section as an index and tried to find out how many government hospitals had the capability to do a caesarian section. There were just three!

There were private facilities. But Chhattisgarh is a state where large sections of the population don't have the wherewithal to go to a private hospital. We are trying to implement systems by which these problems will be met. I am also heartened by the declaration that the government is going to try and spend three per cent of GDP instead of one per cent on health. But what we find is that in many cases governments don't have the wherewithal to absorb the funds.

How much is it really a question of money? Groups like yours, the Rural Surgeons Network, the Shaheed Hospital, have shown its not just about money. What are we missing here?

The Jan Swasthya Sahyog in Bilaspur is another group which has done good work. We need empowered communities to initiate processes and carry out effective social audits. These have been part of the NRHM. The Jan Swasthya Abhiyan had done audits in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in which our group had participated. One important piece of work they did was to institutionalise social audits in healthcare but it is at a preliminary stage. We really need to have empowered communities that can perform social audits which can then feed back into the system and improve healthcare facilities.

Water, peace, power, health, education are the issues

Syed Basharat
Srinagar

THE ongoing Panchayat elections in Jammu and Kashmir have witnessed popular participation on a large scale and delivered some unusual results so far.

The candidates include a software engineer-turned-actor, a law graduate, an IT expert, a right to information (RTI) activist, a graduate in forestry, a former militant, a singer, retired government officers and housewives.

Kashmir's three-tier election in 16 phases has nine phases remaining. The elections began on 13 April and will conclude on 30 June. According to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), B R Sharma, more than five million voters in 143 blocks will choose 4,130 Sarpanchs and 29,719 Panchs across Jammu and Kashmir.

The enthusiastic participation of people indicates that Kashmiris want to put an end to unabated corruption, unemployment and underdevelopment.

WUSAN'S PRIDE: One election result which made headlines was of Asha Devi's. A Kashmiri Pandit, Asha Devi, was voted as Panch by the predominantly Muslim residents of Wusan village which is en route to the famous health resort of Gulmarg in Baramulla district. Asha Devi is popularly known as 'Mummy' in her Muslim neighbourhood.

Asha Devi works as a peon in a school. She is the mother of two children and she originally hails from Doda – the home town of Union Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad. In 1984 she married Radha Krishan in Wusan. She says she has never ever felt like an outsider.

"In fact, relations between our two communities are so strong that we never felt the need to migrate from the Valley," she told *Civil Society*. People from her village and adjoining areas flocked to her house to greet her on her victory. Wusan village, which had 10 Kashmiri Pandit families before their mass migration, now has only five Pandit families.

"Our Muslim brethren assured us that we would be as secure as they are and they would tackle any problem coming our way," she said.

Did the militants threaten her? "I am a firm believer in destiny," replies the spirited Asha Devi. "Life and death are in the hands of God and a person dies only once. If I die for truth and I am on the right path, I have no regrets," she replies.

Kashmir's new



Asha Devi, newly elected Panch of Wusan, with members of her village



Ruby Bashir



Ghulam Mohammad Mir

Asha Devi says she was never inclined to politics but local leaders egged her on. "A lot of people asked me to contest. Initially, I was a little nervous but I decided to contest after more support poured in," she says.

Out of 98 votes polled in her constituency, Asha Devi got 54 while her opponent, Sarwah Begum, got 43. One vote was rejected.

"We have lived like a family all these years in this village and I have never felt different from the other families. The people have reposed trust in me. Now it is my turn to serve them," she added.

Her neighbours are jubilant. "We supported her because we felt she can serve the area better.

We will continue to support her efforts to serve the people," says Halima who campaigned for Asha Devi.

Abdul Hamid Wani, Numberdar (village head) of Wusan, believes that electing Asha Devi was a conscious decision of the village as they wanted to send a message to the entire world that the people of Kashmir want the Pandits to return to their homes in the Valley. "We wanted to tell them that we miss you. Without you Kashmir ceases to be the centre of pluralism and age-old communal harmony," says Wani.

Asha Devi's neighbours helped her get her job

regularized in the education department. "I work as a peon in a government school. My monthly wages are ₹70. And I have been working in this school for the last 27 years," she says.

Ghulam Mohammad, a former political activist and Asha Devi's neighbour, takes a more cynical view. He says people are aware that Asha Devi will find it difficult to make a difference because corruption runs very deep in the system.

"She is a very poor lady," says Ghulam Mohammed. "The government has so far not given her son a job in the police though he is from a non-migrant Pandit family. So, what can she do for us? But we still love her and we don't expect anything from her."

Asha Devi has an agenda all the same. "First, I want to provide some relief to a few families of Wusan who have disabled children. Then I want to improve education facilities, provide safe drinking water and ensure round-the-clock power supply. We also need better roads."

Was she worried about impediments? "If the government does not empower us, then there is no fun in being elected to this post. Rather, we will feel humiliated. I think the government should support us in our honest and sincere efforts for the development of this state."

And Asha Devi's message to her own Pandit community is: "We want all Pandits to return to Kashmir...not to the camps or colonies set up by the government but to the places which they called home."

MODEL TEACHER: Every day Ruby Bashir wakes up

village leaders



Raja Parvez Mir, software engineer-turned-model, is Sarpanch of Lachipora

early and prepares for her class. The difference between Ruby and other teachers is that she works hard to educate the people of her village without taking any compensation.

A full-time volunteer, Ruby has done a Bachelor's in Science from a college in Budgam, a central Kashmir district. She also did a one-year special course in computers. She got married to a bank employee, Bashir Ahmad Dar, in Badipora Chadoora in Budgam immediately after she finished her computer course.

Ruby says she was motivated by her neighbours to fight the panchayat elections. She got 120 votes out of 150. She never thought she would join politics, she says. She was nervous and hesitant when she was asked by her people including her in-laws to contest.

"My immediate priorities would be better roads and fencing for my village which is in a flood-prone area. I have other work which I will try to complete in due course," says Ruby.

She says she will try never to be cowed down by political elites who have always neglected the people who elect them. "I will try to fight all forces who try to downplay our panchayat recommendations," she says. Asked if more women should overcome social taboos and join politics, Ruby says that she would like the women of the entire country to change with the changing world. "I want women to be really empowered. Otherwise, we will continue to be dominated by the male world," she believes.

LACHIPORA'S HERO: On 21 April, villages along the Line of Control in North Kashmir were abuzz with

the news that Raja Parvez Ali Mir had been elected Sarpanch of Lachipora in Baramulla district, a two-hour drive from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

Mir is a 27-year-old software engineer-turned-model who left Mumbai's film industry to contest the panchayat polls as an independent candidate. This political novice aspires to give a new look to his village. Mir talks of building roads, providing safe drinking water, education, health and hygiene.

Returning after 10 years in Mumbai to his village surrounded by steep hills, Mir says he wants to serve his community which comprises Gujjar and Pahari peasants and labourers who rear livestock.

"I want to bring some change to my entire community," he says. "My priority will be to end corruption, provide basic amenities and improve employment opportunities," Mir said in an interview to *Civil Society*. Son of a police sub-inspector, Mir has a degree in software engineering from a college in

'If the government does not empower us, then there is no fun in being elected to this post. I think it should support us in our honest and sincere efforts for the development of this state.'

Maharashtra. He completed his schooling at the Modern Public School in Srinagar. In Mumbai, after completing his degree, he turned to modelling.

He has appeared in commercials for sauna belts, suitings and shirts. In 2003, he got a break when he was selected for the role of Amit in Ekta Kapoor's "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi". Later, Balaji Telefilms production offered him a role as Prem's friend in "Kasauti Zindagi Ki" and a negative character, Sameer, in "K Street Pali Hill." In Rajshri Productions' "Woh Rehne Waali Mehton Ki," he played a character named Prem.

But at home he faced stiff opposition from his father who, says Mir, felt that public life was a waste of time. However, Mir had made up his mind. "The post of Sarpanch is the least corrupted position where you must strike a chord with people you represent," he says.

Mir, who braved a boycott call by separatists and militants to contest the polls, believes that false promises won't yield anything. "I believe in pragmatism. I never promise what I can't fulfill. I have never promised my people that I will turn them into models. No. I want to provide my village better roads, good schools, health institutions and some employment," he says.

Elected by 542 out of 1,100 voters, Mir says different political parties can act as barriers. "I hope I can achieve almost everything on my agenda. To do that I have decided to support whichever party is in power because that is how I can deliver results to my people."

DOHAMA'S TECHIE: Ghulam Mohammad Mir, 36, is an Information Technology (IT) graduate who studied in Shimla. The people of Dohama, a village in district Kupwara, have elected him as Sarpanch.

He got 287 out of 740 votes. "This is the only way I can work for my people at ground level. My agenda is to make my village a model for education, health care and roads. I also want to do something for the unemployed youth here," says Mir.

Mir has worked in Meltron, a multinational company. He believes that if he works hard nothing will stand in his way. "One can achieve everything provided one is serious and sincere," he says. "I could have earned ₹60,000 a month working for any company in India. Here, as Sarpanch, I will earn nothing but I will bring some change to my village. My wife, who is a teacher and a big support for me, will run our family and I will look after my people," Mir says.

REPORA'S ACTIVIST: Shahnawaz Sultan, 28, is a founder-member of the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Information Movement. He has a small travel business. He was elected as Sarpanch by his village, Repora Namthal in Chadoora district, Budgam, Central Kashmir.

Sultan, an RTI activist, is a trustee of an educational trust running a school for orphans in Chadoora. "I have found that people at the grass-roots don't have big dreams and ambitions," he says. "What they need is a simple ration card without hassles, roads, safe drinking water, electricity and fair distribution of rations. I have day-to-day development programmes in my agenda. From now onwards, I have pledged to my people that I won't allow anybody to do any development work in a fishy manner. All such works will be done in an open and transparent way."

MKSS renews itself at Bhim mela

Bharat Dogra
Bhim

ALL people's organisations need at least a day in the year when their members and friends can get together to reflect, plan, gossip, celebrate, sing and dance. This is especially true for the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) since their members are scattered all over in remote villages.

For the MKSS this annual get-together coincides with Workers' Day which is celebrated on 1 May. Its friends all over the country know that this is the best time to catch up with all leading MKSS activists in one place.



Shankar Singh with MKSS activists at the mela

A special feature of this famous Mazdoor Kisan Mela is that serious work and 'mela' activities proceed side by side. So even as people are enjoying their lemonade for ₹2 or a plate of jalebis for ₹5, the District Collector is explaining how ward panches could contribute to the better implementation of the government's rural employment guarantee scheme.

This annual bash is held every year in Bhim, a conveniently located kasba in the MKSS work area of central Rajasthan. Here, peasants and workers join hands with students and interns to turn the dull, flat landscape into a lively, vibrant mela site. The main shamiana is surrounded by stalls where low-cost books, T-shirts, kurtas, crafts and toys are sold along with a variety of mouth watering snacks. Occasionally a cow or a bullock manages to sneak into the proceedings.

What is remarkable about the Mazdoor

Kisan Mela is that serious issues like those of the Lokpal Bill, minimum wages and unions of MGNREGA workers are discussed in the setting of a mela. The assembled people feel free to go to a foodstall, or meet friends, or concentrate on what is being said from the podium.

Yet the audience is attentive and disciplined. This is apparent from their reaction. When an important issue is being discussed, the audience responds immediately.

One important issue discussed at this year's mela was about the mobilisation needed to continue the struggle for obtaining the legal minimum wage of ₹135 for NREGA workers in Rajasthan as well as sort-

ing out other problems faced by these workers. The assembled people raised their hands in large numbers to assert that they will collect foodgrains in their villages to support this struggle and they will join rallies and *dharnas* to fight for these issues.

The need to obtain legal recognition for unions of MGNREGA workers was emphasised. Several groups of workers marched to the stage to introduce themselves as members of MGNREGA unions from various areas. But their unions have not yet been registered by the government. So getting these unions registered will be an important step forward in the near future.

It was also interesting to see how the complex issue of the Lokpal Bill was discussed in a way that the debate could be taken up at a much wider level at the grassroots. And in the midst of all this there were songs, slogans, puppets and folk theatre.

Big Lokpal



Arvind Kejriwal addressing the crowd at Jantar Mantar

Civil Society News
New Delhi

DISCUSSIONS between the government and activists on drafting a proposed Lokpal Bill are as yet in their early stages. Several contentious issues are still to be taken up and it seems unlikely that the 30 June deadline set for a final draft will be met.

A draft Jan Lokpal Bill prepared by activists of the India Against Corruption campaign, during which Anna Hazare went on a fast at Jantar Mantar, envisages a Lokpal with a bench of 10 members at the Centre and Lokayuktas in the states.

But what the powers of this anti-corruption machinery should be and how it should function remain to be debated. As we go to press, several questions have not found answers. Should the Lokpal cover the judiciary? Will it look into all kinds of grievances or limit itself to big-ticket corruption? Can the CBI be merged with the Lokpal to give it strong and independent investigation capabilities?

In the meantime, the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) met on 19 May and decided to continue with its own deliberations on drafting a Lokpal Bill.

Original work on the Bill began in the NCPRI, which includes Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Harsh Mander, Shekhar Singh and others. They didn't

issues remain, but talks on

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join the demonstrations at Jantar Mantar and they are not part of the discussions between five activists appointed by Hazare and five ministers representing the government.

The NCPRI has been of the view that the Bill needs wide consultations and careful drafting. It has now decided to write to Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who is chairman of the drafting committee, to know what has been done to ensure broader consultation.

Some progress: On the positive side, there has been complete agreement between the government and Hazare's representatives on providing the Lokpal with full financial, functional and administrative autonomy. This would include the power to investigate.

It has also been agreed to do away with the "single directive principle" under which permission from the government is needed before launching an investigation against an officer. This has been a long-standing demand because such permission is not easily received and as a result investigations don't proceed.

Doing away with the "single directive" is a significant step forward. It will allow the Lokpal to act swiftly and without constraint. Explaining the importance of this, Arvind Kejriwal, one of the members of the drafting committee and a prime mover of the India Against Corruption campaign,

says that seeking permission for prosecution from the department where corruption had been unearthed is fraught with problems.

Kejriwal cites an example from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). "An officer of the NHAI was caught red-handed with unaccounted cash by the CBI, but an FIR could not be filed against him because permission wasn't given to act against the officer," he says.

It has also been accepted that the Prime Minister will come under the Lokpal. "The government perhaps wants some exemptions in the larger public interest and we are open to discussing them," Kejriwal said.

Judiciary and grievances: But dealing with the judiciary and grievances is more complex. Civil society members in the committee want all grievances – which could mean a held-up passport or ration card – should come under the Lokpal. Those who don't agree say this could bring the functioning of the ombudsman to a standstill.

Kejriwal points out that the Lokpal will be supported by an administrative machinery which will include an elaborate investigation arm. There will also be the Lokayuktas in the states. "It won't be as though there will be one person in an office dealing with all these complaints," Kejriwal explains.

But empowerment of the Lokpal envisaged by the activists involves big changes. The CBI is to be

merged with the Lokpal and its strength of 1,000 officers could handle more cases than they do at present.

Kejriwal also speaks of each government department having a citizens' charter with essential functions and stipulated time limits spelt out. There will be a grievance officer to receive complaints. If no action is taken within a reasonable time, the head of the department can be held accountable and a complaint filed with the Lokpal or Lokayukta.

