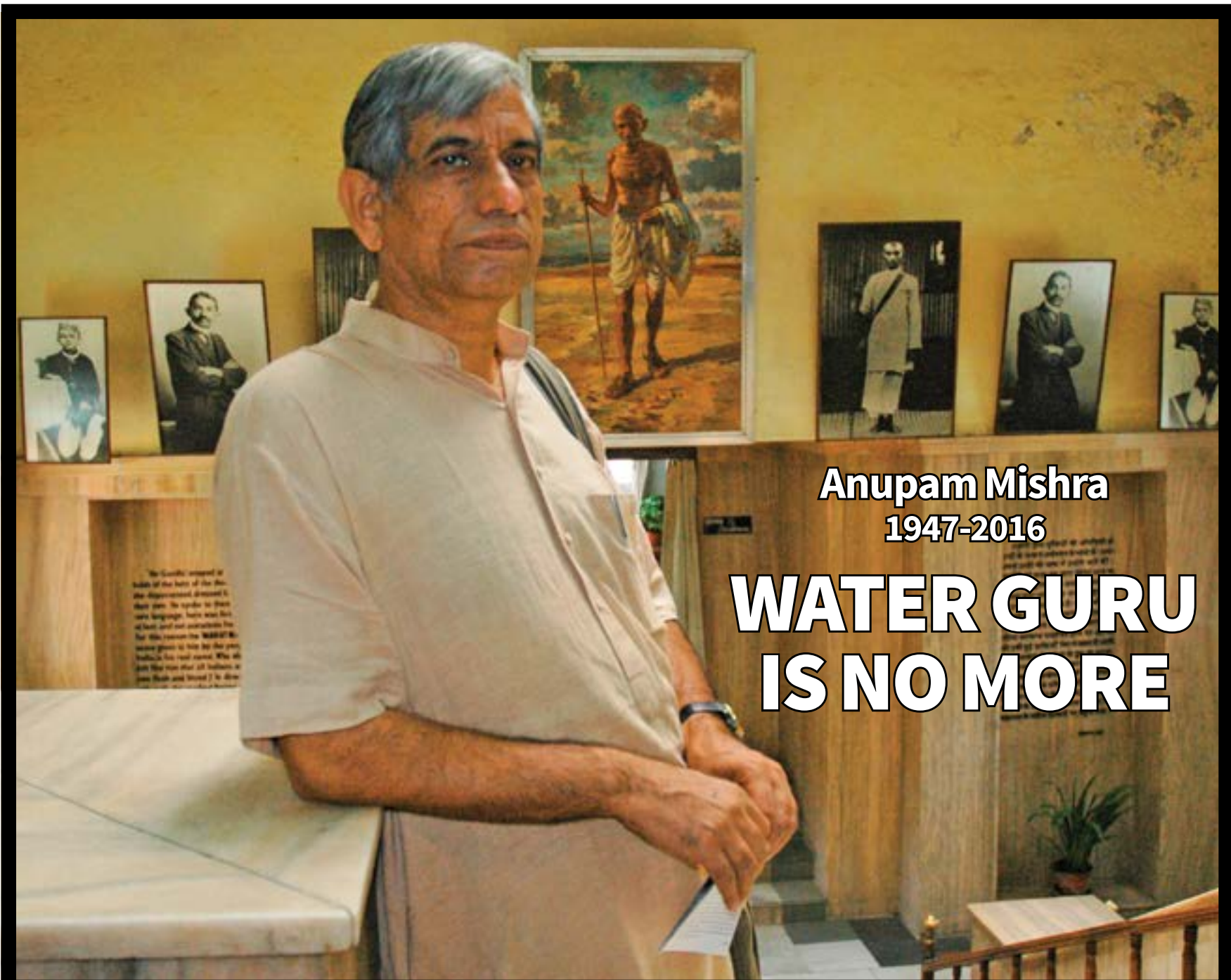


Civil Society



**Anupam Mishra
1947-2016**

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Harvesting Rain for Profit

Name: Shri Muniraj,
Village: Muthur, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu

Muniraj, a marginal farmer with seven acres of land from Muthur village of Krishnagiri district, had a greenhouse where he practiced floriculture. However, a falling water table meant that irrigation became a problem – especially during summer months even for drip irrigation.

To overcome the problem of insufficient water, Srinivasan Services Trust (SST) encouraged Muniraj to save every drop of rainwater falling on his green house. SST provided technical information and engineering support for creating a pond, next to the greenhouse, large enough to collect six lakh litres of rainwater. To prevent loss by seepage, the pond was lined with a polythene sheet and a shade net was used as cover to help arrest loss by evaporation. The pond gets filled up with 3 days of rain. The water saved in this pond is sufficient for the crop needs for one season.

IMPACT: Muniraj is now financially secure and earns more than ₹30,000 per month. He has built a pucca house and also bought a car. He has become an expert on rainwater harvesting and offers advice to several villages in the area.

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A troubled yearend

THERE has been little to celebrate in the way the year has gone out. If demonitisation at first seemed like a bold effort to deal with black money, there is now little certainty about what it will achieve. Of grave concern is the growing arbitrariness in politics and governance. It is all around and so it makes little sense to point in any one direction. It is as though politicians, the so-called reformers like AAP included, inhabit a zone of their own and the rest of us are left to cope with a different reality.

Putting together the January issue of *Civil Society* in such circumstances, you will recognise, has been challenging. It would be boring to dabble in the obvious and yet it won't do to ignore developments around us. So, in search of some kind of silver lining, we have picked our way through chaos (read that as the mess in Parliament, stresses in the banking system and runaway air pollution) to bring you an issue which makes some sense of our situation and offers some hope in the year ahead.

For our opening interview this month we have spoken to R. Chandrashekar, president of NASSCOM, on what can be achieved in terms of digital financial inclusion given the push that demonitisation has provided. Our sense is that demonitisation will speed up and even provide focus to initiatives for getting more people to use the Internet and mobiles for financial transactions. But the task is huge and by reducing it to a slogan we run the risk of not addressing the complexities.

The opportunity is in getting people from across income groups on board. The big danger is that they can get turned off if the system doesn't deliver. For all the mobile phones we have and the zooming market valuations the Internet has spawned, digital empowerment still has a long, long way to go. Chandrashekar, we felt, could tell us where we really stand since he represents NASSCOM. He does so with a nuanced understanding that comes from years of experience, particularly in government and his role in Chandrababu Naidu's early digital initiatives in Andhra Pradesh.

Another window we open for you is on microfinance. When demonitisation strikes, how does a business that depends so much on cash transactions survive? Ratna Vishwanathan of the Microfinance Institutions Network tells us that MFIs and SHGs have coped admirably despite the odds they were up against. Can microfinance go cashless? It is difficult because of a variety of reasons, not least among them being safe and stable digital access. So, when the livelihoods of 40 million women are involved, there is a serious need to do some detailed thinking. Getting it wrong has implications of pushing these women back into the clutches of moneylenders.