Kejriwal argues that once the system gets going, it will find its own equilibrium. With initial action, complaints will go down. Worried heads of department will ensure that people under them will deliver and so on.

But it remains to be seen what the Union government's response will be to these proposals. Equally important will be the buy-in of the state governments. A law, even if drafted by the committee now discussing it, may never get passed because of the enormous complexities involved.

The committee hasn't also looked closely at the question of bringing judges under the Lokpal. The matter was raised, with Chidambaram pointing out that at least two former Chief Justices with impeccable credentials for honesty had opposed it for several practical reasons.

Getting the judiciary on board is likely to be challenging, even though a good many judges themselves believe there is a need for greater accountability and corruption in the courts has to be stopped. They aren't convinced that the Lokpal is the answer.

Divisions in civil society: The Lokpal agitation at Jantar Mantar in Delhi had the impact of dividing activists. Many felt that the agitation had been taken over by communal elements. There was also discomfort with the arbitrary choice of five people by Anna Hazare to represent all of civil society. Statements that the draft of the Lokpal Bill was not negotiable were regarded as unrealistic.

Initial discussions on a Lokpal Bill had begun in the NCPRI and the National Advisory Council (NAC) and there were differences. The decision to take to the streets was seen as an attempt to "hijack" the drafting of the law and establish "ownership" over it.

Kejriwal denies this. He says that the process did begin in the NCPRI, but it went too slow. The NCPRI and NAC only became active when Anna Hazare threatened his fast. But by then the India Against Corruption campaign over the Commonwealth Games scams had gathered momentum.

Kejriwal insists that he and others with him would like the NCPRI to be involved because it has an important contribution to make. "I have the highest respect for Aruna Roy. What I know about democracy I have learnt from her."

He concedes that important points were raised during the discussions in the NCPRI and the NAC working group and these deserve to be discussed in greater detail.

'What matters is the cause'

Medha Patkar talks about corruption and Lokpal Bill

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Medha Patkar

Civil Society News
New Delhi

THE demand for a strong Lokpal Bill made by the India Against Corruption campaign has been supported by Medha Patkar and the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) despite certain differences over the process of consultation, the presence of communal elements in the campaign and Anna Hazare's praise for Narendra Modi.

In an interview to *Civil Society*, Medha Patkar explained that there was an urgent need to sink differences at this point and focus on tackling corruption. A strong bill was needed though passing it would take time and its implementation would not be easy.

She also said that corruption had assumed many forms and a much wider effort was required to cleanse governance. There was legalized corruption in the transfer of assets such as land from the poor to the rich in the name of development. The Lokpal was not an answer to such corruption, she said.

Is the NAPM fully backing the India Against Corruption campaign?

Yes, because we have been dealing with corrup-

'In villages too people have different political affiliations. But they say they leave their chappals outside and then come in.'

tion at different levels. We have seen corruption in the public distribution system, disbursal of rural employment wages and even in getting a copy of the electoral rolls. There has also been corruption in real estate, examples being the Adarsh case and Lavasa.

In development planning there is corruption of a different kind. The loot of natural resources involves misuse and misappropriation of an important indispensable capital of the people and the nation. Invaluable resources are being pocketed or transferred against the constitutional framework of equity and justice by the agencies of the state and its allies, the large companies. So, obviously the campaign against corruption is our campaign also and we are supporting it.

Are you saying that corruption impacts the poor the most?

Yes. There is a new category of corruption which is legitimized corruption, when the law itself legitimizes misappropriation. We have to fight such corruption at ground level and not only through the Lokpal or Lokayukta. Take the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act. That cannot be detected as corruption or punished by any agency. This is political corruption. It is a form of legalized corruption which the Lokpal may not be able to uncover since by law it is permitted.

The campaign against corruption has been accused of having the participation of communal elements. What is NAPM's stand on this?

We have made it very clear that communal elements, either in the framework of issues or strategies or action, will be opposed by us. If anybody takes up communal issues we will oppose it. We feel that the campaign should also make its position on other issues, apart from corruption, very clear.

Have you asked the campaign to make its position clear?

Now that the campaign has become national we will discuss what is the next step. But I don't think anybody can call Anna Hazare, Arvind Kejriwal or Prashant Bhushan communal. In the Gujarat riots case, Swami Agnivesh has intervened.

Even people close to the campaign have raised questions but then every campaign does face this. The Narmada movement also faced such questions. People across party lines have supported the movement. Even in villages people have different political affiliations. But they would say they leave their chappals outside and then come in.

Now should we say a person who supports us but is the member of a party which is not with us on any of our issues should not be in the movement? It is not so easy.

This is a dilemma which all movements face and it is challenging. But that also helps the movement to grow and widen its base. It can make people leave. But one should not be afraid of that if one's agenda is a wider transformation.

Many people asked us, why is the Narmada movement going the NAPM way? I said if you are talking about water, food, land etc, you have to talk about disparities and discrimination and natural resources, you cannot talk only of rehabilitation. If you talk about social and environment issues, you cannot ignore justice and financial issues.

Has the Lokpal bill been discussed by NAPM and its partners?

Actually clause by clause we have not discussed the bill. Anna's fast came up suddenly. A strong

bill with a minimum of the highlights was acceptable. It is time for everyone to give suggestions. Everyone would like to have the best law. Follow-up is also important for which unity, integrity and solidarity are important. There need not be consensus on the first draft. But they are using technology to get in as many opinions as they can.

You are saying consultation is important. The experience of mass movements is important. The law needs to reach the last man, it should go to the grassroots. So should the Lokpal bill just be a middle-class domain? The bill has been widely circulated, in the media also. It needs to be in regional languages. The right to information bill went on for a long time. It was well done. Aruna and Nikhil were very concerned it should follow democratic processes. Such processes need to be followed as much as possible.

In the case of corruption there was also a tempo which needed to be caught with these scams and scandals. I think that is what has happened. In case there is no sufficient ground for consensus among the committee members or the committee members and others outside the committee who are supportive, the deadline can always be extended.

What if there is a consensus between the government and the committee but not between the committee and other activists? What happens then?

The campaign will have to take care of that and that is why all of us must be cautious in going through the bill. Many people have not read the bill. They did not know that the Lokpal consists of a committee of 10 members or the importance of the Whistleblowers Bill. Every law requires wide public debate. So I would urge the government/ drafting committee to circulate the bill in regional languages as much as possible. There is not enough national debate. Rethinking the processes of law-making is very important.

The Lokpal bill was already being discussed in the National Advisory Council (NAC) and the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI). Should that process have been allowed to reach its logical conclusion? Was there a need for such a campaign?

I think everyone should sit together. We cannot afford divisions. The country is facing a challenging situation. Most important is the content of the legislation and that should not be sidetracked. If there is firing the whole focus shifts to human rights violations and the main cause of the movement gets neglected. We have to sometimes take hard decisions.

Should the Lokpal bill be placed before the NAC?

The drafting committee has its own role to play – limited but crucial. But the NAC can go much beyond all that and we expect that because we know the composition of the NAC is very rich, richer than the earlier NAC. I think NAC can bring in the civil society perspective. It is not as though its members aren't independent. They all have their integrity and backgrounds. We have full faith in them. Aruna resigned over the issue of Narmada from the NAC last time and we are grateful for that. Jean Dreze resigned over the right to food bill.

Representative democracy must be more of direct democracy – gram sabhas etc. But even in movements decisions have to be made by a core. The drafting committee can have a forum which can hold larger consultations. Ultimately what matters is the cause.

Children assess schools and anganwadis

Sugandha Pathak
New Delhi

ABOUT a year ago, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan had launched the third phase of their '9-is-mine' campaign to assess how money was being spent on primary schools and anganwadis run by the government in rural areas. Around 20,000 children had been mobilized to go out and prepare report cards on such infrastructure in 16 states. A year later in May, children presented their findings in New Delhi.

"Under the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) six per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was allocated to education and three per cent to health. Right now about 1.5 per cent is being spent on education. But where is the money going? According to our evaluation, infrastructure is available in most places but it is of poor quality," says Sai Kishore, a Class 10, student from Andhra Pradesh.

Infrastructure created under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for 3677 schools and facilities for 3810 anganwadis covered under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) were gauged.

Only 18.16 per cent of schools surveyed qualified as good. Although 91 per cent of schools have permanent buildings, only 28 per cent were of good quality. Around 77 per cent of schools had facilities for drinking water but in actual fact water was drinkable only in 13.83 per cent. Although 62 per cent of schools had separate toilets for girls, only 13.33 per cent were in a workable condition. Inclusiveness fared the poorest. Although 51 per cent of schools had ramps for the differently abled, just 8.33 per cent were in good shape.

Children also noticed class and caste discrimination in schools. Raja Subramaniam, a Class 10 student from Chandigarh felt that the implementation of the Right to Education Act (RTE) a year ago has not made much difference in far-flung schools.

Still, the data reveals Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Assam do better in terms of school infrastructure than other states.

The state of anganwadis, it was found, was worse than that of schools. Only 10 per cent

were working according to norms laid down under the ICDS. Although 71 per cent of anganwadis had educational and playing materials, only 10.85 per cent was of good quality. Manipur scored in this respect. Drinking water is a major concern. Just 12 per cent of anganwadis had clean drinking water. Although 80 per cent of anganwadis had weighing machines only 17 per cent were in good condition. Just 13 per cent had adequate food storage facilities.

Pinky, a student of Class 12 from Uttarakhand who evaluated schools and anganwadis in Jharkhand says most angan-

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wadis were in a deplorable state, many even operating without a building.

"A few teachers have opened anganwadis in their homes. I noticed that most teachers were not interested in the children and were finishing their household chores. Even the food which is allotted for the children was being distributed among their relatives. There were hardly any toys and educational material. Very few anganwadis had a separate storage area," she says.

Schools in Jharkhand either had no toilets or the toilets were broken and filthy. She said girls were dropping out for this reason.

Over 200 students showed their score cards to Shantha Sinha, Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). She assured them quick measures would be taken.

The '9-is-mine' campaign is part of the Children's Voices Against Poverty programme which lobbies for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. It has been initiated by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan with the Institute of Human Rights Education, World Vision India, National Coalition for Education and People's Action for Rural Awakening.

Trust is focus of CSR meet

Civil Society News
New Delhi

Is transparency the key to responsible corporate behaviour for sustainable and inclusive development? A summit with global participation planned by the Birla Institute of Management and Technology (BIMTECH) on 8 and 9 July in Delhi will seek to address this important question.

The summit will be the third held by BIMTECH in its effort to inject greater social content into its own management course and to see how corporations are facing up to the challenge of remaining relevant to the concerns of consumers and citizens.

According to Dr. H. Chaturvedi, Director, BIMTECH, "There is an alarming decline in the level of society's trust in civic institutions and corporations. The world has acquired a new lens of seeing corporate behaviour in the wake of WikiLeaks, right to information and public scrutiny in general. Continually unfolding global scandals and the financial and the economic crisis over the past few years have caused society to assign a completely new priority to the issue of transparency, credibility in business activity and responsible business behaviour."

Under Dr Chaturvedi, BIMTECH has vigorously reached out to civil society groups and government in an attempt to build bridges and understand better the concerns of stakeholders and the shape of future markets. As a management institute, this approach helps BIMTECH students go into the corporate world with a different perspective of what is relevant and contemporary.

But through the medium of the summit, BIMTECH hopes to have a greater external impact. "We expect to generate ideas, stimulate discussion on how all of us can join hands, and put in place the necessary measure, systems, self-regulatory codes of conduct to uphold the principles of trust, transparency, ethics and integrity," says Dr Chaturvedi.

The objectives of the summit are to discuss the implications of the broadened concept of CSR and transparency, bring forth exemplary and inspiring examples of CSR and transparency practices, present stakeholders' experience and perspectives of their engagement and evaluation of responsible corporate practices and generate enthusiasm towards fair trade principles and practices.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is partnering BIMTECH for the summit. GRI has vast global experience in encouraging companies to be sustainable and, more importantly, build transparency into reporting their performance.

Simon Longstaff, Director, GRI Board and Executive Director, St. James Ethics Centre, Australia, will deliver the keynote address. Other speakers will include Arup Roy Chowdhury, Chairman and MD of NTPC, R.N. Mukhija, president operations L&T and Dr. Rajendra Sisodia, Co-Founder of Conscious Capitalism Institute.

New law tricky as Acquisition, rehabilitation remain contentious issues

Civil Society News
New Delhi

EVEN as political parties rushed to Greater Noida to express solidarity with farmers whose land was acquired by the Uttar Pradesh government, legislation which would prevent such tragic outcomes continues to be in limbo.

The UPA government wants to move a law to replace the archaic Land Acquisition Act of 1894. In the past it had drafted two separate bills – one on land acquisition and the other on rehabilitation and resettlement.

But these two Bills have been found inadequate in several quarters. The Trinamool Congress has opposed it and so have activists. Industry too is unhappy.

Land is acquired for national projects. But villages lack electricity, water, roads though they give up their land for such facilities. Development should first take care of local needs.

Two other drafts are now in the making: one by a working group in the National Advisory Council (NAC) and the other by the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM).

The NAC has fast tracked its work on preparing a Bill. It appears to favour one comprehensive Bill on land acquisition and rehabilitation. It also seems to be in favour of private industry acquiring the entire land needed for projects on its own.

The NAPM has also been asking for one comprehensive Bill. It has emphasised that land acquisition cannot be delinked from rehabilitation and resettlement.

The NAPM argues that it is not only a question of taking over land and paying higher compensation to farmers. Acquisitions affect entire communities which include agricultural labourers, artisans, small traders, fisherfolk, forest people and so they too must be identified as project-affected persons and resettled.

The NAPM also opposes the provision in the government's draft Bills that industry directly acquire 70 per cent of the land and the government the remaining 30 per cent. The NAPM says that the government should remain the guarantor of farmers' interests. The NAPM will submit its own draft of the law to the NAC.

Interestingly, industry too sees the government abdicating responsibility by asking farmers to deal directly with industry. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has argued that establishing titles and identifying land which can be used for projects is the government's domain. The CII has called for proper zoning so that land meant for industry is clearly identified and agricultural land and the livelihoods which are associated with it are not disturbed. It also wants the government to step in where small pockets of resistance hold up entire acquisitions.

The UPA's partner, the Trinamool Congress, also has problems with the government's two Bills and wants fresh discussion on them. Land acquisition has been one of the major issues in the West Bengal election in which the Trinamool recently came to power.

All these initiatives are under way and there is no consensus on what shape the proposed law should finally take. In such circumstances, it seems unlikely that the two Bills introduced by the government will be passed in the monsoon session of Parliament in their present state.

There is however consensus that the archaic Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and the principle of 'eminent domain' under which the State acquires land for 'public purpose' requires to be changed. Peoples' movements have several significant differences with the government.

The definition of what is 'public purpose' continues to be a sore point. "So far all land acquired is for national projects," says Ashok Choudhary of the National Forum for Forest Workers and Forest People (NFFWFP). "How do you reconcile local development with national development?" Villages lack electricity, water, roads though they give up their land for such facilities for the nation. Development should first take care of local needs.

So the NAPM feels 'public purpose' should be defined as infrastructure projects for local economic and social development. These would include facilities for education, health, transport, housing, livelihood for villages and disadvantaged communities. All such projects should be owned by the state and be in conformity with

land fights grow



current land use patterns.