Demonitisation can perhaps be welcomed for how it shakes things up. It is a big and bold measure. But it has also emerged as a cruel measure in the way it has upturned people's lives. This is particularly so for small earners. If the goal is inclusion, we have to say it isn't being achieved. In fact, there can't be instant solutions. Technological innovations, social engineering, investment, entrepreneurial energy and regulation are needed.



COVER STORY

Water guru is no more

Anupam Mishra, India's foremost authority on traditional water harvesting systems passed away on 19 December after a brief but devastating encounter with cancer.

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EMPOWERING DIFFERENTLY-ABLED



Himalaya has partnered with **'The Association of People with Disability (APD)'**, a not for profit organisation based out of Bengaluru to support and empower people living with disabilities.

Too often people who are differently-abled are barred from the public sphere, pushed to the margins of society and end up living in deplorable conditions with little or no income. Every year, 70 associates who are differently-abled are trained on a 'medicinal plant program' which enhances their knowledge and know-how on select medicinal plant cultivation.

This program is not just limited to classroom concepts, but Himalaya also provides quality seeds to the associates and imparts best practices on how to increase yield. Additionally, cost of packaging materials and transportation is borne by Himalaya.

Himalaya is also raising funds for other rehabilitation programmes for APD through campaigns and tie-ups including our employees. We are hopeful that through this program, differently-abled person will gain self-confidence and build their self-esteem.

Himalaya
SINCE 1930

VOICES

IN THE LIGHT

SAMITA RATHOR



LETTERS



Delhi's air

The cover story, 'Choking in Delhi: How AAP failed the capital,' is very timely. Every winter cities and small towns in India find themselves covered with a blanket of toxic haze. We need a dedicated policy on urban air pollution. Otherwise, cities and towns will put in place a few cosmetic changes when the air becomes intolerable and after that revert to business as usual.

Shikha Joseph

I think the steps to tackle Delhi's air pollution are well known. Everybody knows the sources of these noxious gases. Everybody knows public transport and redesigning road space can help reduce vehicular pollution. So why are we not doing it? Your story provided some answers. I think the main reason is politics.

Sanjay Singh

I feel very strongly about Delhi's air pollution crisis. But what should I do? How can we participate for action to be taken?

Sonya Philip

Air pollution is an international battle. Many cities across the world face it. But they take a long-term view and a short-term view. Stringent action is taken to tackle pollution and at the same time, efforts are made to improve road systems and transportation.

Kiran Shama

Antim Yatra

Your story on Daljit Sean Singh and his socially conscious business,

Antim Yatra, was very good. This is an excellent idea and I am glad it is working out. I wish Daljit all the very best for his venture.

Sunder Lal

An excellent story about a much-needed service. Kudos.

Bunny Suraiya

Antim Yatra is a service that is badly needed in Delhi and the NCR. Such services can be extended where feasible, like providing transport from the hospital when a death occurs, planting trees in a memorial at a prominent place like in a corner of India Gate. Memorial benches can be installed at client's cost too.

Kamal Singh

Antim Yatra services, run in a dignified manner, are greatly needed in India.

Harish Capoor

Beyond drip

Your story, 'The market beyond drip,' was an eye-opener. This is an innovative method of irrigation for increasing production and saving water with efficiency. It is a gift for farmers.

Dr. Suresh Kulkarni

Very valuable information and a great innovation. We will try this technology in our Krishi Vigyan Kendra and keep you updated.

Pramod Deshmukh

Great work, Gopal, you are truly a Gopal who will rejuvenate our farms to world-class standards.

Raghu Rajan

Jackfruit quest

The story, 'Punjabi jackfruit quest succeeds in Malaysia' was an amazing story. The Malaysian government's policy of creating food parks might be worth looking at. The policy seems to attract only those who want to farm. Such food parks, close to urban centres, would be very useful. Existing agricultural land could be protected this way.

Nimesh Saini

Good article by Shree Padre. It was very interesting and informative.

Mneme George

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‘Demonetisation will fast-track digital financial inclusion’

R. Chandrashekhar on the many challenges of going cashless

Civil Society News
New Delhi

WITH the demonetisation of ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes the goal of rapidly converting India into a cashless economy and promoting financial transactions through the Internet, has become a critical priority. The question is — what is achievable and how soon?

Though India has taken to the mobile phone faster than any other country in the world, only a very small part of the population truly enjoys reliable digital access. Even of that number only a small percentage uses debit and credit cards and logs into bank accounts through phones and computers.

Digital transactions have been increasing, but the fact is they are insignificant considering the size of the population. Can demonetisation be the impetus to quickly change things and bring more people on board? Will it speed up the search for solutions to the problems of connectivity, bandwidth, availability of handsets, cyber security and use of local languages?

To get a perspective on these issues, *Civil Society* spoke to R. Chandrashekhar, president of the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), who has a lot of experience in the telecom sector.

A career bureaucrat, Chandrashekhar has served as Union Telecom Secretary and chairman of the Telecom Commission.

Under Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh many years ago, Chandrashekhar played a key role in setting up the state's department of information technology. Andhra Pradesh went on to be a role model for other states.

In the wake of demonetisation there are concerns about digital access. How far have we got with the Digital India mission?

There are two very different perspectives. Digital inclusion from the perspective of financial inclusion and digital inclusion as a larger objective — of empowering people with low income who may not have had access to the kind of opportunities that you can get today through access to the net due to the advent of disruptive technologies. These are two different things we are talking about — and while they are not unconnected they are distinctly different.

Out of the population we have how many have access and the potential to actually do financial transactions digitally? And out of those who have the access, how many are actually doing so?

The picture is quite mixed. We do have a sprinkling of smartphones and an urban population that is reasonably well-connected where mobile penetration is high. It's pretty much full coverage in most urban areas. Access to a mobile phone is more the rule than the exception.

When you go to rural areas, the picture is a little more mixed. There is, barring the most remote areas, fairly extensive coverage. We now have almost a billion subscribers. Most analysts believe at least 600 million would be unique users, or about half the population, which is not bad if you consider the average household is about five people. So, most households, we can presume, either have a mobile phone or have access to one through a friend or colleague.

There are, of course, many ways to transact financially using the mobile phone: from wallets to online systems that banks have put in place to the very basic star 99 hash that works for very simple feature phones and so on.

Therefore, at a conceptual level and in theory, everybody who has a mobile phone has the potential to transact digitally financially. Some of the higher-end solutions that require a smartphone are obviously limited to people who have a smartphone — around 20 percent of the entire mobile devices.

However, if you look at the data, the number of transactions and number of users is really very small. There are reports of lack of user-friendliness, long response time, etc.

When you look at a rural area where there is patchy, unreliable connectivity then the practical availability of even the ability to transact does become somewhat doubtful.

The situation is, therefore, much more mixed than one would imagine just looking at the number of mobile phones and drawing some simplistic inferences.

But one area where immediate steps are possible is to bring in those who can but don't (use the Internet/mobile) for digital financial transactions. I believe this percentage is quite significant. There are people who may not be transacting today, but they can with a bit of encouragement and support actually make that transition.



R. Chandrashekhar: 'Digital India has a number of components and many moving parts which need to come together'

What would that percentage be?