The 70:30 clause mooted in the government's draft is being bitterly opposed. The government's draft says if a private company acquires 70 per cent of the land but is having a problem acquiring the remainder 30 per cent the government can step in and acquire this land for them. The NAPM argument is that companies which acquire land by merely paying compensation to farmers will not rehabilitate the others in the village who get displaced like agricultural workers, landless labour, artisans and so on.

Also, NAPM wants to know if the government will rehabilitate people on the 30 per cent of land it acquires for the companies if their number is below 400 families in the plains and 200 in the

hills as laid down in the government's Bills?

The NAPM draft points out that even where forests or even wasteland is not inhabited, people could be dependent on it. Taking such land over for projects should keep in mind the interests of people who may not be living on it but are its users. And 'public purpose' would need to be determined before such land use changes are approved.

There is still a lot of discussion on whether a separate Bill is required for urban resettlement. In every city, slum-dwellers are being evicted on a large scale without any rehab whatsoever. But here again defining 'public purpose' would be very contentious. It would pit the middle-class against the poor.

Recognising voluntarism

Civil Society News

New Delhi

APPLICATIONS are being invited for the Apeejay India Volunteer Awards, (AIVA) 2011, by the Apeejay Surrendra Group. The corporate is partnering iVolunteer, an NGO and International Business Leaders Forum, (IBLF), to recognise volunteering talent at the individual, corporate and NGO level in India.

The awards were launched at an event held in New Delhi. There is a Volunteer of the Year award and a Youth Volunteer of the Year award for young people below 25 years of age. Also included is an Employee Volunteering Programme of the Year award for companies and an award for Volunteer involving NGO of the Year.

"We realise that there are a lot of people who do a great deal of good work and they don't do it just for recognition. By recognising them we might just encourage thousands of Indians to volunteer," says Renu Kakkar, vice-president, Corporate Communications and Technology, Apeejay Surrendra Group.

At the event there was a panel discussion on the future of volunteering. Those who took part included Anshu Gupta, founder-director of Goonj, Indira Dasgupta, executive director, Peoples Institute for Development and Training, Joe Phelan, country director, IBLF-India, and Rahul Nainwal, director, iVolunteer.

The panel discussed what was driving voluntarism in India, what motivated volunteers, opportunities for volunteering and the significance of the upcoming awards.

The increase in volunteering was attributed to greater exposure, options such as 'gap years', technology, mobility and interest by major companies who felt it built team spirit.

SAMITA'S WORLD

by SAMITA RATHOR



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAKSHMAN ANAND



Nandkishore with his students

Night school is guru

Sugandha Pathak
New Delhi

SUPPORTING a maroon shirt which says 'INA market coolie,' 24-year-old Ramnath carries hefty crates of vegetables and fruits around this busy bazaar in south Delhi. You can spot eight-year-old Sonu delivering cups of tea and then collecting the empty containers. The cruel sun doesn't seem to bother them or the other 60 to 70 boys working as labour or assistants in shops in the INA market. When the boys are tired they rest under an old *peepal* tree at the back of the market, waiting for another exhausting day to end so that they can enter the exciting world of books.

Ritinjali, an NGO working in the field of education and community development for marginalized sections, started a night school here in 2005. The school caters to boys and young men. They work during the day in and around the INA market and then attend Ritinjali's night classes at Navyug School, opposite the INA market, from 9 pm to 10.30 pm every night.

"They are not like regular school-going kids. They don't have any parental pressure, or anybody to look after them, question them, or tell them what is right and wrong. So to keep motivating them to attend class everyday is a task," says Nandkishore, teacher and friend to his students. He says the boys get so tired working 12 hours a day without a single day off that after work they only want to eat something and sleep so that they can wake up early next morning.

"It takes a whole lot of love, affection and moti-

vation to entice them to study after a hard day at work," he says. In a room of 30 to 40 students – the rest have gone to their villages for the summer – many are shy to talk. But the moment they are asked, 'what do you want to be?' the reply is quick and unanimous – 'I want to be a good and successful man.'

According to Nandkishore, the students are improving every day. Many of the boys never went to school. Some ran away from school. But they are now attending classes because they see the difference it is making to their lives.

"I was in a school before but then I left due to certain reasons. Since the past seven years I have been working in a printing press. Initially I couldn't read anything even though I did attend school earlier. Now if my boss hands me an address to deliver something I can very well manage to read



it. It's easier to deposit or withdraw cash from the bank too. And my boss now gives me more responsibilities," says 17-year-old Raju Singh with a shy smile.

Many of the boys and young men in this night school are from the Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh. Some ran away from home and some left for better prospects. Like 20-year-old Harish who ran away. An energetic and happy-go-lucky boy, he aspires to start his own business. For the time being he is a coolie and simultaneously works as a parking assistant in the market. "I know how to drive a car; I want to change my job and become a driver and then later start my own business in my village. For all that, I need to study," states Harish with dreamy eyes. Ramnath, who never attended school before, can now write and read a bill, do simple math and use a calculator without any help.

"I have to do a lot of number crunching," he explains. "How many vegetable and fruit crates were supplied, sold etc. Initially I could not

figure out if the amount of money I was getting was right. Now I can calculate it myself."

According to Nandkishore, most students who joined when the night school started continue to attend class. A few who couldn't juggle work with studies dropped out. "Even the ones who don't manage to come regularly want to study every day but their shift timings are usually stretched. Whenever they get time they make sure they attend class. These boys come and tell me that they enjoy studying but the work is so much that they do not get any time," says Nandkishore.

The night school culture in Delhi is very limited given the fact that a huge number of migrant workers flood the city every day. Even the few NGOs working for children's education come up with capsule educational programmes, organizing night schools for a couple of months at the most. "The major problem is to get a teacher or a volunteer who can at least give one and a half hours of his/her time at night. Also, as an NGO we can't pay any salaries. If this problem is tackled we would really like to open night schools for older women and girls," explains Divya Sharma, Projects Head, Ritinjali.

In contrast, Mumbai another city with a huge number of migrant workers, boasts of over 50 night schools. "The plus point with Mumbai is that it has a night life, the roads are not deserted early, people can be seen everywhere. So it is safe for women teachers and volunteers to travel at night. But in Delhi we can't appoint a lady teacher for a night school. We have a curriculum. Space is also allotted by the government. But there is a huge paucity of teachers ready to take classes at night," explains Sharma.

Whatever the reasons for the acute shortage of night schools, the boys in INA market have the opportunity to get an education. The little time they spend at this night school, they become kids again, joke around, laugh and learn, just like the way it should be.

Smiles that tell a thousand tales!

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

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

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



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



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



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

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



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



Tata Motors' Sustainability Programme. Striving for Sustainable Change.

Water empowers women

Bharat Dogra & Reena Mehta
New Delhi

ON 24 April, 1993, the Union government passed the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment under which one-third of the seats in panchayats and municipalities were reserved for women. The Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) celebrates this day as Women's Political Empowerment Day every year.

This time over 500 women panchayat representatives from 22 states participated making it a truly national event. The theme this year was, 'Panchayats, Women and Safe Drinking Water'. "Women and children are the worst sufferers of the lack of safe drinking water," said Dr. George Mathew, Chairman, ISS.

Patrice Coeur-Bizot, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, said the UN system is committed to strengthening women's participation in governance. As India has the largest number of grassroots women representatives in the world, there is considerable room for cooperation especially in providing safe drinking water in rural areas.

"We believe women like you make the world more just and equitable," said Anne Stenhammer, Regional Programme Director, UNWOMEN, to the women elected representatives. "The challenges women face everyday like fetching drinking water can be best tackled by panchayats. The issue is not just what women can do for panchayats but also what panchayats can do for women." Assuring them of solidarity, she told the women representatives that they were not alone in their struggle.

Aslak Brun, Minister-Counsellor, Royal Norwegian Embassy, said in the last 100 years Norway has changed itself from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to being one of the richest. He attributed this turnaround to the par-



Agatha Sangma giving the award to Rukmani Devi, Sarpanch of Vijayapura

ticipation of women in Norway's political and social systems. He remarked that how women representatives implement development schemes will be critical for India's future.

Lourdes Baptista, Chief Executive, WaterAid India, said that in 2009 the Ministry of Rural Development came out with guidelines which transferred the responsibility of providing safe drinking water to panchayats. Within panchayats women have an important role to play. "We need to build on this empowerment so that women can contribute significantly to meeting this most critical need of our villages," he said.

Every year the ISS also honours some outstanding women panchayat leaders to encourage them. This year one of these two awards went to Rukmani Devi Salvi, Sarpanch of Vijayapura Panchayat, Rajsamand district, Rajasthan. Rukmani has done outstanding work in establishing transparent systems in her panchayat and implementing important schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Junpo Jugli, Chairperson, Zilla Parishad, Changland, Arunachal Pradesh, was honoured for

initiating a range of development works and mobilizing villagers against atrocities.

Agatha Sangma, Union Minister of State for Rural Development, conferred the awards. "We must encourage women to act as change agents," said Sangma. She highlighted the need to include socially and economically marginalized women in villages in water and sanitation committees. She said that women in many states have formed 'pani samitis' under the Swajaldhara scheme.

Manju Joshi of Cechoedecon, said that recently the Rajasthan government has started a Water Security Plan under which water samitis are formed with 15 members from the

community. The samiti is responsible for resource mapping. There is also a promising rainwater harvesting scheme for drinking water and sanitation.

Joy Elamon of Solution Exchange, UNDP, said that in one project experts like him got excited about the prospect of producing micro-electricity but women in the village clearly said that their priority is drinking water and they won't allow any diversion of their water source. In another project in Narora, there was enough water but the poorest people couldn't access it. Drawing on all these experiences he concluded that the challenges in water were of availability, access, quality, sustainability, equity, ownership, misuse and capacity.

Sadhana Gupta, a grassroots leader from Chitrakoot in Uttar Pradesh, talked about a village in which five percent of agricultural land is kept aside for water conservation. She also spoke about the work of ABSSS, a voluntary organization, which has tapped natural springs on hilly terrain to create low cost drinking water sources.

Sarita Balooni from Jagori highlighted how water scarcity has worsened for slum dwellers in Delhi who were banished to Bhawana and Bhalsawa on the fringes of the city.

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Saheli sanjivanis raise slogans for the girl child with villagers

Sahelis for the girl child

Bharat Dogra
Kanpur

A campaign against female foeticide is underway in and around Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh (UP). Led by Shramik Bharti, a voluntary group working with the weaker sections since 25 years, the campaign has been named Sulakshmi.

"If we do not come forward to save the girl child, the survival of the world will be threatened. The story of life will end. It is as simple as that," explains Renu, a volunteer from Hurdauli village in Kanpur Nagar district.

Renu is called a 'saheli sanjivani' the uplifting name given to dozens of women who have volunteered. At first, Shramik Bharti named its campaign, Community Action for Survival of Girl Child, and then renamed it Sulakshmi in the 30 villages of Vidhnu block where it has been implemented, since this name was more familiar to local people.

The saheli sanjivanis of Ramaipur village are an enthusiastic group. Nearly all of them are from economically weaker families. But they carry out their responsibilities without expecting any cash benefits. On the day of our interaction, they had cheerfully waited to speak to me although this was the harvesting season and they were extremely busy with their farming work.

These volunteers are drawn from self-help groups (SHGs) initiated by Shramik Bharti over the years. Small, regular savings and the ability to borrow in times of need have given these women

a minimal support system and increased their confidence, encouraging them to take up bigger responsibilities. Several of these women have been selected as ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and have performed very well.

The campaign against female foeticide has benefited a lot from the strength of the SHGs. It became relatively easier to create village forums and to select saheli sanjivanis as volunteers due to the SHGs. The volunteers were thoroughly trained so that they became aware of the various implications of female foeticide. Men, women, adolescent girls – all were mobilised for this campaign.

Special care was taken to involve panchayat representatives, ANMs, midwives other health personnel and registered medical practitioners (RMPs). Basic information was collected about ultrasound machines in the area and where people generally go for tests.

Information collected by the campaign revealed that the practice of female foeticide had spread to the peripheral villages of Kanpur. Here regulation is minimal and it is possible to access medical and test facilities available in Kanpur. Despite the ban on sex-determination tests it was revealed that several families were undergoing them. There was family pressure on women to go in for testing especially if women already had one or more daughters. They sometimes used their contacts with midwives and RMPs to approach ultrasound units.

At these test centres, sometimes code words

were used to convey the sex of the unborn baby. For example 'Devi ka Vardaan' would mean a girl child while 'Shankar Ka Vardaan' implied a male child. Some volunteers alleged that sometimes even when a male child was indicated by tests, these units misinformed and said it was a girl child so that they could immediately get the opportunity to perform an abortion and earn about ₹3,000.

The sahelis urged midwives and RMPs to break their connection with sex-determination clinics. Village-level meetings were called. More and more people were converted into realizing that female foeticide is a crime and is ethically very wrong. If this practice continues it will lead to very serious social problems.

Street theatre and community radio helped greatly in taking this message to the people. Wider issues concerning maternal health, family planning and domestic violence were linked to it.

As Sadhna Ghosh, Shramik Bharti's project coordinator for Sulakshmi says: "The fact that we had been working on issues related to women's health and welfare for a long time certainly helped. Without the foundation we had created with our previous work on women's welfare and health, it would not have been possible to successfully take up the issue of female foeticide in these rural communities."

Within a short period many rural women who became sahelis took up this work with a deep sense of commitment and enthusiasm proving that if a vigorous effort is made, the battle against female foeticide can be won.



PRAHITA SONI
Dungarpur, Rajasthan

Better skills for better opportunities

Prahita Soni hoped to be self-reliant someday, a hope left unfulfilled when she was married at age 15. Today however, she has battled the odds and is a successful Client Servicing Representative for a leading satellite TV provider. A course in Computer Fundamentals and Applications offered by Aide et Action, an NGO partnering with Microsoft's Project Jyoti, helped her bridge the gap.

The opportunity to learn new skills enabled Prahita to explore various prospects in areas of her interest. Moreover, the new-found self-reliance has empowered her to manage work and studies together. The first person in her family to complete 10th grade, she is now inspired to go many steps further to graduation. After work, she is found in her father's tea shop, studying late into the night to make this dream come true.

The result – Improved skills and wider opportunities for a sustainable livelihood and economic independence too.

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Increase knowledge of basic computer applications and soft skills

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INSTANT MONEY

MORE MIGRANTS TRANSFER CASH TO VILLAGES BY MOBILE

GAUTAM SINGH



Money is transferred effortlessly via mobile through PCOs.

Aarti Gupta
New Delhi

JAGANNATH Jha does brisk business at his *dhaba* in one of the crowded bylanes of Lakshmi Nagar in East Delhi. Innumerable chartered accountancy students living away from home in the neighborhood turn to him for their meals. After paying a rent of ₹11,000 and the wages of his seven employees, Jha needs to send money to his family in a village in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar.

Transferring money used to be a headache. But now he does it in a jiffy. He merely takes the cash he wants to send to the Tata PCO adjoining his *dhaba* and sends the money instantaneously to his family using the Green Money Transfer Scheme of PayMate, a mobile commerce company.

The system works like this: The PCO triggers a call to Jha's mobile and he enters his pin number. He then gets a transaction code which he conveys to his family in Muzaffarpur.

PayMate launched the Green Money Transfer a year ago in collaboration with Corporation Bank and Tata Teleservices.

Jha's 68-year-old mother, wife and three children in the village no longer

have to wait for days for relatives and friends to turn up from Delhi or the local postman to show up with a money order.

Instead, they go to the local Tata PCO, confirm their identity by furnishing the transaction code sent to them by Jha from his cellphone and collect the money.

Probir Roy, co-founder of PayMate, says his company addresses the "survival need" of migrant workers to send money home in a cost-effective and secure manner.

Domestic remittances are potentially a huge market. People like Jha account for a whopping ₹60,000 crore a year sent from city to village. There are other estimates which are larger. According to the UNDP's Human Development Report of 2009, migrants contribute 10 per cent of India's GDP or ₹130,000 crore.

At present a mere fraction of this gets transferred through telecom. It is unclear what shape the market might take or what migration might be like in the future. But the opportunity is massive. Service-providers, telecom companies, banks and banking correspondents are all converging to make the best of it through seamless and instantaneous transfers.

Transaction costs would fall yet further in the next stage if money were to

GAUTAM SINGH



Awadh Raj Jaiswal and D. Verghese show their FINO cards outside their shops in Dharavi, Mumbai

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Jagannath Jha outside his dhaba in east Delhi

move from mobile to mobile instead of cash being handed over. Jha in that case would transfer the money directly to the mobiles of his family members who would then use their mobiles to make payments to others.

Indian companies like PayMate have been inspired by the success of M-Pesa in Kenya. M is for 'mobile', and 'Pesa' for 'money' in Kiswahili – the two together have proved to be effective where conventional transactions through the banking system have fallen short.

Vijay Kumar Kamat, 33, is all excited talking about how the SBI EKO mini savings account operable through his cellphone has helped him remit money in real time to his parents and extended family in his village in the Madhubani district of Bihar. He works as a cook in a household in Bharat Nagar in the vicinity of the Escorts Heart Institute in Delhi.

Kamat can now make small deposits in his mini savings account. With his cellphone, he can know his balance and transfer money as easily as he makes chapattis. "I opened an account the very next day after the service was launched," he says. Now he can send as much as ₹10,000 for as little as ₹25 – the company charges a flat fee per transaction. The courier service that he used earlier would have charged ₹500 (five per cent) for that transfer.

The mobile remittance business is also spawning new jobs and opportunities

in cities. Retailer Shiv Narayan Goel, who was earlier selling only airtime for cellular companies and mobile recharges at his shop in Bharat Nagar, has now decided to switch almost completely to EKO's banking business on behalf of SBI.

In the hour that we were at his shop, people kept coming in to transfer, deposit and withdraw money. Divya Devu, 23, was only one of several nurses from the Escort's Heart Institute who came to the EKO outlet to send money to her family living in Kollam in Kerala.

BOTTOM TO TOP: The mobile remittance opportunity spiral, being hailed as the present-day game-changer, goes all the way up to the top.

When 4B Capital, a Colorado-based social fund, was looking to invest in long-term sus-

Domestic remittances are potentially a huge market. Migrants account for a whopping ₹60,000 crore a year sent from city to village. There are other estimates which are larger.

tainable business ventures late last year, it chose to debut with the EKO Financial Services, which was set up by Abhishek Sinha with around ₹2 crore donated by family and friends. The small Delhi-based company was building low-cost financial services infrastructure with the 'un-banked' as its prime target audience and had been around for a mere two years.

The reason for 4B's decision to go with EKO was its sharply accelerating business on the back of remittances and money transfers. The start-up has done ₹750 crore worth of transactions since launch; daily transactions average around ₹10 crore, of which ₹3 lakh worth of transfers happen via the 130,000-odd customers

EKO sourced as a banking correspondent for SBI. It also acts as a banking correspondent for ICICI bank.

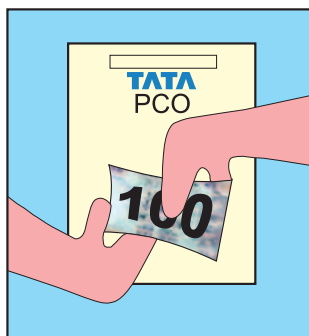
Mumbai-based FINO (Financial Information Network and Operation Ltd) reinforces the perception that transfer of money from urban to rural via mobile banking is a business which can only grow bigger.

Within months of launching FINO-Tatkal in mid-2009, the company was processing up to 3,000 remittances a day. The number currently has gone up to 5,000 transactions valued at ₹3 crore a day. When it was launched the service specifically targeted migrants living in the slums of Mumbai – Dharavi, Ghatkopar and Shivajinagar.

Avadhraj Jaiswal, 30, from Pahsana village in Jaunpur district of Uttar Pradesh, is a typical customer. He has been making photo frames in Dharavi for more than 10 years now. It wasn't until two years ago when he started using the FINO service that he realized the money he sends could reach his mother in a few hours as opposed to the several days that a money order used to take earlier. Now also helps his friends in Dharavi to send money to their families.

The Green Money Transfer Scheme, launched a few months after FINO-Tatkal, has seen 10,000-odd customers sign up for the service to send money to their hometowns. Half of these are *dabbawalas*, known for delivering

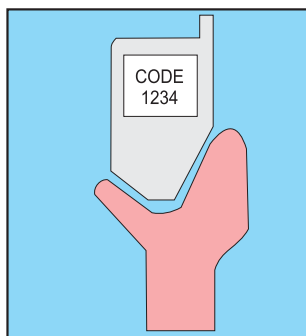
HOW IT WORKS



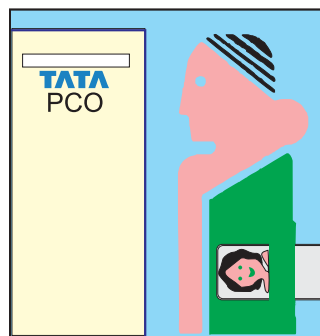
The sender goes to a Green Tata PCO with cash to be transferred.



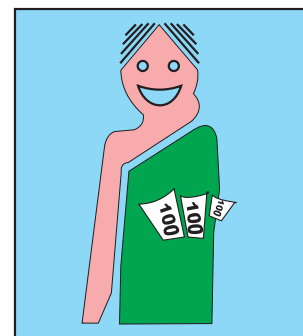
The Tata PCO triggers an IVR call to the sender and the sender enters his mPIN to authorise the transaction.



The sender receives a transaction code on his mobile to be conveyed to the recipient.



The recipient goes to the nearest registered Tata PCO and shares the transaction code.



Once the verification is done the cash is handed over to recipient.

200,000 tiffins a day to office-goers in Mumbai, earning around ₹5,000 a month, most of which needs to be sent to families in villages around Pune. But much more is in the offing. "A number of tie-ups with corporate clients and rural retail chains are in the works," says Nadeem Siddiqui, PayMate head for retail and distribution in northern India, "so the incremental addition to business is going to be rapid in the coming months."

MARKET BOOM: "That there is a launch by a new player every third day," says Ashish Ahuja, product head at FINO, "goes to show that domestic remittances are the flavor of the season." His reference is to some of the biggies in the banking and telecom space announcing plans or actually launching such services recently – Axis Bank along with Idea, Airtel and SBI, UBI and Nokia, Vodafone and ICICI.

Such tie-ups show that the mobile banking network is becoming the preferred medium for transfer of money from urban to rural. Banks and post-offices cannot tackle the huge opportunity that domestic remittances provide. Anand Raman, EKO chief marketing officer, agrees. "It is a demand-driven market where there is virtually no supply. Remittances are the big driver."

Anand Shrivastav, who is chairman of Beam, is unequivocal: "The opportunity is so humongous that no single institution is geared up for this kind of business. So it will have to be a collaborative model."

Mobile commerce has been gaining ground at the grassroots and as a means of financial inclusion ever since the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued detailed mobile banking guidelines in September 2008. Subsequently, the move to allow banks to appoint grocery shops, PCOs and authorized functionaries of self-help groups and even telecom operators as banking correspondents has helped expand the banking eco-system further.

A look at some numbers helps provide perspective. There are 200 million bank accounts but considering the much bigger number of cellphone users, the potential for m-commerce companies is as large as 400 million (mobile users without a bank account). There are others who peg the potential much higher at 600 million, considering how even those with bank accounts in rural areas don't get to use them either due to distance, or the KYC (Know Your Customer) norms, or the mere fact that they get intimidated by the 'all-too-official' ambience.

ROAD TO FINANCIAL INCLUSION: "Financial inclusion is a buzzword today but the fact of the matter is that it will have to be triggered by remittances," says PayMate's Roy. Remittance of money is the first need of the masses.

This is the natural course of evolution, he explains, citing how in Kenya the initial burst of inclusion happened through money transfer and e-payment of goods and services when Safaricom launched M-Pesa as a marketing tool to get the 'un-banked' to subscribe to their service. The first mobile money transfer system of its kind proved successful beyond all expectations and M-Pesa today has 13 million users. Now that M-Pesa has got ingrained, M-Kesho has come, bringing services like bank credit, deposit, savings and overdraft riding on the success of the former.

India is at the first step of the ladder of benefits right now, both because there is limited wherewithal for remittance and there is a compelling case for urban-rural linkage with only around 20 per cent urbanization in the country, as in Kenya.

India Post transfers over ₹9,000 crore per annum through money orders. It is still the only mode of money transfer for most places in India and takes any-

GAUTAM SINGH



Ashish Ahuja of FINO

'Financial inclusion is a buzzword, today but it will have to be triggered by remittances, which are the first need of the masses.'

GAUTAM SINGH



Probir Roy of PayMate

thing from a week to 10 days. But there is only one post-office for every four villages in the country. The result is that a staggering two-thirds of the target population remits money through informal channels.

So how large and untapped is the opportunity? With a migrant population estimated as high as 10 per cent or over 100 million, of which 30 million are floating workers, there are varying estimates. However, with remittances averaging ₹20,000 per person per year, ₹60,000 crore is taken to be the most widely accepted figure. All mobile value added services (VAS) in the country on last



count toted up only around ₹12,000 crore!

According to UNDP, migrants contribute 10 per cent of India's GDP. This implies a total market of ₹130,000 crore of domestic remittances. The Centre for Microfinance has put out a report which says that if all the money that is currently routed through informal couriers were to be done via bank transfers at the regular three per cent charge, migrants would save nearly ₹1,000 crore.

Beam's Shrivastav in fact goes so far as to mark the entire retail market to be the size of the mobile remittance opportunity – ₹400,000 crore. That's perhaps exaggerated. Nonetheless there is merit in his argument that "it is all about relevance to the customer." Echoing PayMate's Roy, he says it's not a bank account that an individual from the hinterland really needs, but a mechanism to enable him to pay for goods and services.

REMITTANCE CORRIDORS: The real potential for money transfer has to be from urban to rural. This explains why companies are targeting a handful of 'remittances corridors.' These are key urban cities where employment is luring workers to migrate from deep inside rural India. PayMate's Roy identifies a handful of distinct corridors: Mumbai-Maharashtra, Mumbai-Karnataka, Mumbai-Kerala, Karnataka-Kerala, Delhi-East UP-Jharkhand, Delhi-East UP-Bihar, Mumbai-UP-Bihar, Orissa-Gujarat, Rajasthan-Gujarat. In addition, there are the emerging corridors from the north-east to Delhi and to south India. EKO, for instance, has zeroed in on the Delhi-NCR- Bihar- Jharkhand corridor.

Mobile money companies also hope to be a part of government schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) and social security pension.

Over 75 districts are covered under MNREGA and distribution of funds via biometric cards approximates ₹1,500 crore as of now. Mobile money transfers would provide a substantial saving in cost and also plug leakages.

The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), another government health insurance scheme launched in 2008 for low-income workers has tied up with



Divya Devu, a nurse, is from Kerala



Sohan Kumar, a peon, sends money to Darbhanga in Bihar



Sanjay Kumar, from Gonda district in UP, has been using SBI Eko



Vijay Kumar Kamat, a cook in Delhi, sends money home to Madhubani

hospitals for treatment options. Every beneficiary family is issued a biometric smart card and empanelled hospitals are IT-enabled and connected to a server at district level. Of the 23 million families covered thus far, roughly half have been enrolled by FINO in about 130 districts, says Ahuja. That's the kind of potential players can dip into.

PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE: According to a report, while the government incurs a transaction cost of ₹12 to ₹13 for every ₹100 it shells out, mobile banking helps it reduce the cost to a mere ₹2. Compare this with the still higher transaction costs through conventional channels – a physical bank withdrawal costs as much as ₹60 to ₹70 per transaction while that through an ATM is about ₹15.

All these small efforts are luring bigger players. In January this year, Bharti Airtel and the State Bank of India, the largest in their respective domains, announced a joint venture that will invest ₹100 crore to offer mobile payments and cash-in, cash-out remittances across India. Bharti Chairman Sunil Mittal said at the time of the launch that 55 per cent of the operator's prepaid base is un-banked and it is this segment that they would strive to serve.

There were two launches in March alone. Axis Bank and Idea Cellular formally launched Idea MyCash offering banking and money transfer on mobile. However, the service is a pilot between Dharavi in Mumbai and Allahabad in UP. Nokia and Union Bank of India have launched 'Union Bank Money'. Nokia stores will act as banking correspondents to offer services such as cash withdrawal and money transfer. Nokia handsets will come bundled with the application. Existing users can download the application. The service will first be available in the national capital region and then be rolled out elsewhere..

Nokia is also working with Yes Bank on a pilot in Pune using California-based Obopay's technology for money transfer through mobile. In January, ICICI Bank, India's largest private sector bank, and Vodafone also announced a tie-up for mobile banking services.

Business

- Enterprise
- Inclusion
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Kokum's quiet success

Shree Padre
Kasargod

KOKUM, a round wild red berry, is spawning a cluster of micro and home-based enterprises along the western coast of Maharashtra and Karnataka. These little businesses produce kokum juice, syrup, butter and dry rind. They are also inventing a range of products.

"The crop is a '*kalpavruksha*' since all its parts are useful," says Ajit Shirodkar, chairman of the Western Ghats Kokum Foundation, a voluntary organization started a decade ago. "If we promote kokum's pharmaceutical uses, it will become a good money earner just like the mango."

Shirodkar has another important point to make. "Kokum is not grown anywhere else in the world. This species is indigenous to India. So, whatever development we do, we will be the sole stake-holders."

Kokum's present status cannot be compared with mango, the king of fruit. It grows on a humble, neglected tree which farmers merely tolerate since it does not fetch them any great money. It is small, home-based businesses and micro-enterprises which see a future in kokum.

Planting a kokum orchard is very rare. Sometimes a farmer might plant it as a border crop in arecanut gardens or in a scattered manner on hills. But after that no farmer cares to irrigate it or apply manure. Like the undervalued jack-fruit, it is a zero-attention crop.

Since the crop is scattered, it is hard to come across figures of area and production. Maharashtra has 1,000 hectares under kokum cultivation which produce 4,500 tonnes of fruit, according to a baseline survey done in 2010.