In the absence of a study it would be very difficult to say but a fairly large number of people who have mobile phones and smartphones would fall in that category. I would imagine it would be over 50 percent. That category of people need to be educated and made aware of how they can transact financially. Then you have variants of people who have a mobile but no bank account, Aadhar card but no bank account.

Therefore, what people need is not a wide-ranging lesson on all the options, but one that is simply tailored to that individual. It's not difficult to learn. It is so simple that someone who learns won't feel tempted to go back to the old ways. So, these are areas you can do something about in the short term.

How difficult is this? Is it bleak?

I would say it is challenging. I am optimistic. Used imaginatively, this situation can provide a big boost to bring more people into the digital financial mode.

You have restricted yourself to the mobile?

Yes. I think when you are dealing with a billion people you have to look at what is instantly scalable. Everyone knows we have cards and POS (point of service) devices and we are accustomed to using those in shops, restaurants, etc. In urban areas this is taken as part of daily life. But it is much less in rural areas. If you look at card penetration in terms of credit cards it is less than 5 percent and 95 percent are debit cards. Therefore, card penetration is

‘It is undoubtedly a monumental challenge. But if we are able to work on all the elements in a concerted way then the transition is possible in India at a much faster pace than anywhere globally.’

confined to bank accounts. I think most people who have a card almost definitely have a mobile phone. Somebody who has a credit card has every single option available. A person who has a debit card may have slightly fewer options.

But it's really people who don't have a card or don't have a bank account who are part of the real challenge because pre-demonetisation that transition was happening at a certain pace. Post-demonetisation it will happen at a hugely accelerated pace for the pains of demonetisation to be reduced to the minimum.

Doesn't the success of this depend on the success of the Digital India programme?

Of course it does. But given the reality in the context of digital financial payments, this is a simpler and narrower quest. When you come to Digital India it's a much broader question. To say that if you had solved the bigger question the smaller question would have been easy is almost a

trivial statement. It is what you can do to solve the immediate problem even as you are grappling with the bigger problem.

There are people at the grassroots who tell us Aadhar doesn't work, you can't get a computer fixed and there is no connectivity.

Digital India has a large number of components and many moving parts which need to come together. Connectivity, for example. The latest statistics are that, barring about 30,000 villages, the rest are connected.

Again, this definition of connected and what we mean by it, is an important question. If connectivity is available in a small physical part of the village then you may call it connected but a large part of the village may not be connected. Then, because of the lack of power or equipment maintenance, connectivity may be available only for a few hours a day. Perhaps people can't charge their mobile phones because there isn't dedicated electricity. So

there are all these challenges in rural areas where the mere tickmarking of a box that tells us a village is connected doesn't give us the true picture.

The second thing is that the more interesting or sophisticated things you can do with the Internet and mobile require a smartphone, reliable connectivity, greater bandwidth — all of which are non-existent in rural areas. And anything that requires somewhat broadband — I won't even say true broadband — is a challenge in villages.

The third is the affordability of devices. Affordability by people in the lower economic strata in villages is a limitation. But it is my belief that cost is relative. It's a question of cost for what? The cost of the device and connectivity is high or low depending on what people can do with it and what they can get out of it. For many people in India, I believe for a significant population in India, the mobile is an instrument people use to supplement their income — whether it's a vegetable vendor or a taxi driver or any other service. It has become a lifeline.

Language is also a big issue. Many of the service providers we have been interacting with, including mobile financial payments, have reported a big jump in their business once they have made available a local language interface.

We need a far greater degree of domestic innovation in terms of making apps and services available to people which are relevant to their situation and their problems in life.

It may be something simple like a minor innovation some years ago that enabled a farmer to turn off his pump set using his mobile phone. It makes a huge difference to the lives of people and there are millions of such innovations that are possible. You need a set of people who are familiar with the real problems of people on the ground and can quickly build solutions. And these solutions are not rocket science.

Would you say demonetisation provides us the impetus to do more and faster?

As far as digital financial inclusion is concerned, I would say certainly it does. As far as the other things are concerned, yes, it does help in creating a certain pull. Once you have experienced the comfort, convenience and power of transacting online, your readiness to absorb other things becomes much higher and we know that the fastest growing area in telecom is in the rural areas. The rapid rise in demand is also from the rural areas. The first revolution in India was putting the mobile phone in every hand, which is pretty much done, illiterate or literate, village or city. The next step is to use it for something other than conversing. The steps after that will follow much more easily. Bringing people on to the digital transaction mode is the most challenging aspect.

So it is going to be about people being able to use all that you spoke about. Are you positive about it?

It is undoubtedly a monumental challenge. It is wishful thinking to believe otherwise. But if we are able to work on all the elements in a concerted way then the transition is possible in India at a much faster pace than anywhere globally. The mobile revolution in India happened faster than in any other country, including China, though we began a little later. Here, too, we are coming in a little later

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than other countries, including China, but the ground has been laid. There needs to be an overall gameplan for these things under Digital India.

There needs to be an interface between the state sector, research and private enterprise to achieve this?

Yes, I think that first of all one has to be very clear which of these can be met by market forces and which can be met by direct State intervention and which require State intervention by providing an enabling policy framework. These are three distinct boxes. We know that in the telecom space almost 50 years since Independence we got 50 million phone connections. With the right policy framework and the right technology evolution stage, in a little over 10 years we went to a billion.

Similarly, here too it's a question of recognising when you need to put in place an enabling policy and letting the private sector run with it. That's the kind of frenzied pace we need. It is beyond the competence of the government to do the programme directly. You do require the nimbleness, agility and innovation of the private sector together with extremely farsighted and perceptive policies.

What you are talking about then are socially impactful market forces with the right regulation?

Socially impactful, viable programmes, which are scalable, and supported by an enabling policy framework. The challenge is that regulation has to be nimble, and continuously adapted to changing times and with a light touch. It is practically impossible in today's world of fast-changing technology for regulation to anticipate technology. Regulation should not try and solve a problem before it has occurred in the fond hope that it will avert the problem.

Does this change the focus of NASSCOM's digital literacy programme?

I think digital literacy has always included many dimensions. It's not the digital equivalent of the 3Rs. It's also been about life skills — what you need to be able to do for your own livelihood, for enhancing your income, accessing services and so on. Digital financial literacy was always a part of the overall digital literacy programme. What demonetisation has done is to increase the importance of that and actually fast-forward it.

How much of a concern should cyber security be?

In my opinion it is something we should worry about the most. It's not cyber security simply in terms of hackers. It's about simple do's and don'ts in life for people using this medium and especially people using it for the first time. Simple things like not sharing your password or changing your password or sharing information with people you don't know very well and the kind of phishing messages people get. I think in the early stages people falling prey to that is quite high. Even regular users fall for that.

The second part is for the government, the regulatory system and others to balance ease of use and convenience of use with the need for security. It is important when you want to get a large number of people to use these technologies without putting off the early entrants. ■

THE IMPOSSIBLE WAS POSSIBLE WITH AMMA



J. Jayalalithaa's welfare schemes improved social and economic indicators in Tamil Nadu

T.S. Sudhir
Chennai

IT is an emotional moment for Sumathi, 35, who is employed in a private firm in Chennai. She is at the final resting place of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, by the MGR Memorial at the Marina Beach. As she folds her hands to offer her prayers for the departed soul of the departed leader, she finds it difficult to hold back her tears.