"We have around 46,600 kokum trees," says the Chief Conservator of Forests. "In the South Konkan region alone, 1,674 tonnes of fruits are used for making dried rind. Syrup is produced from 757 tonnes. Another 40 tonnes goes into producing kokum butter."

"If we market kokum products outside their growing areas they will be an instant hit," says a senior agriculture department officer of Goa.

But the rest of India hardly knows what kokum is.

Anonymous and useful: Botanically known as *Garcinia indica*, kokum has many names – *birin-*



Sanjay Orpe, joint managing director of Hardikars with kokum products

da, murugalu and *punarpuli*. It is the maroon coloured cousin of *Garcinia gummigutta*, or *kudumpuli*, an essential ingredient in traditional Kerala fish curry. Kokum is regarded as a tree spice. It resembles mangosteen but since it is sour it can't be eaten fresh.

Where kokum scores is that it has far more uses than *kudampuli* and mangosteen. Sherbet made from its fresh or dried rind is very popular. Hundreds of small-scale units in the Konkan region comprising Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts produce concentrated syrup for local sale.

As a beverage, kokum has a good market. Many small towns like Puttur, Kumta, Sirsi, Ankola, sell ready-to-serve juice locally in poly packs. A small time kokum juice producer says, "Its sweet and sour taste has very high consumer acceptance."

Dry rind is another product which has local demand. One major advantage is that the fruit can be processed at home. About five to six kg of fresh rind is required to make one kg of dried

rind. Drying in the sun preserves the rinds for more than a year.

Concentrated syrup is also made from fresh rinds. At home, two methods are followed. In the first, sugar is mixed into the fresh rind and kept in the sun. Once the sap oozes out, it is concentrated using the heat of the sun for a few days. In the second method, the rinds are boiled after mixing with sugar. The first method, followed in many Uttara Kannada families, makes the syrup tastier.

The attractive red juice made from the syrup reduces *pitta dosha*. According to Ayurveda, kokum is also a *raktavardhaka* (blood increaser).

Ashoka Honey and Food Products in Kumta, Karnataka, has been producing kokum syrup, sol kadi concentrate and kokum extract for two decades. "Since the sherbet has a cooling effect on the body, it is used by many," says Ashoka Sharma, its proprietor. In summer, this company sells on an average 8,000 to 10,000 kg of syrup per month.

Apart from kokum syrup, kokum agal (a salty juice for making sol kadi), kokum amsul (dehydrated salted rind) are also produced by thousands of households and micro-enterprises. Amsul is used as a souring agent for vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes in the Konkan region and Goa. Like *kudampuli*, it is used mainly in fish curries.

Sol kadi, a Konkan speciality, is generally served last with rice as it aids digestion. It is also served as a beverage. "Many Ayurvedic doctors prescribe this for people with constipation," claims Ashoka Sharma. His company sells around 4,000 to 5,000 kg of sol kadi concentrate every month. "Unlike syrup, sol kadi has a market through the year," he says.

Hydroxy citric acid (HCA) is another food supplement that is industrially extracted from kokum rinds. It is being exported mainly to the US.

HCA is said to have anti-obesity and anti-cholesterol properties. Kokum rinds have 13 to 14 per cent HCA as compared to 18 to 20 per cent available in *garcinia gummigutta*. India exports about 600 to 700 tonnes of HCA every year.

Prakruti Products Pvt Ltd in Ankola, Karnataka, is one of the leading players which exports about 350 tonnes annually. Depending on the percentage of HCA, this product is priced between ₹400 to ₹1,000 a kg.

Kokum butter is another product extracted from the seeds of the fruit. It is used in ointments, suppositories, confectionery and as base material for body creams. It is also used for diarrhoea, burns and cracked heels. Shrikant P. Vaidya of Deepashree Products, Ratnagiri, is producing cocoa chocolates using kokum butter instead of cocoa butter. His chocolates taste as good.

Another interesting discovery is that food colour can be extracted from kokum. The Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore, has developed a spray-dry technology which separates the red anthocyanin pigments and can be used as a natural food colour.

Kokum colour can be a good alternative for artificial colours used in beverages, ice-creams, chocolates, cream biscuits and wine.

"If promoted this colour will have good export potential," says Chetan N. Nayak, who as a PhD Scholar carried out the colour extraction studies. "We can also see if the colour can be extracted after HCA is separated, thus making the best use

of the fruit."

Of late, some more innovative kokum products have been introduced in the market. Hardikar's Food Technologies Pvt Ltd in Pune has launched kokum sherbet concentrate in packs and a kokum carbonated drink.

Ready to use sol kadi in liquid and powder form are being produced with an eye on office-goers. "Our instant sherbet powder and syrup is finding acceptance among Indian consumers. We are able to sell in Hyderabad, Delhi and even in some African countries," says Sanjay Orpe, joint managing director of Hardikar's.

In February, kokum juice in tetra packs was introduced for the first time by Aparant Agro Foods of Pune. Named Konkan Kokum, it is also available in Nagpur, Mumbai, Aurangabad and

'Kokum is a health drink. It is anti-acidic and has antioxidants which help increase immunity. It has anti-obesity properties.'

Nasik.

"Kokum is a health drink," says Mukund M Bhave, managing director of Aparant. "It is anti-acidic and has antioxidants which help increase immunity. Devoid of any preservatives, it has anti-obesity properties. Our challenge lies in getting capable distributors."

On a small scale the product is being sold in Delhi, parts of Rajasthan, US, Singapore and Dubai. But since only interested groups have introduced the product in these areas, it can be termed merely as 'test marketing.'

The Western Ghats Kokum Foundation has been successful in creating awareness and catalyzing research on kokum. It has organized three national seminars on kokum, the latest in Goa in early May. "Ensuring better prices for the farmer is out primary objective," says Ajit Shirodkar.

Backend missing: Farmers however are not very interested in cultivating kokum. One problem is that kokum's fruiting season coincides with the onset of the monsoon and the fruit then begins to rot. The berry attracts worms and becomes use-

less. "About 40 to 70 per cent of fruits get ruined due to rain. In Konkan, this loss is huge," says Dr Parag Haldankar, head of the Department of Horticulture, Balasaheb Sawant Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth (BSKKV), Dapoli.

BSKKV, which has done considerable studies on kokum, has a big experimental orchard on its Dapoli campus. The university has experimented with pruning the tree to restrict its height. A shorter tree helps the farmer to harvest easily without losing yield.

The university has released two improved selections of kokum, Amruth Kokum and Kokum Hatis. "But grafting has its own problems," says Dr Parag Haldankar. "When orthotropic shoots (which face the sky) are used for grafting, the grafts attain the same mother-like tree shape and yield well. On the other hand if plagiotropic (facing the sides) shoot is grafted, the plant remains short and bushy. The productivity of the latter is very less."

Despite being touted as 'a fruit of tomorrow' the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has no mandate for research on kokum.

The second problem is the high cost of labour and the low returns on the fruit. Rauf Saab, a distinguished farmer from Karnataka, cut around 1,000 kokum trees which he had planted as an intercrop in his Banavasi coconut garden. "At ₹20 per kg of dry rind, I don't get back even the cost of labour for harvesting," he says in disgust.

Goan farmer Ashok Joshi from Valpoi had 25 trees that produced around three tonnes of fruits annually. But since dried rinds get him only ₹30 to ₹35 per kg, he harvests just the quantity they need for household use.

"It may be highly medicinal and very good for health. But when my other crops like cashew, coconut and vegetables fetch a very good price, why should I incur losses by harvesting kokum," he asks bluntly. Dry rinds should fetch around ₹70 to ₹100 per kg to make it viable for the farmer.

Shrihari Naik Kurade, 75, is one of those rare farmers who have planted 2,400 kokum trees in a phased manner. He provides manure and irrigates his orchard. Half his 400 plants have started yielding in fourth year. Yield in selected plants is very high. This raises the question why farmers have to opt for graft plants when selected seedlings can give very good yields.

For farmers, selling fresh fruits is a good option. But since kokum is highly perishable, marketing it quickly is difficult. Ajit Shirodkar says middlemen take advantage of the perishable nature of kokum just as in mango and jackfruit. Providing superior varieties or good farming practices won't remedy the situation.

He recommends that farmers be provided with simple, village-level technologies which will help them produce semi-finished products. "This strategy has started working for mango in Maharashtra now. Instead of selling fresh mangoes, farmers are earning two to three times more by producing and selling mango pulp."

The Spices Board, under the Union Ministry of Commerce, is the flagship organization for the development and worldwide promotion of Indian spices. As a tree spice, Kokum comes under its purview. The board has not done anything to help farmers. It is high time it wakes up from its deep sleep.



Fair trade becomes a brand

Sugandha Pathak
New Delhi

THE Fair Trade India brand was launched on 14 May to mark World Fair Trade Day. The Indha Shop at Sushant Towers in Sector 56 Gurgaon, together with five other shops in Kolkata, Bangalore and Ooty will be the first in an expanding chain to stock products with the new logo.

Fair Trade stands for sustainable and environmentally sound practices. It seeks to give dignity to small producers, helping them connect with markets and get higher prices for their products.

The Fair Trade India brand will bestow on shops the identity of being socially clean. Goods with the brand are produced by artisans and farmers who have been adequately compensated and not milked by middlemen. Consumers will now know that the money they pay is going back to people at the grassroots.

Ithya Mallikarjuna, executive director of Fair Trade Forum-India spoke to *Civil Society* on the new branding initiative and plans for expanding the market for Fair Trade products in India.

How extensive is the national network for fair trade?

Fair Trade Forum India (FTF-I) is a pan India network which is spread across 16 states with 86 NGOs and civil society groups. There are 100,000 grassroots producers, artisans and farmers involved in this movement. It is a global effort to provide a fair price and respectable income free from exploitation. Fair Trade India acts as a country office of World Fair Trade Organization in Asia.

How have you been creating awareness about this forum and the concept of fair trade?

The awareness about this forum is growing through the help of our NGO members. There are states, like in the northeast, which are rich in handicrafts and the awareness is increasing slowly there now. Other than that we have college outreach programmes in business schools, design schools and colleges where we organize workshops and live interactions between producers and students. There are capacity-building programmes where we directly interact with the producers.

What does it aim to do for small traders and producers?



Fair Trade signifies goods which are socially and environmentally clean



Ithya Mallikarjuna

'The logo signifies creating a brand, so in using the same brand on all the products the promotion of the products is uniform. For example there are over 40 retail chains in the country handled by our member NGOs. The logo will be India's first umbrella fair trade brand.'

The main aim is to find ways to link small groups with the market. These groups lack the resources to promote their products and directly reach customers. The fair trade movement gives them a better opportunity to compete and get more remunerative prices for their products.



What is the symbolism of the logo which was recently launched?

The logo signifies creating a brand, so in using the same brand on all the products the promotion of the products is uniformed. For example there are over 40 retail chains in the country handled by our member NGOs. The logo will be India's first umbrella fair trade brand. The branding has two phases. The first phase will involve bringing all the products under one umbrella brand and in the second phase we will go in for franchising. Another part of the branding effort will involve online retailing. We have plans of starting a fair trade helpline. So, apart from the exporting of these products we are now trying to expand the domestic market slowly.

Apart from creating awareness, how do you plan

to popularize this concept so that people opt for products under the fair trade logo?

First, by using the social media extensively and talking about our brand story, success stories, case studies and involving students and the youth, who constitute a huge group. Another plan is to promote

corporate gifting. It is a huge opportunity. Why can't the corporate houses be linked with these products? We regularly organize fair tourism initiatives where we provide the opportunity to interact directly with the producers and witness the making of handicrafts. In fact every year quite a few international students visit us for this purpose.

What are the hurdles to scaling up?

It is tough to suddenly meet a bulk order because the products are handmade and take time to produce. There are inherent challenges in the production of our kind of products. Secondly, there is isn't as yet here a policy environment for fair trade. If we want to broaden our scope we need to be supported through policy initiatives at various levels.

Insights

- Opinion
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Corporators have no power

V. RAVICHANDAR

GURGAON gets to first base through its 'virgin corporation' status with the municipal election this May. The rest of us 'elevated' souls across most Indian cities are in a 'bloody corporation' mode – a kind of been there, done that person, who feels considerably underwhelmed by the experience. Understandably there is a lot of first time excitement and accompanying jitters about what the election means for the future. One does not wish to spoil the movie like suspense at least till the end of this piece!

From a distance and with some helpful Internet surfing one gathers a few emerging themes around the elections. The active Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) plan to join the fray and are not surprisingly unable to work under a common banner for a common goal. This is the time middle-class voters feel they count and some professionals will stand as Independents. There is the disconnect between the 'villages' within the city and the gated enclaves. There is also worry that 'one of them' will end up ruling the place (as Mayor) given the voting blocs, the voter proportions, the voter spread and of course the mainstream political parties for whom this is another day at 'work.'

All this sound and fury actually counts for very little given the way our city governance is structured. We are all players within a deeply layered 'Inception' (yes, the movie) like matrix where the powers that be have managed to get us all excited about the inconsequential elements around a Corporation election while we have amnesia about the larger, relevant question, immortalized by the kid who asked, "but papa, the emperor is not wearing any clothes.'

Make no mistake, the power over a city lies with the State – be it funds, legislation or deciding on largesse, it is the State that calls the shots. Our cities are littered with mayors who do not matter. Going further, the scope for the average Corporator too is limited. In Mumbai, about three years ago there was a lot of excitement about Adolph D'Souza who became the Juhu Corporator, as the citizen's candidate backed by Bollywood activists. Not so surprisingly, one has not heard much about his exploits post that election.



Elections were held recently to the newly created Gurgaon Municipal Corporation

It is good to see RWAs active through their participation in the elections. But this needs to be seen in the context of the ward geographies. The reality of most of our city wards, any Corporator's territory, is a mix of rich, moderate and poor

neighbourhoods (make it villages in the case of Gurgaon) more so in the inner city. Pure electoral compulsions require a more inclusive outlook among RWAs and middle-class candidates if they hope to win. Inclusiveness is also necessary if our cities are ever to improve – it is only by ensuring the poor have a better quality of life (water, electricity, public transport, pedestrian walkways) allowing better livelihoods, that the middle-class and the rich stand to gain. But this needs a different mindset and will take time. A ward *yatra* by the more progressive candidates would be a good place to start. Many of us have no clue of how the poor cope and a walk around the ward will bring home some harsh realities.

One prefers to talk solutions. My contours of a dream outcome would be along the following

'Make no mistake, the power over a city lies with the State – be it funds, legislation or deciding on largesse, it is the State that calls the shots.'

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Indian trains are risky

MIHIR R. BHATT

THE miraculous saving of about 1100 passengers in what was headlined in newspapers as the 'Burning Train' incident is not happy news. While we can thank God for saving 150 human lives in the B7 coach of the Mumbai-Delhi-Rajdhani train, as Indian citizens we should be alarmed that the Indian Railways depends on miracles and not disaster preparedness to save the lives of its passengers. This is not to undermine the dedicated efforts of the railway staff on duty like Pawan Jain, the quick-thinking pantry in-charge, and others who arrived to provide tireless help. We can wholeheartedly join the passengers in their praise for the rescue efforts. But sadly, safety remains an individual initiative and rescue remains a heroic act.