"From the time I conceived my son to the time he was born, everything was taken care of by Amma," said Sumathi. She was referring to Tamil Nadu's government schemes under which every pregnant woman is tracked by the healthcare system.

"Even biological parents don't do as much as Amma did. When a child is born, everything would be provided for, including a sheet to hold the baby and even a mosquito net," she said.

When it is pointed out that this is a government scheme, Kokila, who works as a librarian, chips in to talk of Amma's personal touch. "She planned very well. She knew what was needed. From a girl's education to the amount of jewellery that is to be given for a girl's marriage, everything," says Kokila.

A few kilometres away, the Amma Canteen in Egmore is a bustling place. On 6 December, the day Tamil Nadu bid farewell to Jayalalithaa, the government took forward the goodwill it has earned by offering a free meal to everyone. It kept its canteens open, serving people with food when all other establishments, including eateries, in Chennai were shut. In terms of outreach, it did what Jayalalithaa always envisaged with Amma Canteens — that they provide hot, hygienic and nutritious food at subsidised rates, especially to the poorest of the poor.

"You won't find beggars on Chennai's streets, asking for food or people sifting through garbage bins looking for leftover food," said K. Anandan, a Chennai resident. Social activists point out that the days of senior citizens being left uncared for by their insensitive children are now a thing of the past. The Amma Canteens where anyone can have a hearty meal for ₹5, ensures no one goes to sleep on an empty stomach.

The Amma Canteens, which have been emulated in states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, have been the showpiece of Jayalalithaa's welfare push. Since they began in 2013, they have sold over 330

million *idlis* and 170 million *chappatis* through 300 outlets in Tamil Nadu till September 2016. The number of *idlis* sold is expected to cross 500 million in 2017. The intention may not have been to win a vote for every *idli* sold. But that Jayalalithaa had found that the way to a voter's choice is through the stomach cannot be discounted as the results of the assembly elections in May 2016 showed.

Social activist Chandramohan points out that though Jayalalithaa's schemes were seen as populist, they were a big hit among the people. "Apart from the Amma branding of products, she also expanded the list of items for the Public Distribution System (PDS) in ration shops so that poor people could get more food products at a cheaper rate. This helped the poor and was one of the reasons she got re-elected despite her many other faults including an autocratic way of functioning and corruption charges," says Chandramohan.

But through the years, Tamil Nadu has also put in place a robust healthcare system that reached out to neglected pockets. The fact that Jayalalithaa was sworn in as chief minister six times, means she gets a large part of that credit. Social indices like the maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate are low because of various processes put in place like maternal death audit, setting up of tertiary hospitals for neonatal emergency care and critical infant care within a few kilometre radius of every place. Apart from this, well-equipped primary healthcare centres, a very well trained and motivated professional health services cadre, 108 ambulance services being used for pregnant mothers, in addition to critically ill patients, meant that Tamil Nadu was able to make a significant difference to those who needed quality healthcare.

With some drawbacks, the state's public health system works well. Nearly all babies in Tamil Nadu are now delivered in clinics — up from 87 percent in 2002 to 98.9 percent in 2012.

Other data reflect this healthy state of affairs too. Tamil Nadu is India's number one state according to

the National Health Mission, on fertility rate, with 1.7 children per woman on an average. Infant mortality rate is 21 deaths per 1,000 live births (2012 figure), making it the second best after Kerala. It scores well on the maternal mortality rate indices as well, recording 90 deaths of mothers per 100,000 births. It stands at second position after Kerala on this index (2013-14).

Add to this the Anganwadi system that took care of nutritional, educational and healthcare needs. What makes this system work successfully in Tamil Nadu, making people demand services under the ICDS, is the qualified workforce that is employed.

'Even biological parents don't do as much as Amma did. When the child is born, everything is provided.'

The midday meal scheme, that has been vogue in Tamil Nadu for close to five decades, from the time of Kamaraj and continued by MG Ramachandran, has kept a close watch on what should be given to children. Not only did it lead to better attendance in schools, but also ensured that the system recorded the young population in Tamil Nadu.

While Jayalalithaa's schemes of giving bicycles, school uniforms, laptops, books, shoes have been criticised as dipping into the state exchequer to pursue a welfare agenda, the larger goals of such measures cannot be underestimated. Over the years, it has led to high awareness about education, especially for the girl child.

With a literacy rate of 80.3 per cent according to

the 2011 census and 73.8 per cent among women, Tamil Nadu is in the top 15 states in the country. The expectation is that the 2011-21 decade will see that percentage improve.

A group of women in Tiruppur were discussing the different Amma schemes targeted at women when I was travelling through this part of western Tamil Nadu in the run-up to the assembly elections in April. "I have Amma fan and Amma mixer-grinder. What is wrong in giving such items for free if they help make our lives at home a bit more comfortable?" asked one of the women.

But there is a flipside as well. The AIADMK was the only party that refused to promise prohibition if it was re-elected in Tamil Nadu. That, for many social activists, has been the biggest failing of the Jayalalithaa regime though she shut down 500 shops after returning to power and reduced the timings of the outlets. They argue that addiction to liquor has led to domestic violence.

But the National Crime Records Bureau data of 2015 does not bear that out. Tamil Nadu, in fact, records the lowest rate of crimes against women, with 17 crimes registered per 100,000 population.

Those in the government argue that the money raised from sale of liquor is necessary for subsidising the welfare policies of the AIADMK regime. The criticism then is that the government is only taking money from the poor, getting them addicted to liquor and making a virtue of giving freebies out of the revenue earned.

At Rajaji Hall, where Jayalalithaa's body was kept in state before her last rites on 6 December, several women, none of them with any affiliation to the party, spoke about how Jayalalithaa had been an inspiration. The courage to have taken on and succeeded politics, a male bastion, was something that endeared her to them. As one of the constables, Gomathi, who was on duty at the venue said, that is the biggest takeaway from Jaya's life — that nothing is impossible. ■



Women weep at Jayalalithaa's funeral.



A woman breaks down in sorrow

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

Cadre for midwives to give them status

PUBLIC health experts, nurses and NGOs working in women and child health programmes are keen that the government create a special cadre of nurse-midwives for rural India. The midwives should be trained, adequately paid and have a clear role.

Although maternal mortality is declining in India, 44,000 women still die every year during pregnancy and childbirth. This accounts for 15 percent of global maternal deaths. Half the women who die in India are under the age of 21.

"If a cadre of trained nurse-midwives is created maternal and infant mortality rates will come down. Doctors are not always available," says Evelyn P. Kannan, secretary-general of the Trained Nurses' Association of India (TNAI).

There is the Janani Suraksha Yojna (JSY), a cash-based incentive provided by the government to promote institutional deliveries in public hospitals and health centres. But it is well-known that such hospitals and health facilities are ill-equipped and overstretched.

Only 10-15 percent of high-risk women need referral by midwives for emergency care and specialist interventions, says Dr Leila Caleb Varkey, a public health researcher and senior adviser at Centre for Catalysing Change. "Evidence has shown that around 85 percent of the time women can go through labour with support from skilled hands, without needing medical or surgical intervention," she says.

"During my training at the Christian Fellowship Hospital at Oddanchatram in interior Tamil Nadu, nurses independently conducted every delivery and doctors were called in only for emergencies. We were completely involved in the entire antenatal, intra-natal and postnatal process," says Kannan.

But as things stand there is no exclusive course for midwives. It is tagged with nursing courses like Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), Diploma in General Nursing and Midwifery, B.Sc (Hons) Nursing, Post Basic Nursing and a one-year diploma programme called Nurse Practitioners in Midwifery.

As a result, students don't get hands-on training, says Professor Manju Chhugani, principal of Ruffaida College of Nursing, Jamia Hamdard in New Delhi. At best, after completion of the four-year diploma or graduate course in nursing a dual certification as Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife is given.

The other issue confronting public health experts, nurses and NGOs asking for a separate cadre is the low status of midwives. They are seen as *dais* and the word *dai* is regarded as a pejorative.

The government no longer recognises *dais* as health providers although they play an important role in slums and rural areas. But even a well-trained Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife, has shaky standing in society. Most are treated as mere appendages of doctors, whereas they could perform far larger roles. In fact, Kannan says that it should be mandatory for every normal delivery to be conducted by a nurse-midwife. To enable this, a better nurse-to-patient ratio, adequate hands-on training



A mannequin is used to demonstrate how to handle a normal delivery

and logistic support should be put in place.

At the grassroots, ANMs do the job of midwives. They were originally supposed to conduct normal births not only in homes but at government health sub-centres. If the delivery looked like it would be a complicated one the ANM's job was to refer the woman to a primary health centre. But over the years it was found that most sub-centres were ill-equipped for basic deliveries. "We have been around in the field and found that in the sub-centres there aren't even basics, like electricity or water," says Dr Aparajita Gogoi, executive director of Centre for Catalysing Change and national coordinator for White Ribbon Alliance India (WRAI), which works in the field of maternal health.

Moreover, until 2005, ANMs were not allowed to initiate simple life saving procedures before referral to higher levels of care. After arduous lobbying with



Professor Manju Chhugani

the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, civil society organisations like WHO and WRAI were able to get regulations changed.

Now, after completing what activists say is a questionable 21-days in Skill Birth Attendant (SBA) training, ANMs can give antenatal, intra-natal and postnatal care like immunisation. To induce labour or for management of post partum haemorrhage they can administer oxytocin injections, manage eclampsia with a first dose of magnesium sulphate, help resuscitate women, administer intravenous fluids and accompany women to higher health facilities.

"But the ANM ends up spending just 12 percent of her time in midwifery," says Gogoi. A lot of her time goes into immunisation, family planning, paperwork like maintaining records and reports and village health nutrition. So her additional role as a multipurpose healthcare worker dilutes her role in providing maternal and child healthcare. "What we are calling for is better skills, better capacity building and standards. We would also like midwives to have the skills and the rights to do more than what they are doing at present," says Gogoi.

Chhugani is convinced that the plight of midwives can be improved by starting a separate cadre of midwives who have more status in society. This can be achieved by upgrading their financial status, providing clarity to their work, creating separate positions for them and improving career opportunities, she says.

The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), now under the National Health Mission, was launched in 2005 to address the health needs

PICTURES BY AJIT KRISHNA



Daksh Skills Labs have been set up in five states

of underserved rural areas. One of its initiatives was the appointment of Accredited Social Health Workers (ASHAs) who would link the community with the public healthcare system. The frontline ASHAs are an additional support system to

the ANMs as they mobilise communities and spread awareness of safe maternal and child healthcare practices.

Likewise with the appointment of a second

hands-on clinical skills. One of the important features of the lab is a simulation centre to demonstrate best practices in carrying out safe deliveries, emergency and neonatal care and the administration of intra uterine contraceptive devices.

On a visit to Jamia Hamdard that hosts one of the five national-level skills labs in Delhi and the National Capital Region, Dr Asmita Acharya, master trainer of the lab, is hard at work to test and evaluate the skills of a mixed group of ANMs, staff nurses and health providers.

She uses mannequins and a simulated labour room to evaluate just how much they have learnt over their six-day training. "Simulation helps to develop our group's confidence in being able to carry out important procedures independently particularly when they are working and need to develop clinical skills," says Acharya. ■



Dr Aparajita Gogoi

'Evidence has shown that 85 percent of the time women can go through labour with support from skilled hands.'

Samita's World

by SAMITA RATHOR



Tracing the jackfruit family



Thomas Kattakkayam has collected 114 varieties of jackfruit and plans to get to 200

Shree Padre
Kottayam

JACKFRUIT was born and cultivated in India but how many varieties do we have? Nobody really knows. But ask Thomas Kattakkayam, a 71-year-old farmer in Kottayam district, and he can provide a few clues. Kattakkayam has collected 114 varieties of jackfruit and plans to stop at 200.

Throughout last year Kattakkayam was away from home, scouting around for good jackfruit varieties. Most of his selections are from his own district, Kottayam. He has not selected any variety without first tasting the fruit. "Only 40 percent of what I ate could be shortlisted," he says.

Kattakkayam is actually a rubber farmer. His 10-acre estate near Pala in Kottayam district is thick with rubber trees. Recently, he cleared one acre of rubber to make room for the jackfruit plants he had painstakingly collected. On that land he planted 100 jackfruit grafts. Kattakkayam is carefully watching them grow, assessing their qualities and picking out the best varieties for propagation.

"In five or six years, I hope to be able to harvest jackfruit throughout the year. Then I'll make it my staple crop," he says. It is not without reason that this seasoned farmer is keen to grow jackfruit 365 days of the year.

Jackfruit isn't easily available in Kerala in October and November, its traditional off-season. Yet, Kattakkayam has already consumed two jackfruit. One has passed his taste test and will be propagated shortly.

Kattakkayam has two very valuable all-season varieties of jackfruit trees. "I have been observing both for the past 18 months. At least once in three or four months, I visited the trees to check their performance," he recalls.

Kattakkayam says these two mother trees yield fruits of an average weight of 12 kg. About 50 fruits

are currently growing on them. The lowest yield he observed was about 20 fruits per tree. In terms of taste, he said, the yield from both trees was succulent.

Another two cultivars he has grown yield fruits for nine to 10 months in a year. Kattakkayam has already planted 10 all-season cultivars and six 10-month bearers. When they start producing fruits, he will have jackfruit every day, he says.

'About 25 percent of the jackfruit varieties I have collected are outstanding,' says Kattakkayam.

collection are 12 *then varikka* cultivars. *Then* in Malayalam means honey and *varikka* means firm-fleshed jackfruit.