By and large the attitude seems to be – buy your ticket, close your eyes and enjoy the thrill, be it fire, floods, cyclones or landslides! There is hardly any information in the public domain about the disaster preparedness of trains in India. While the measures taken to address the recommendations of the High Level Committee on Disaster Management by the then railway minister Nitish Kumar remain accessible on paper, that information has not reached the passengers.

Information on what to do in the event of a disaster is neither posted in trains nor at our railway stations. Checklists of safety procedures, maps of escape routes or emergency contact numbers for the railways are not in the public domain. As a result, the large numbers of passengers as well as the crowds that throng the railway stations remain highly vulnerable. At this rate, India can claim to run the world's largest and oldest network of unsafe trains between unsafe stations!



The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of the Government of India has made a series of hazard-specific guidelines for around 21 types of hazards – from droughts to urban floods. Yet, so far, no sector has been taken up for a detailed, third-party, performance scrutiny. Perhaps the reason is that our ministries and departments have not given due importance to the work of the NDMA. A Disaster Management Plan for the Indian Railways was worked out in detail in 2009 and it has been reviewed, at least once. But the review remains an internal process without the involvement of *Civil Society* as a third party. As a result, the technical and hardware issues get addressed but the software and the citizen perspectives remains neglected.

Next time you take a train, step into the station master's room to pay your respects and find out if he or she has a copy of the station's contingency plan. Ask if the plan was updated in the last six months, and if it was indeed used for any crisis, what parts of the plan worked and what did not work. After you have received this information,

level guidelines and passenger awareness posters so far.

The first respondents in any railway disaster are the on-duty staff and the passengers. Today, the railway staff has started receiving systematic training in how to handle emergency situations and conduct rescue efforts, but the passengers remain profoundly ignorant on safety and response procedures.

Institutions fail us in India. It is left to individuals to save us. When we build institutions at high cost in India, we can expect them to not only survey, research and plan, but it is also incumbent upon them to make sure that their plans are accessible, comprehensible and implementable by every citizen in our country. Decidedly, we need dedicated efforts to make our trains safer. This job must be done by our railways; and as passengers we must expect and demand safety information in local languages on trains and at railway stations.

Mihir R Bhatt is currently working on disaster preparedness after cyclone Aila in the Sunderbans delta.

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lines. For starters, the third tier of city government needs to be truly empowered. Easily said than done given that the second tier of State MLAs have to pass on the power – this will not happen unless we have an 'Anna Hazare' like variant demanding for more powers for the city. Once the City Corporation has the powers to determine the destiny of the city, a directly elected mayor seated at the head of the corporators would attract the best and brightest of our political class. We have romantic notions about a Ken Livingstone like London mayor or a Rudy Guillian like New York mayor but we forget that

these are posts that carry true heft. A directly elected mayor is certainly better than an MLA with less than five per cent vote share in the city calling the shots in respect of the city.

At the ward level, if we are to see scope for citizen participation post elections, you need to have citizens simultaneously vote for an area representative (arranged around each election booth) and a Corporator (for the ward) with a mandate for Corporators to be guided by the area reps on defined basis. And budgeting activities in a city needs to built-up area by area, ward by ward to the city wide level. This has been elegantly detailed by Ramesh and Swati Ramanathan of

Janaagraha but getting civil society to agree and demand a common set of reforms is energy draining and exhausting, a script that suits the powers that be as a continuation of their 'Inception' like hold on us.

To close, Corporation elections are certainly better than not having them. But unless the scaffolding issues of city governance are addressed and the appropriate plumbing done, there will be no meaningful flow of citizen oriented benefits on the ground. Sorry to disappoint you Gurgaon voters but 'kaafi picture baaki hai' and this is just the trailer.

V. Ravichandar, Chairman, Feedback Consulting, is figuring out how to break out of our 'Inception' like nightmare status in our cities.

Landfill is minefield for MCD

KANCHI KOHLI

LAKSHMAN ANAND

CITIES produce a lot of waste. All those tetra packs, tins, plastics, metal or electronic junk that is indiscriminately chucked into dustbins does go somewhere once it's out of your sight! One such common destination is the landfill site located in and around cities. Landfills are a mechanism to dispose of waste by burial. It is one of the oldest forms of waste treatment. But that does not mean landfills are benign even if the waste which is dumped is non-hazardous. To begin with, a landfill requires land which in its prior avatar was used very differently.

My story is about the creation of one such landfill site in the Bhatti Mines area of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi. It is not really a commentary on what ecological changes the setting up of such a site might bring about, although that is of crucial significance. My story is about the complete oversight of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) in following the rule of law.

In 2002, the MCD approached the Supreme Court to push its proposal of using part of the Bhatti Mines area as a sanitary landfill site. Since this area is located within the city's Ridge forest – an extension of the ecologically sensitive Aravalli Hill range – the MCD claimed it had followed due procedure by seeking mandatory approval from the Ridge Management Board (RMB) set up by the Supreme Court under the Delhi Government in 1996.

The MCD therefore petitioned that the Development Commissioner of Delhi and other authorities allot 477 acres in Bhatti mines Pit Nos 2, 6, 10 and 12 as a facility for processing garbage. The Supreme Court in 2010 transferred the case to the Delhi High Court stating that since this was a matter pertaining to Delhi city, the High Court was the appropriate forum for it.

But a few other statutory requirements which the MCD conveniently overlooked were brought to the notice of the Supreme Court through an intervention filed by Ravi Agarwal, acting on behalf of the NGO Forum for the NCR. This intervention application, also transferred to the High Court, had objected to the conversion of the Bhatti mines area into a landfill site. In an additional submission to the High Court, the NGO Forum raised several legal requirements that the MCD had not fulfilled, including clearance by the RMB. In fact, contrary to MCD's submission, the RMB had rejected its proposal.

Does the MCD need to seek an environment clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for setting up such a landfill site? This procedure would require the MCD to commission an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) and carry out a full fledged public consultation. At first glance it would appear that an EIA notification might not be a requirement as "common municipal solid waste management facility" is listed as a Category B project in the First Schedule following the notification, thereby



It appears that the MCD continued to insist that the area it was asking for as its landfill site was outside the Delhi Ridge and the Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary.

requiring the approval of Delhi's State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and not the MoEF.

But, read with the General Condition asterisked with it, the approval lands into the MoEF's domain. The General Condition converts all Category B projects into Category A projects if they are located within 10 km of a Protected Area notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, or in critically polluted areas, notified eco-sensitive areas, inter-state boundaries and international boundaries.

MCD's landfill site satisfies two of these criteria – the area it is asking for is located within the Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary and situated on the inter-state boundary of Delhi and Haryana.

Interestingly, the MCD did get an EIA done through the Consulting Engineering Services India Pvt. Ltd as the Ridge Management Board had asked for it. But the additional submission by the NGO Forum in the High Court argued that the EIA was not carried out in a detailed manner as per procedures laid out in the EIA Notification, 2006, and that it did not go through the required public scrutiny and expert appraisal. This is primarily because the MCD did not seek an environment clearance.

What is crucial to note here is that a part of this

landfill site is also located within the Bhatti Wildlife sanctuary thereby attracting the legalities of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Section 29 of this law prohibits the destruction of wildlife and forest produce in a sanctuary. For permission to use land within the sanctuary, the MCD should have approached the Chief Wildlife Warden. If the assessment revealed that the activity was not considered destructive to wildlife, permission to the MCD would have been granted. But, it appears that the MCD continued to insist that the area in question is outside the Delhi Ridge and the Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary.

In September 2010, the High Court directed the Government of NCT through an order to ask the Chief Secretary to file an affidavit disclosing the khasra numbers/boundaries of the Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary. In January 2011, the Government of NCT officials undertook a site inspection and submitted their report before the High Court. In an interesting turn of events, the Delhi Government's joint inspection report (which included the MCD) of February this year asked the MCD to revisit and revise the proposal due to its falling within the Sanctuary. In the High Court, the Delhi Government objected to the MCD's decision to identify pits in the mines as proposed landfill sites.

At the April hearing, the Delhi High Court sought a reply from the MoEF on whether pits at the Bhatti mines sanctuary can be used as a sanitary landfill site. No final decision has been taken till the hearing on 2 May. The contentions of the MoEF and the High Court's views on the various legalities involved will be crucial to determine whether the Bhatti mines area will become a dumping ground or be given a chance to resurrect itself from the dustbin of history.

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

Why culture matters

AMITANGSHU ACHARYA

MY first epiphany as a rural development worker took place on a humid July afternoon in Udaipur, Rajasthan, in 2005. Sitting on the village *chabutra*, I was having an intense conversation with a village elder.

In this village I had implemented a project on promoting low cost smokeless *chulhas* so that the adverse health impacts on women from the use of open *chulhas* could be reduced. However, many of those smokeless *chulhas* fell into disuse. I was considerably vexed. After all, we had corrected all technical errors, done participatory training, taken user feedback.

I was expressing my grief to Udhaba, the village elder, when he said "*chulha sirf chulha nahin, parampara hai.*" This simple sentence, delivered with the utmost nonchalance, suddenly explained a lot. For Udhaba and for many others in the village, the 'obsolete' open *chulha* defined their family. It was inherited and symbolized familial unity. An heirloom, its abandonment disconnected a family from its history.

These epiphanies, mostly in retrospect, are often considered a luxury in development. But in many cases, projects fail because they become antithetical to local cultures and belief systems. Hence, rural and in some cases urban India, is dotted with unused toilets, dysfunctional drinking water stand posts and derelict watershed structures.

Explanations revolve largely around institutional failures, lack of ownership, technical glitches. The discussion on how local culture refused and rejected a well-intentioned intervention is relegated to the background.

Cultural mismatch does feature prominently in informal discussions, though. I remember a conversation with an international NGO worker in which I casually referred to the *chulha* story. She immediately shared a similar experience. She said a breastfeeding project funded by her organisation in the Sunderbans in West Bengal had faced serious setbacks. Efforts at persuading mothers to give colostrum (first milk) to their infants had failed miserably. Only after the project got over did they realise that local religious custom dictated that the first milk should always be offered to the local goddess.

Understanding the cultural aspect of landscapes requires listening to the intimate conversations that take place between people and their environment. Only a few have managed to capture this in detail. Foremost examples are the written works of Anupam Mishra and Dhruvajyoti Ghosh. Time and again, their writings have revealed that sustainability is culturally embedded.

Culture is a community's black box of science, religion, knowledge, ethics and politics. It hides as

much as it reveals. It accepts, rejects and manipulates technologies. One key example is the unethical use of the ultrasound test in the economically progressive states of Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab for sex selective abortion. Economic growth and technology have only helped to intensify deep rooted patriarchal values.

There is a need to bring culture to the forefront of development analysis. Development actors often tend to either romanticize or demonize culture, unable to see it with nuance. In Uttarakhand, piped water supply, deemed unsustainable and unaesthetic by a section in civil society, had also brought to an end the discrimination against Dalits who were allowed to collect water from village springs (*dharas*) only after the upper castes

in such contexts.

Anchoring interventions based on proper understanding of local culture works wonders. This stands vindicated through the work of Farhad Contractor and his colleagues at the Sambhaav Trust. Farhad believes in strengthening the relationship with communities over time rather than rushing into completing projects. Sambhaav Trust in collaboration with local communities has revived an astounding 630 wells (locally known as *beris*) over the last seven years in the areas of Bakhasar in Barmer and Ramgadh in Jaisalmer in Western Rajasthan. The sustainability of these wells are enhanced by their equitable sharing, a remarkable achievement.

While Sambhaav looks into revitalizing sustainable practices rooted in traditions, Water for People-India, a Kolkata based organisation has been engaged with the other end of the cultural spectrum in rural West Bengal. Working on issues of menstrual health and hygiene management has revealed how cultural taboos operate to stigmatize adolescent girls. Here there are instances of mothers giving coins to their menstruating daughters to drop into the river while crossing it on a boat, so that the gods do not take offence. Given the difficulty of the work at hand, Water for People has engaged in rigorous research to understand how these cultural taboos work in communities before moving into an intervention

mode.

The shades of grey in culture require adequate attention. Development actors, be it government agencies or NGOs need to tease out multiple world views and knowledge systems constitutive of local culture. And this requires delving deeper into people's religious perceptions as well. Unfortunately, culture is often used as a convenient explanation for failure, as many sanitation projects in India have proved. Agencies easily brush off failure of their ill conceived sanitation projects by putting the blame squarely on 'backward' local habits and customs.

Culture is that compass with which one navigates life's complex journey. Standardized development interventions often tend to see culture as an irritant, which delays deliverables and outcomes. Projects often walk the tightrope of timelines and expectations, which makes revisiting the development agenda based on cultural resistance difficult. Plus, there is a perverse fetish for 'solutions' which overrides proper understanding of the 'problem'. Indeed, the 'solution' itself emerges as a 'problem' in such contexts. Unless analysis of cultural issues surrounding developmental interventions is brought to the forefront, the only way to learn and evolve would be the hard way.



had their fill. The science of traditional water harvesting has to be seen separately from socially unjust traditions of water use. Calls for rejuvenating the former often get interpreted as implying the latter.

Minimal time and resources are devoted to understanding the impact of culture on development projects and vice versa. Hence missing the woods for the trees is common. I came across one such scenario in Ratlam district in early 2010. NGOs and government institutions spared no effort to improve the incomes of tribal farmers with small and marginal land holdings through supply of rural credit and improved livelihoods.

However, they forgot that the maximum amount of loan taken was mostly to meet marriage costs and "bride price". One marriage in a family easily requires a minimum of ₹20,000 and a maximum of ₹100,000 and has little hopes of being provided by any MFI or rural bank. Hence the '*sahukar*' (moneylender) with his exorbitant rates of interest would be the last resort. This intergenerational cycle of debt has crossed over from pre-colonial to colonial to independent India and refuses to disappear. It's an example of how deep-rooted the effects of cultural practices are and how shallow our proposed solutions seem

Living

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

Ladakh's rock art hunters

A rare personal effort discovers many wonders

Civil Society News
New Delhi

SINCE 2001, Viraf Mehta has been to Ladakh 22 times to admire the stark beauty of its landscape. A climber, he loves altitudes and enjoys trekking in the Himalayas.