"There is diversity in my *then varikka* cultivars. A few secrete sweetness akin to honey. Some lack this but have an attractive honey-like smell. The quantity of this honey-like secretion varies from two drops to six," explains Kattakkayam with the enthusiasm of a high school boy.

One of the *then varikka* varieties has two special features. It is red-fleshed with bright red carpels. This type is called *chembarathi varikka* in Malayalam. The other cultivar has the aroma of ginger.

Kottayam is the rubber district of Kerala. Pala, Kattakkayam's region, is full of rubber trees. Many farmers haven't kept aside even a bit of land to grow

anything else. In fact, they cut many trees including some of the best jackfruit trees in the district to make room for rubber.

HEALTH BENEFITS

What made Kattakkayam plunge into selecting jackfruit varieties and conserving the best ones?

He says that last year, during the jackfruit season, he started eating the fruit regularly. He noticed an improvement in his health. Kattakkayam ate jackfruit as a traditional dish called *Chakka Pulukk* and as fresh fruit.

"My eight-year-old blood pressure problem got completely cured. I was convinced that jackfruit is such a healthy food it should be regularly eaten. I used to take Ayurvedic pills regularly to keep my blood pressure in check. Now I have completely stopped medication. I am, of course, getting my blood pressure checked regularly."

It was jackfruit's positive impact on Kattakkayam's health that prompted him to 'undo' the mistake of yesteryears. He decided to clear one acre of rubber and replace it with jackfruit. "In the 1970s the government gave us a subsidy of ₹3,000 per acre to shift to rubber. It was a tempting incentive. Now we have to work hard to retain our valuable jackfruit cultivars and spread them around," he says.

His 100 jackfruit grafts have been planted with a distance of 20 feet between them. Kattakkayam himself does the budding. His earlier experience of running rubber nurseries made him an expert in budding.

"About 25 percent of the varieties I have collected are outstanding," he says. Kattakkayam is producing budded plants of these in big numbers. The all-season variety is now highly sought after. All the grafts are sold within a few days. Kattakkayam plans to develop a bud bank of mother trees so that he can produce jackfruit plants in a big way. Next year's target is to produce 15,000 plants.

THE SEARCH

How does Kattakkayam get information about the best varieties of jackfruit? His reply is disarming. "While travelling by bus," he says. He makes it a point to befriend people on the bus and ask for help after explaining his mission. Fellow travellers have helped in a big way.

Kattakkayam has pursued his passion zealously for quite some time. At first his family wasn't impressed. There was even silent resentment. Slowly, recognition started coming his way. "Farm Society, a farmers' organisation, and *Safalam*, a local publication, honoured him at a public function recently.

News began to spread and now a number of farmers call on Kattakkayam. Tip-offs of good jackfruit varieties are pouring in. Kattakkayam plans to propagate and spread the best ones among farmers.

His mission doesn't stop with selling these plants. "If you stick to jackfruit, other local fruits and honey, you can keep most illnesses away," he explains. "No harm if we keep the rice out. Through my example and through the plants I sell, I want to spread this message too." ■

Contact: Thomas Kattakkayam - 94952 13264 (8 - 10 pm)

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Honouring India's river warriors

Civil Society News
New Delhi

SEVENTY percent of India's rivers are destroyed or critically degraded. As for the remaining 30 percent, studies are required to gauge their condition. This was one of the startling conclusions of India Rivers Week (IRW) held in Delhi over 28-30 November after assessing the state of 295 Indian rivers.

More than 130 river enthusiasts from across the country congregated at IRW 2016. This time, the focus was the 'State of India's Rivers'. Eighteen authors presented reports about the health of rivers in their respective states or basins. A comprehensive River Health Assessment Methodology was proposed and deliberated upon, possibly for the first time in India. The report on the State of India's Rivers and River Health Assessment Methodology will be finalised over the next few months in consultation with the participants of IRW 2016.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Delhi Water Minister Kapil Mishra congratulated the organisers and said, "We all have a similar vision about the future of our rivers. But we do not know the way from the present to where we want to reach. What the government currently does is clearly not leading to our goal. It would be great if such meetings were to provide this roadmap." Anupam Mishra, in his last public appearance and very unwell, delivered the inaugural address and said, "If we do not change the way we govern, there is no possibility of rejuvenating our rivers. Changing the marble stones and poles at the ghats cannot lead to rejuvenated rivers."

Dr Kalyan Rudra, known for his expertise on the Ganga and rivers of West Bengal, speaking on "Who Governs India's Rivers?", said, "The canal mania of the British was followed by the dam mania of the government of independent India. But the decision-making does not take into consideration the impact of dams on the health and services of rivers. This must change." Prof Brij Gopal delivered the annual River Lecture in a session chaired by former Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh.

As in the past two years, a jury headed by Mishra selected the Bhagirath Prayas Samman (BPS) recipients. Two individuals and two organisations were selected in this third year of the BPS awards for their efforts to conserve, rejuvenate and save our rivers. They were selected from a large number of nominations received through an open process and based on a set of criteria. Justice

Madan Lokur of the Supreme Court gave away the awards comprising a plaque, a citation, a shawl and ₹60,000.

The awardees this year were the Himdhara Collective from Himachal Pradesh, Citizens Concerned on Dams & Development from Manipur, Ritwick Dutta, a lawyer known for fighting numerous cases for the cause of rivers, and Dr Dinesh Kumar Mishra for his path-breaking, consistent work on floods and flood management in Bihar.

Giving away the awards, Justice Lokur said: "BPS awardees are making commendable efforts. The Supreme Court has also passed several orders on rivers. The government has spent perhaps over ₹1,500 crore on cleaning the Yamuna alone, but we have achieved nothing. If we do not have rivers flowing with unpolluted waters, we are in deep trouble. Please share the outcomes of your deliberations so that even if there are disagreements, we can work towards improving the state of rivers."

Union Water Resources Secretary Shashi Shekhar, speaking at the concluding session, said, "Rivers are most important gifts of nature. Ever since reservoirs became temples of modern India, rivers have become the victims. There is no assessment as to what dams do to the rivers and their services.

'If we do not change the way we govern, there is no possibility of rejuvenating our rivers.'

Most dams in the last three decades are unable to meet cost-benefit criteria. They seem to be pushed with the intention of only to construct. Can we come out of this nexus? Dead, dying rivers are unable to perform any of their numerous roles for society. If we cannot break this nexus, it is not possible to rejuvenate rivers. So far we have not been able to take sufficient steps to rejuvenate the Ganga."

To a specific question that since India has no agency either at the Centre or in any of the states, that monitors, assesses or reports on the state of our rivers, so how can we bridge this lacunae, Shekhar's reply was: "Yes, there is no such agency, but we need detailed thinking on how we can fill this gap."

Readers are invited by SANDRP (South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People) to help spread the word about India Rivers Week and BPS awards and nominate anyone who deserves the award for exemplary work related to river conservation. Healthy rivers are not a luxury, but a necessity for sustained existence of society. It is not a binary choice of development or rivers, but the only option we have is development with healthy rivers. And this needs participation. ■

Email: ht.sandrp@gmail.com

Setting the disability equation right

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

THE NCPEDP-Mindtree Helen Keller Awards were conferred on 3 December, World Disability Day. Individuals and companies were honoured for being role models themselves and for creating an enabling environment for people with disabilities to get training and jobs.