On his 12th trip to Ladakh, Viraf stumbled sud-

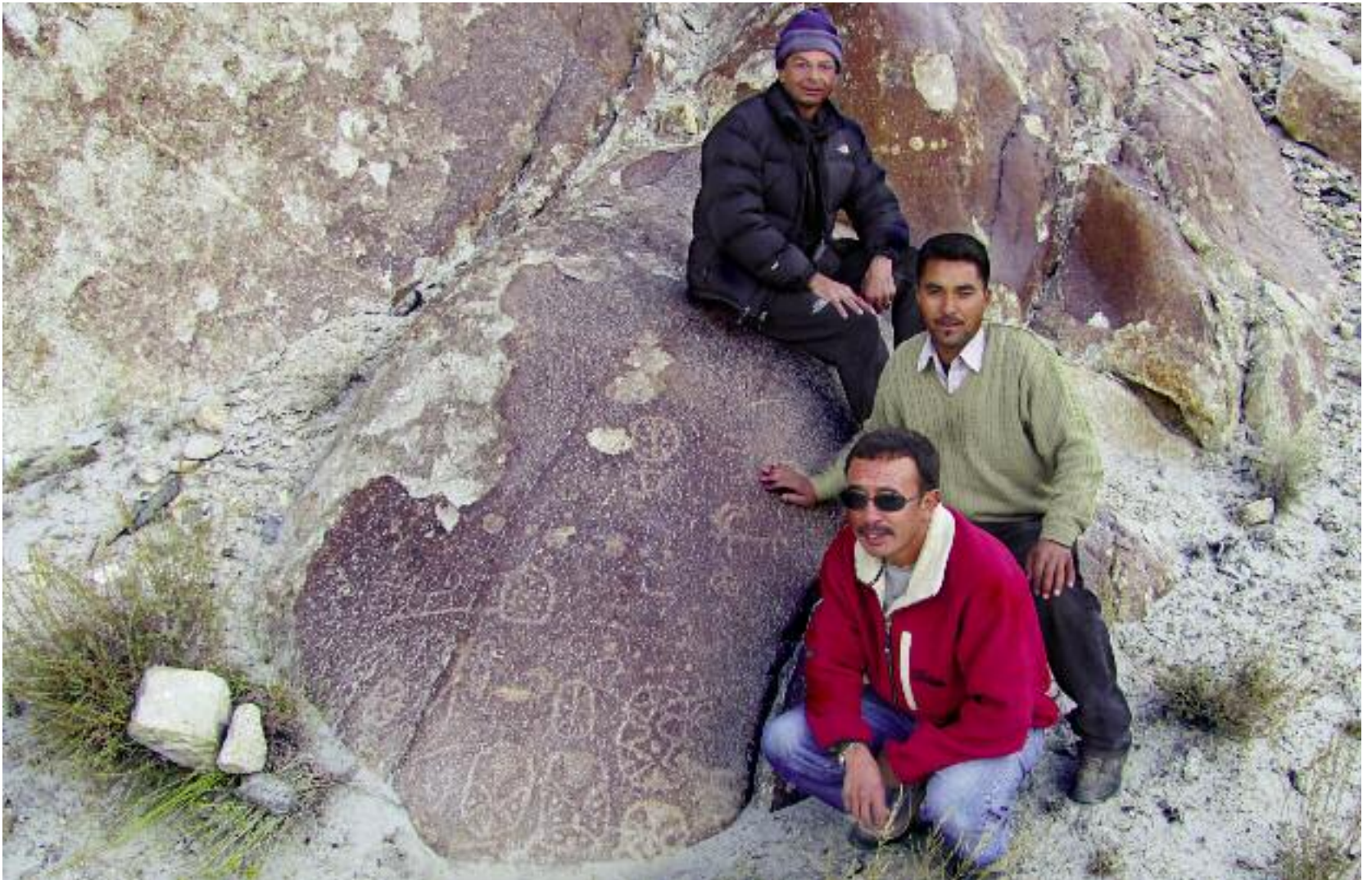
denly upon a petroglyph on a boulder. "My hair stood on end," he recalls. "I knew something in my life had changed forever."

Petroglyphs are prehistoric images engraved on rocks with metal or stone. Referred to as rock art, the ones in Ladakh date back to the Bronze Age, some 3000 years ago, much before Buddhism came to this region. The ancients did not know

how to read or write. So they expressed themselves by inscribing facets of their lives on rocks.

Despite 12 trips Viraf says he hadn't noticed the petroglyphs. He'd been blind to this artistry. Suddenly he found himself face-to-face with the language of ancient art, the voice of a prehistoric people trying to communicate with the few who

Continued on page 34



Viraf Mehta (top) with Tashi Ldawa Tshangspa (below)

cared to listen. "The rocks revealed themselves to me," he says, philosophically.

Viraf, 54, has spent many years in the corporate sector and then worked for an NGO, but his training is as an anthropologist. His passion for a rambling exploration of Ladakh's valleys and mountains had as much to do with the joys of climbing as his abiding interest in prehistoric man.

Engraved on these rocks are ancient people, animals, birds, motifs, flora and fauna. We can see the activities of our prehistoric ancestors like hunting or dancing. Rock art has much mystique. It is a language which hasn't ever been fully unravelled. Around the world scant attention has been paid to it. And surprisingly, rock art was first

and Ldawa, began scouting around for petroglyphs. Each had their own style of investigating. While Ldawa would climb to the highest point and then start looking down like an eagle, Viraf preferred to walk around browsing for petroglyphs amongst the rocks. You need a keen eye to spot petroglyphs, is Viraf's observation.

They trekked through Kargil, Leh, along the gleaming blue Indus and the sparkling Zaskar braving icy weather and chilly wind. They discovered that Ladakh was literally strewn with prehistoric rock art. It was there, knocked into boulders, rocks and cliffs from altitudes of 3,000 to 4,500 meters. There was artwork, 20 feet long. There were rocks with multiple images. And they dated

not know but now we'll protect it. "It is a community asset," points out Viraf.

The army too has promised to pitch in. They were amazed to know that they had been stomping all over Ladakhi art history. Viraf recalls when he took an army officer around his own camp to see rock art the officer was astounded. "But I walk here every day, I never noted this," he said. Here and there the army is protecting petroglyphs by building little pebbled fences around such boulders. The guys who mow down mountains to build roads are being told to kindly spare the lives of rock art.

Viraf has spent the last three years travelling, researching and taking pictures of petroglyphs



Glimpses of rock art

discovered in India, sometime in 1869-1870. Indians were aware of its antiquity, reveals Viraf.

"You could say these are the earliest human artifacts," he says.

The problem is petroglyphs are not regarded as protected monuments in India. This form of art has been unearthed in the south and west of India. But the Himalayan region has been ignored. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) airily states rock art couldn't possibly exist at such high altitudes. In Ladakh building roads and infrastructure has wreaked havoc on petroglyphs. Boulders with priceless engravings have been smashed into smithereens. Actually nobody knew. There was no awareness about their historical value.

Viraf embarked on a mission to unearth as many petroglyphs as he could and save Ladakh's art heritage. He found a soul mate in Tashi Ldawa Tshangspa, 43, a lecturer in zoology in EJM College, Leh, who was equally passionate about rock art. At first Ldawa was suspicious, recounts Viraf. He had helped many foreigners research rock art. The foreigners went home, published books in their own language and conveniently forgot their assurances about creating local awareness and conservation. Ldawa was on the verge of giving up. But Viraf's enthusiasm and agenda matched his own so he was keen to team up.

Getting permits to travel around Ladakh was not easy. A lot of it is restricted area manned by the army. It took Viraf much time and trouble to explain to mystified army officers why he wanted to inspect rocks all over Ladakh's countryside. But once the army understood, they cooperated.

Permission granted, the two rock hunters, Viraf



The army is protecting rock art with little fences of pebbles

to the pre-Buddhist period so this was really, really ancient stuff they were gazing at. "The Indus river is the backbone of rock art," observes Viraf.

They discovered India's northern most rock-with-art at the edge of the Siachen glacier in a village called Washi. These petroglyphs were being witnessed by human eyes in the 21st century for the first time, an event of considerable historical significance for Viraf and Ldawa. Altogether they went to some 150 sites.

"We want to tell everyone that people lived even in the icy heights of Ladakh 3000 years ago, that there is a commonality with the people of Siberia, Tibet, Iran and Pakistan. It is a continuing tradition," says Viraf.

They then set off to create awareness about rock art amongst local people, printing posters and going to schools, taking children on a visual feast. They told ordinary people about rock art around their homes. The response was, oh we did

with his own money. He now has some 2000 images of rock art which he plans to publish into a book with maps, large visuals and short, explanatory text in English and Ladakhi. He would like academics to use the book as a resource to research petroglyphs.

Viraf also wants to start a 'rock art trust' to protect and document Ladakh's rock art and a 'rock park' in Ladakh with a guide to explain it all. In fact there are long stretches where nearly every boulder has art inscribed on it. These could become tourist trails of rock art, says Viraf.

It is well-known that Indians have always been hopeless at documenting history. From 1947 to 1974 entry to Ladakh was anyways closed. Some foreigners have chronicled Ladakh's rock art like a Moravian missionary who did some preliminary work publishing a few black and white pictures. Martin Vernier, a French writer, did a fairly comprehensive book on Ladakhi rock art in French. But such foreign works are not in any way linked to conservation efforts. Nor do they connect Ladakhis to their local history. In this respect China and Pakistan have done better than India. They have documented rock art along their side of the Indus. A book done by the Chinese was spotted by Viraf in Kathmandu. Nicely laid out, it did not cost much.

However, Viraf and Ldawa's strenuous efforts to save Ladakh's rock art are probably more significant than what China and Pakistan have ever done. In years to come, if Viraf's plans succeed, Indians can look forward to an envious display of rock art. And Ladakhis would have discovered a rich slice of their history. All of which would make India a frontrunner in prehistoric rock art – a valuable contribution to the nation.

SUSHEELA NAIR



River-facing cottages

In wild company

Susheela Nair
Karapur (Karnataka)

It was noon when we zoomed into the Serai Kabini, a high-end wildlife resort in Karapur village on the banks of the River Kabini. Winding pathways led us to the 19 river-facing cottages sprinkled across the sprawling rustic property. Each cottage is enormous, comprising of a patio, bedroom and en suite bathroom. Each room features plush interiors, a king-sized bed, rich silk brocaded cushions, large windows and doors that open on to a verandah. There's also a hammock where you can recline with your favourite book in hand, and disengage yourself from the maddening world. Each cottage is distinctive with a different colour scheme.

The wood-and-stone structure of the cottage exudes an earthy look while the mango wood furniture gives a snug and cheery feel. The vibrant earthy tones and the natural materials used for the construction blend perfectly with the surrounding landscape. Adorning the shelves of the resort are artifacts representing different parts of the country. The food served at the Flames restaurant is a gourmet's delight.

Getting around the verdant property is itself an exercise. We discovered that there was no formal landscaping and everything was in harmony with nature in this resort. The landscape is beautifully laid out with indigenous plants and trees. It is difficult to find exotic flora in the resort. Some of the



SUSHEELA NAIR

Elephants frolicking in the water

trees and plants are named and this makes for an enjoyable and informative walk. Adding to the verdant ambience is a natural bamboo grove and clumps of Kabini grass on one side of the property. The early morning and evening walks through the winding pathways are a refreshing experience

Briefing us on the resort's eco-friendly practices, M. Venkatesh, Director, Coffee Day Hotels & Resorts Pvt. Ltd, explained, "In keeping with its eco-friendly status, all efforts are made to retain the gifts of nature. So there are eco-friendly toiletries, a state-of-the-art waste water treatment plant, eco-friendly generators, bio-degradable bin-liners, use of minimal water consumption fixtures, and a vermiculture pit where the solid waste of the resort is converted into manure. The use of plastic is not encouraged." The resort's other eco-tourism initiatives include sourcing local produce, employment of local talent, assisting in the sale of village handicrafts, distribution of leftover food to the local people and use of recycled paper in all branding communication and guest handouts.

With a plethora of activities on offer, there is never a dull moment in the resort. Besides the jungle safaris, you can take a plunge in the pool. And if you need to drain away the stress from your tired muscles, chill out with a refreshing massage at the Cloud 9 Spa. There are a multitude of nature-based

activities for the guests. These include boat rides, wildlife safaris, nature trails, kayaking, cycling, etc. You can drift down the Kabini River in a kayak. If you are lucky, you'll spot pachyderms quenching their thirst at the edge of the reservoir.

After a sumptuous meal and a siesta, we embarked on a boat ride at 4 pm. Sukanto, the resort's ebullient naturalist, helped us identify darters, kingfishers, snake birds, cormorants, egret, kingfisher, ibis and a colourful array of winged species which charmed us with their rare beauty. Some of these rested on stumps of deadwood entrenched in the lake. We were fortunate to sight an amazing variety of wildlife at the backwaters as all the watering holes had dried up in the scorching summer heat. Herds of elephants congregated on the banks of the river to quench their thirst. Some of them were uprooting succulent clumps of grass while the young ones played. An elephant herd was frolicking in the waters bathed in the golden light of the setting sun. The matriarch of the herd towered over her brood while a gigantic tusker moved away from the herd. We spent over an hour watching their antics while some of us went on a clicking spree. Besides the pachyderms, we spotted herds of gaur, spotted deer and wild boar in the distance by the waterside.

We returned after a fruitful water safari and sat around a crackling fire under the starry sky exchanging animal stories and spinning yarns of our encounters in the wild. The next morning after drifting down the reservoir in a kayak, we set off on a 15-minute boat ride to Bhimana Kolli Temple. The temple is believed to be 800 years old. Legend has it that during their exile, the Pandavas visited this part of the village and Bhima crossed this point of the river, considered to be the deepest, in just one leap. Kolli in Kannada means river. Thus, a temple was built on the same site and named after him.

The same evening saw us heading for the much-awaited jungle safari. The jeep purred smoothly out of the lodge. The forest was looking dry but teeming with chattering wildlife – langurs, Malabar squirrels and drongos called and herds of wild pachyderms ambled past majestically. Birds we saw aplenty. Peacocks and peahens were strutting about while a Blue Jay or Indian Roller posed for a photograph. We were treated to the unusual sight of an elephant quenching its thirst along with a herd of Indian gaur from a waterhole. Several spotted deer, barking deer and sambars sprinted across our path.

After awhile, the silence of the forest was shattered occasionally by a burst of urgent chatter as a langur sent out warning signals. The alarmed cry of the deer signaled that a predator was on the prowl. A sudden flash of orange and we were left wondering if it was the tiger we had seen or just a flash of late afternoon sun glancing off a prancing deer. We waited with bated breath and had a fleeting glimpse of a leopard leaping across the road and fleeing into the bushes, annoyed at our intrusion into its rugged terrain.

For bookings contact: The Kabini Serai, Coffee Day Hotels & Resorts Pvt.

Queen bee



**MAFIA QUEENS OF MUMBAI
STORIES OF WOMEN FROM
THE GANGLANDS**

S Hussain Zaidi with Jane
Borges
Tranquebar
₹ 250

MUMBAI'S underworld has always been perceived as a man's world. Dawood Ibrahim, Karim Lala and Varadarajan Mudaliar are household names, thanks to the police, writers and filmmakers. Not many women intrude into this murky world of the mafia and not much is known about them.

In this book, S Hussain Zaidi and Jane Borges lift the lid on women in Mumbai's underworld who rose to lead their own gangs and run illegal businesses. The stories are riveting, like an absorbing film. It is hard to take your eyes off the book so make sure you have enough time and popcorn.

Zaidi is well known for his book, *Black Friday*, which was turned into a film by Anurag Kashyap. He is a crime journalist who investigates and tells his stories with depth and sensitivity. Zaidi and Borges seem to have penetrated into Mumbai's mafia with an astonishing degree of acceptability. Perhaps the reason is Zaidi and Borges are willing to see things from the other side of the fence.

The book's foreword is nicely written by filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj. In eight chapters, Zaidi and Borges take you through Mumbai's dark alleys to meet characters who could have sunk into misery but chose instead to live life on their own terms. But, unfortunately, as criminals.

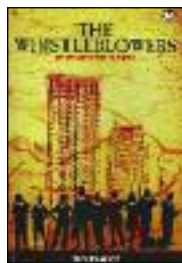
Jenabai is *The Wily Old Woman of Dongri* whose advice was sought by mafia dons like Haji Mastan. Practical and hard-headed, Jenabai could be relied on to find a path out of a jungle of problems. Her daughter describes her as a typical godmother, fearless, powerful and abusive.