"The awards celebrate the many disabled persons who have broken the glass ceiling in the IT, banking and other sectors," said Javed Abidi, honorary director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP).

He described the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill as "history in the making." The Bill would be a major milestone since it would create equitable rights and opportunities for India's disabled citizens, he said. Parliament has now passed the Bill.

The list of disabilities has been increased to 21 and includes victims of acid attacks and those with Parkinson's disease. Reservation for jobs has been increased to four per cent. The government has been given a two-year deadline to create barrier free access for people with disabilities in transport and infrastructure.

The chief guest this year was Bibek Debroy, member of NITI Aayog. He said NITI Aayog is drafting a vision document for India and it will incorporate suggestions from civil society organisations like NCPEDP.

Here is a list of the winners of this year's NCPEDP-Mindtree Helen Keller Awards.

INDIVIDUALS

Cegeo Thekkel, Peer Director, AMBA, Bengaluru

Cegeo Thekkel is intellectually disabled, with an IQ level of 65 and 70 percent disability. He was encouraged to find new beginnings by AMBA, a non-profit that leverages ICT and peer-driven processes for the economic empowerment of intellectually disabled adults. Thekkel not only helps himself but shows the way to others too. He is now a Peer Director for Training and Supervision within the AMBA Core Centre and Trainer for special educators for AMBA's partner centres. He leads a team of 25 peer data operators and helps the peer group to complete their tasks.

Deepa Narasimhan, Head, Diversity and Inclusion, APJ, Dell-EMC, Bengaluru

Thirty-one year old Deepa Narasimhan hates to be stereotyped. Though she goes around in a motorised wheelchair, she is clearly not confined. A committed advocate of mainstreaming the disabled in the workplace, she has rapidly gone up the corporate ladder. Her efforts led to the setting up of internships for people with profound disabilities at Dell-EMC. Frequent



Javed Abidi of the NCPEDP with the winners of this year's awards

sensitisation workshops and interactive demos of using assistive technologies followed. "It is important to have the right mindset and face challenges. I had to figure out how to go beyond inner and outer barriers," explains Narasimhan who describes herself as "very ambitious".

Pratik Rajiv Jindal, Assistant Manager, Human Resources — Global Strategic Hiring, Wipro Limited, Bengaluru

Visually impaired Pratik Rajiv Jindal is a successful executive. Beginning as a business consultant, in 2011 he went on a long-term client assignment in Dubai and London. He went steadily up the corporate ladder. In 2014 he was inducted into a focus team that designed, implemented and managed the CEO's visionary initiative, Global 100. One of Wipro's thought leaders, he has authored research papers and constantly honed his skills. He has also worked with Wipro's Diversity Team to promote and sustain an inclusive workplace.

SUPPORTER OF EMPLOYMENT

Dr Jasmer Singh Saini, Professor, Rural Development, and Head, Centre for Physically Challenged Persons, National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research (NITTR), Chandigarh

Dr Jasmer Singh Saini became a disability activist when his younger son was born deaf in 1986. "In the process of rehabilitating, educating and establishing him, I experienced disability very closely," he explains. Saini has made a significant contribution in operationalising the Centrally

Sponsored Scheme for Mainstreaming Persons with Disabilities in Technical and Vocational Education in 50 polytechnics across the country since 2011. All disability-related initiatives at the institute have been initiated by him with the support of the top management.

Pankajam Sridevi, Managing Director, ANZ Bengaluru Hub

Pankajam Sridevi leads a team of almost 7,000 people in Technology and Operations. She is the driving force behind ANZ Bengaluru's diversity and inclusion initiatives through her focus on increasing the hiring of people with disabilities. "ANZ is an equal opportunities employer. All persons with disabilities in ANZ are in mainstream jobs," she says with pride. ANZ has been hiring persons with disabilities for the past three years. Today it has 145 staff with disabilities such as autism, orthopaedic disability and cerebral palsy. ANZ has also created a library of banking terms in sign language. Pankajam leads advocacy initiatives to promote the hiring of disabled people.

Professor Sanjeev Arjunrao Sonawane, Head of Education and Extension Department, Savitribai Phule Pune University

Sanjeev Arjunrao Sonawane is a reputed researcher in the sphere of Inclusive Education and Practices. He established Advance Technology Blind Students' Learning Centre in 2008, which works as a support service unit for students with disabilities in over 700 affiliated colleges and 52 academic departments of the university. He has developed a

university education model for mainstreaming students with disabilities, by creating a barrier-free environment in academics and accessible work culture so that a larger number of students with disabilities can be employed through technological capability training.

COMPANIES

Accenture Services Private Limited

Accenture's India Accessibility Programme and Career Path Framework aims at making the company's workplace accessible to all. This is done via an Accessibility Council. A clear career path for people with disabilities has also been worked out.

Aegis Limited

Aegis promotes employment of people with disabilities by partnering 27 NGOs worldwide and over 100 institutions including employment exchanges, vocational rehabilitation centres

and NGOs in India. There are also induction, training and sensitisation programmes on diversity and inclusion, besides a clear career path for the disabled and promotion of accessibility at the workplace.

Cisco Systems India Private Limited

Along with taking people with disabilities on board as interns, Cisco partners with NGOs to provide training to people with disabilities. External partnerships and an inclusive physical environment are the other strategies of the company.

DELL-EMC

The Disability Empowerment Resource Group (DERG) at Dell-EMC is a support network to bolster and provide a knowledge base for people with disabilities or family members with special needs.

State Bank of India

SBI employs a significant number of people with disabilities. It has an Inclusion Centre and Grievance Redressal Mechanism. It provides specialised training for skilling, provision of assistive aids and post-training field implementation.

Synchrony Financial, India

Synchrony Financial has a dedicated People with Disabilities Network (PDN) which identifies roles and functions to provide employment to people with disabilities. Synchrony Financial currently employs more than 67 people with disabilities and provides them equal opportunities to perform and grow in the system. ■

PICTURES BY BILAL BAHADUR



Kashmiris are hoping that winter will attract tourists

Hospitable Kashmir seeking tourists

Jehangir Rashid
Srinagar

AFTER being pushed to the wall during the summer agitation the beleaguered tourism sector in Kashmir was relieved when three top separatist leaders of the Valley unexpectedly issued an open invitation to tourists to come and visit 'Paradise on Earth'.

Separatist leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mohammad Yasin Malik in a joint statement asked the people to come and enjoy the hospitality of Kashmir. They also invited the Amarnath Yatris and said that people coming to Kashmir on pilgrimage should not feel scared.

"Everyone in the world, including India, is most welcome to Kashmir. We invite them to come and enjoy our hospitality and the beauty of paradise on earth," said the separatists. They said that since centuries Kashmiris have been providing exemplary hospitality and safety to tourists and Yatris from the whole world including India.

The statement has come as big relief for the people associated with the tourism sector in the Valley. The arrival of tourists to Kashmir plummeted this summer because of the agitation that broke out after the killing of Hizbul

Mujahideen commander, Burhan Muzaffar Wani.