The Matriarch of Kamathipura is the five feet tall Gangubhai. The man whom she fell in love with sold her to a brothel. Yet Gangubhai rose to become a leader of sex workers. She became an icon of sorts with effigies of hers being placed in brothels. She was revered by sex workers.

The other profiles are equally fascinating. Sapna, who took to crime to avenge her husband's death, making it her life's ambition to destroy Dawood Ibrahim. There is Jyoti, the narco queen of Sonapur *galli*, and Monica Bedi, girlfriend of Abdul Salem. Also featured are the rather fierce wives of Hindu dons, the molls of mafia leaders and the beautiful girls who minted money from rackets like cricket betting and extortion.

Women who take to crime have certain traits – courage, determination and intelligence. They outwit the men in being unscrupulous and manipulative. They would have probably succeeded in lawful jobs, but mostly their circumstances lead them into the business of crime. Perhaps the structure of the Indian city with its contrasts of wealth, poverty, greed, grime and great opportunity spawns crime. Mumbai, in many ways, amplifies this heady fusion.

The real estate insider



**THE
WHISTLEBLOWERS**

Sitaraman
Cinnamon Teal
₹ 475

IN these times, defined as they are by mega corporate scams and political scandals, a novel by someone with a deep knowledge of real estate industry promises to be gripping.

The Whistleblowers by Sitaraman is contemporary, it offers an inside view and, as the name suggests, it pits good against evil. It is not brilliant in its delivery, but for a first novel the prose is functional and the story unfolds with an ease which allows you to read on.

All fiction is autobiographical in some way. It is more so in the case of novels where the

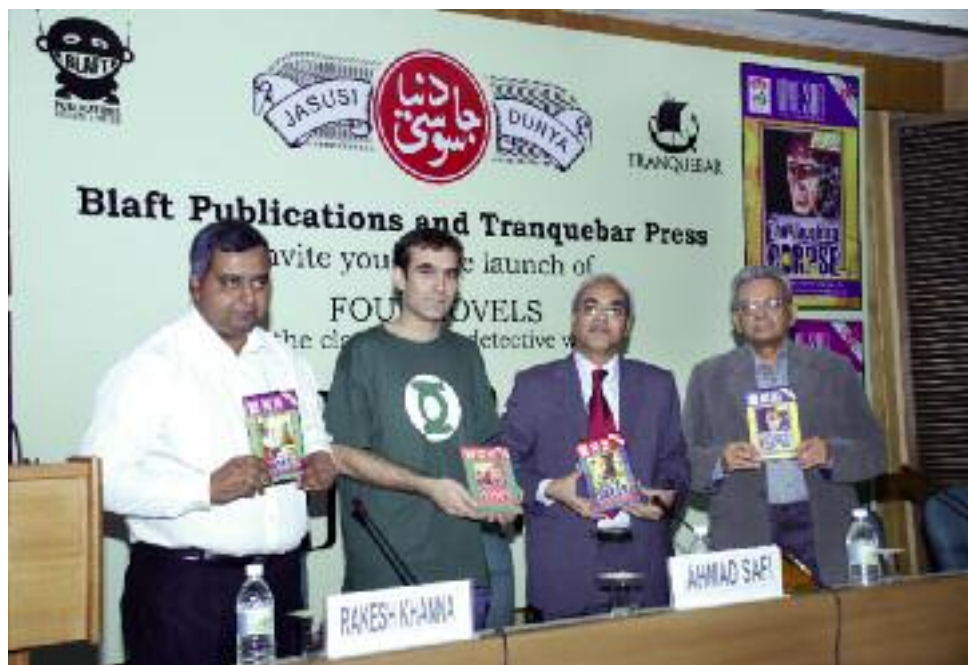
corporate sector is the setting. Sitaraman has been a participant at the top – as a savvy management consultant and a trusted financial advisor. He knows how the system works – you could say that he knows too much.

"This book is about individuals and the choices these individuals make in different situations. It is about the nuances of real estate and housing finance and how the lines get blurred casually in the greed for more," says Sitaraman.

The story is about a builder who plans to take a finance company for a ride. It takes you through courtrooms and boardrooms. There are personal ambitions which unfold as a business manager tries to become a CEO and risk managers put their careers on line. No plot of this kind would be complete without a journalist and we have one who has both guts and looks.

So, if you have wondered how those land deals are swung, how projects come up and what happens to slush money paid out to politicians, *The Whistleblowers* is the book you need to read on your next flight.

Jasoosi Duniya now in India



Ahmed Safi, third from left, at the book launch

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

FORMER Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's mother, Shahara Khatun, used to have late Pakistani writer Ibne Safi's detective stories read out to her long after Urdu became discredited in her country. The second presi-

dent of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, was an avid reader of Safi's gripping crime thrillers. So were many intellectuals and ordinary people in Pakistan and India.

Ibne Safi's fan following is likely to increase hugely now that English translations of his books have hit the Indian market. At a recent book launch in Delhi, four titles of Safi's famous *Jasoosi Duniya* (The

Painting saviour

Sugandha Pathak
New Delhi

THE Paitkar paintings of Jharkhand belong to an ancient tradition. Yet this form of tribal art is dying. In a bid to revive Paitkar painting and other tribal cultural traditions on the verge of extinction, a group of professionals in Jamshedpur have come together to make a film and organize exhibitions for artists.

Most Paitkar paintings are scroll paintings. And just like the Patachitra painters of Medinipur in West Bengal, Paitkar painters too sing the song of their painting.

The film called *Sa- The Search*, is the brainchild of artist and linguist Shubhasish Chakraborty who works with the Tata utility firm, JUSCO. "This film delves into the search for the essence of life which is Sa (the music note). The singing and painting tradition which the people of Amadubi in Jharkhand have been doing since centuries is slowly reaching extinction, so this is an effort to



Shubhasish Chakraborty

revive this dying art form," states Chakraborty.

The film has a lyrical and poetic way of depicting the plight of the people of Amadubi, a small village in Jharkhand. According to Chakraborty, the village consists of around 150 people out of whom only four or five have continued the age-old tradition of Paitkar painting and narrating the paintings through folk songs.

"Since they were not getting any monetary gains many artists took up other means of livelihood," says Chakraborty. The film shows villagers

busy with their alternative jobs. They have become sellers of paper fan, potters, washermen or taken to cattle-rearing.

"They use natural colours to paint. Most paintings are stories which are passed through generations. But some were on current issues, like global warming and water conservation. The objective was to connect them with the community in cities," says Chakraborty. So an exhibition was organized for three painters in Jamshedpur. Around 170 to 200 paintings were put up and most of them sold.

"They earned ₹27,000 by selling their paintings. All the proceeding of the exhibitions went directly to the artist. Now these artists are getting orders, and have been invited to teach painting to the city kids," he further explains.

According to him, the response to the exhibition was a moral boost for these villagers as they gained more confidence after this exposure. "After struggling to survive as painters, they had stopped teaching the next generation this tradition. Now there is a change in outlook as their work is finally getting appreciated and acknowledged," he says.

dia

World of Espionage) series – *Poisoned Arrow*, *Smokewater*, *The Laughing Corpse* and *Doctor Dread* – were formally released by his son, Ahmad Safi. The books have been published by BLAFT Publications in collaboration with Westland Ltd's literary imprint, Tranquebar Press.

"This is the first time that *Jasoosi Duniya* has been published in English. It is a grand occasion because this work was considered more difficult to translate," says Ahmad Safi, a mechanical engineer, who had flown down from Karachi for the launch.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi who translated the books is from Allahabad. He nods in agreement. "It was certainly difficult to translate Safi because he is so culturally saturated in the Urdu milieu. His language is filled with Urdu idioms, speech and mannerisms," says Faruqi.

There were other pitfalls. "The works are somewhat dated as they go back to the 1960s and 1970s. In the meanwhile police detection procedures have radically changed. But I think I was able to maintain the flavour and rhythm of the prose," says Faruqi.

Likewise Safi's humour, some of it "camp humour," was also incorporated.

What made it easier was that

Faruqi was an avid reader of Safi's novels since his youth. Readers continue to be fascinated by the protagonist in Safi's books, Colonel Faridi, with his pedigreed dogs, fancy cars, private museum, a well-equipped laboratory, a superb command over several languages and, of course, his deep knowledge of crime and the criminal mindset.

Ibne Safi was the pen name of Asrar Ahmad. Born in 1928 in the town of Nara in Allahabad district, he migrated to Pakistan in 1952 and established base in Karachi. Safi's early works in the 1940s included short stories, humour, satire and poetry. Of course his most popular works were the *Jasoosi Duniya* novels and the *Imran* series.

The absence of sexually explicit language and gore made Safi's novels widely acceptable at a time when mystery and detective stories could only be read in seclusion because of their objectionable content. In fact, Safi took to writing crime thrillers as a challenge when his peers at a literary conference told him that books in that

genre could never be a success unless they had heavy doses of sex and violence.

Says Ahmad Safi, "Turning popular opinion on its head my father came up with the idea of *Jasoosi Duniya* with his friends." The books were an instant success from day one. "I remember my father coming to me and saying that more copies needed to be printed," says the younger Safi. It's easy to understand why. *Poisoned Arrow* (*Zehreelay Teer*) one of Ibne Safi's books in the *Jasoosi Duniya* series that was launched recently grips the reader from the start when a man is killed by a poisoned arrow. Detectives Colonel Faridi and his assistant Captain Hameed quickly swing into action even as more characters are bumped off along the way. The duo's investigation leads them to a shady world of pimps, drug dealers and foreign spies. The conundrum remains: Who is the culprit? It could be any of the characters that Faridi and Hameed have encountered along the way.

Ibne Safi wrote some 245 major crime thrillers in the *Jasoosi Duniya* and the

Imran series.

Readers loved his books. But the highest compliment that came his way was from the redoubtable murder mystery writer Agatha Christie who once said, "I don't know Urdu but I have knowledge of detective novels of the subcontinent. There is only one original writer – Ibne Safi."



Suffering is curable

SAMITA RATHOR

SUFFERING is something we can all do without. We have the inner ability to constructively use our intelligence to eliminate suffering and examine reality.

Many problems which we experience are self-inflicted and man made. Many humans are harmed at the hands of each other. This destructive and malicious intent is due to lack of compassion. Where there is no compassion, there can only be suffering.

Important points to note about suffering are:

- Suffering is self-inflicted.
- It gives us an idea of where we stand with ourselves.
- It helps us understand the state of our mind.
- If the mind is strong and wise, there is very little scope for suffering.
- Happiness and sadness are two sides of the same coin. By getting an insight into this concept, suffering dissolves.
- Every moment of suffering has a lesson to teach us.

The provocation of war, violence, rape and other forms of suffering is due to lack of moral ethics. We should use morality and ethics for our own selves and not to make an impression on others. We do beneficial acts only for those who are our friends or those who may be of some use to us. This is a very narrow minded way of looking at things. It is the basis of all suffering.

SOUL VALUE

THE IRON CAGE: According to an ancient and beautiful Buddhist example, human beings are trapped in an iron cage of self-grasping. Their actions in their entire lives are based upon: "I, Me, Mine, My friends, My beloved ones." Many times we put up a false front and help someone only because we know that it is going to personally benefit us. In the process we may develop more selfishness than selflessness. This route is sure to lead to suffering.

We find ourselves totally disconnected from others living in the outside world. We have lost the ability to connect with other people who may not be part of our daily lives. We think we can connect with the ones we touch. This again may not be the best way of looking at life. It is therefore our responsibility to destroy this iron cage of self-grasping and thereby realize there is life beyond the narrow-minded thought procedure that most of us may be victims of.

So the first thing we need to learn to do is to recognize what this iron cage of self-grasping is and how are we trapped within it. Once we understand this concept we can try to be free from it. This will give us an opportunity to look beyond our day-to-day existence. Existing is mundane and living is vibrant. We should be living our lives to the fullest not just existing. We remain in our

inner prison and do not make an effort to achieve freedom. It is our own responsibility to liberate ourselves from that prison. We can do that by:

- Attaining wisdom by developing an understanding of dependant origination. We need to understand how all beings on this earth depend on each other.
- We can achieve this insight by developing love, kindness and compassion.

It is important to understand that we depend on each other. We all breathe the same air. In that sense, we are connected. Each one of us has the desire to be happy.

This thought brings in a sense of empathy and a desire to benefit others. The way to do this is to give other people happiness. Happiness provides a strong base to build a loving and compassionate bent of mind. Think of all the people who have selflessly provided us with birth, food, water and love. By developing this thought we can slowly develop love, compassion and kindness.

Living by example and not theory is a very significant aspect of developing true insight and knowledge. By just practicing love and compassion in our day-to-day lives, beginning with our own selves, will give us the wisdom to see reality.

If all of us have the desire to be happy surely that proves that we are all connected with the same thought process. With this thought, suffering can be eradicated.

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PRODUCTS

PURE DEVOTION

PRETTY frocks, soft towels, embroidered bed sheets and a lot more is available at Arpana's shop in Delhi. Lovingly made by hand just for your baby, Arpana's products sell under the brand name, 'Devotion'. They are comfortable, durable and eye catching and available in a range of colours and designs.

Over 2,500 women in Haryana and Himachal have been trained to embroider on linen. They are from poor backward communities, unemployed or agricultural workers who are usually paid only in kind. The money they earn helps them to pay for their basic needs.

Arpana is a charitable organization which provides healthcare to marginalized communities in 200 villages in Haryana, Himachal and western Uttar Pradesh. It runs a dedicated hospital in Madhuban, Haryana, which provides maternal and child care. Arpana also works in Molarbund, a large slum resettlement colony in southeast Delhi where it also runs a hospital and has helped transform the place.



Arpana: E-22
Defence Colony, New Delhi
Phone: 011- 41550798, 41550612
Email : handicrafts@arpana.org

Changing Lives



Economic Development

SST plays a major role in revitalizing the village economy by introducing scientific methods of agriculture, better utilization of water resources and soil conservation. The Trust helped farmers to increase crop yields by conducting soil testing, using improved seeds and spread awareness of modern methods of cultivation.

“Earlier I used to think that government schemes were only given to rich farmers. Through the efforts of SST, I got two schemes: aid for construction of vermi compost units and a contract for a village seed production scheme. In the first year I earned a profit of Rs 8000 from the supply of seeds. Now the agriculture department has given me an assurance of similar work on regular basis”

*Vasant Manikrao Pachange,
Doksanghvi, Pune.*

Achieved as on January 2010

Number of families in Self Help Group:	33368
Number of families in Income Generation Activities and earn an additional income ranging of Rs 1000 to 1500 per month:	29614
Area getting yield above state average (Ha):	20460
Number of farmers getting yield above state average:	17674
Number of animals treated through veterinary camps:	134276
Number of Milch animals increase by milk yield by 2 liters / day:	34199
Families earning above Rs 1000 / month through livestock:	31559
Number of youth trained on vocational skills and made employable:	10308

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

TVS MOTOR COMPANY

Post Box No 4,
Harita, Hosur
Tamilnadu. Pin : 635 109
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URL : www.tvsmotor.co.in

www.tatasteel.com



Smart Steel

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

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

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

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

TATA STEEL

Green Steel

Clean Steel

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Responsible Steel

New Steel