"The statement issued by the resistance camp is timely. It will clear misconceptions among the intending visitors. It will promote Kashmiri tourism outside the state," said Mohammad Ibrahim Siah, President, Travel Agents Society of Kashmir (TASK).

Siah said that the tourism sector is facing its worst ever crisis and there is need for coordinated efforts by all sections of society to revive tourism in the Valley.

Abdul Majid, President, Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association (KHARA), said that tourists intending to visit Kashmir should lend a deaf ear to the negative campaign being carried on by some



people. He said that there are some 'elements' who want to damage the tourism sector of Kashmir.

"Even under the worst conditions Kashmiris have kept their tradition of hospitality alive. We hope that tourists, without any fear and reservations, will plan their holidays and visit the state with the same zeal and passion as before," said Majid.

The Travel Agents Association of Kashmir (TAAK) while welcoming the statement of the separatists said that the announcement was a major development for the people associated with the tourism trade. They were waiting for such an announcement so that they could earn their livelihood.

"Hospitality runs in the blood of Kashmiris. This has been admitted across the world. Even during the unrest, tourists were taken care of by the people here and not even a single tourist was harmed. We request media organisations, especially the national media, to run a positive campaign so that negative perceptions about Kashmir are cleared among intending visitors," said Manzoor Sidiq, President TAAK.

The newly floated Kashmir Economic Forum (KEF) believes that peace is essential for the promotion of the tourism industry especially in the Kashmir Valley. The forum believes that resolution of the Kashmir issue would help both business and tourism to thrive.

"The statement of the separatists is welcome, but a sustained dialogue process to find a solution to the Kashmir issue will help business grow and attract tourists. For tourism to survive, a peaceful environment is necessary. Both tourism and other business sectors would then grow," said Mohammad Showkat Chowdhary, Chairman KEF.

Besides the people associated with the tourism trade, ordinary people are also elated over the statement of separatists. People, on the whole, believe that the statement is a welcome one and that the future of Kashmir more so its tourism is bright.

"We have lost this year's tourist season to the agitation, but the recent statement has rekindled hope that the situation will become normal in the Valley in the coming months. Since the economy in Kashmir, to a great extent, depends on tourism it is important that stakeholders like the separatist leaders pitch in and do their bit in normalising the situation," said Shahid Ahmad, a city resident.

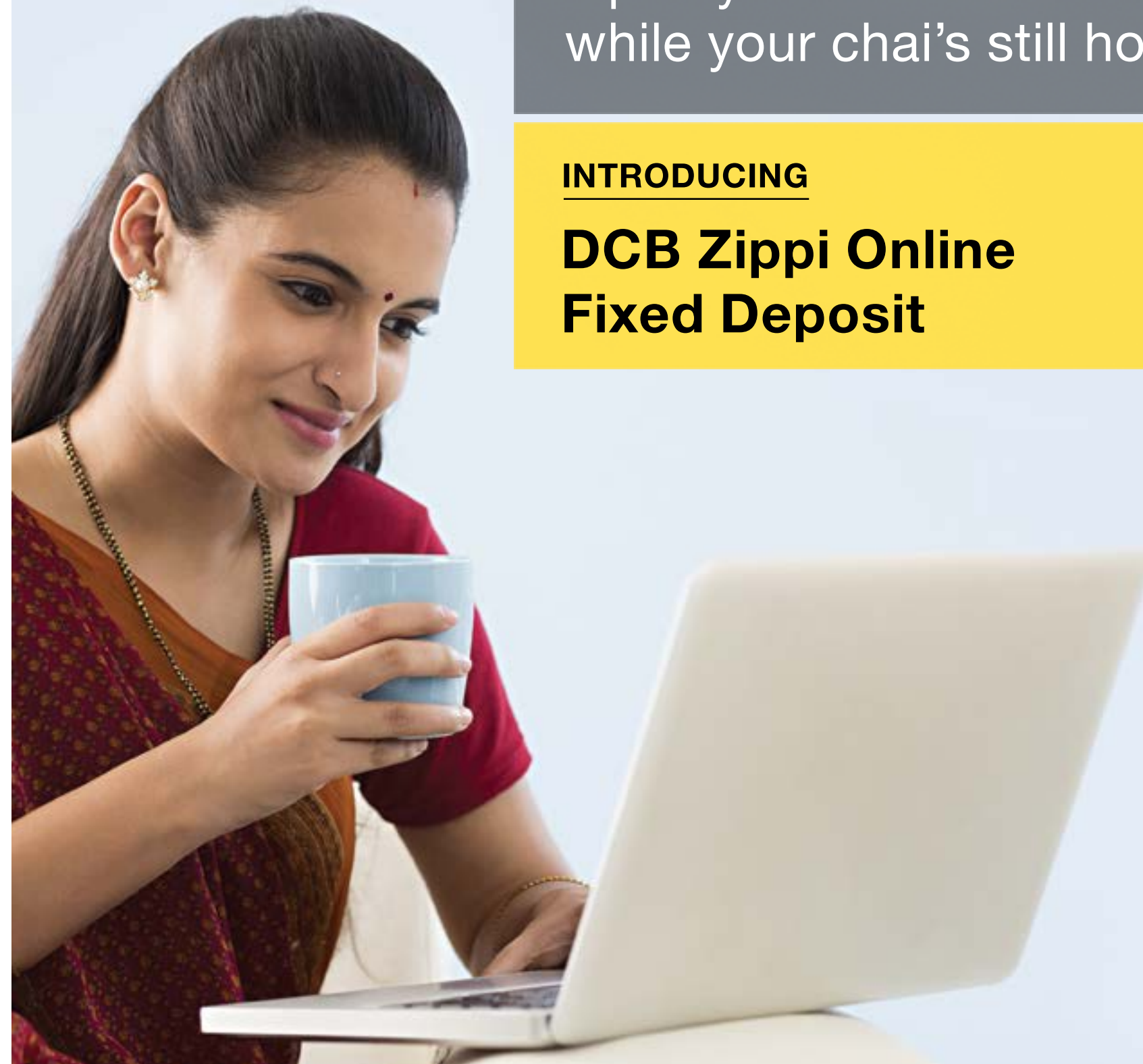
Mohammad Anwar, a resident of Dalgate, exuded confidence that the statement of the separatists would lead to a good inflow of tourists to Kashmir in winter. He said that world renowned health resorts like Gulmarg would attract tourists from within and outside India, if the situation returns to normal in Kashmir.

Very few tourists both domestic and foreign visited Kashmir this year in summer as the Valley was rocked with anti-government protests. The spell of protests that started following Burhan's killing claimed around 100 lives with thousands getting injured as well. Many of the injured sustained pellet injuries in their eyes and lost their vision forever. ■

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WATER GURU IS NO MORE

Anupam Mishra was the quiet Gandhian who understood sustainability at the grassroots

Umesh Anand
New Delhi

THE thirteenth anniversary issue of *Civil Society* with the Hall of Fame 2016 was out from the press and I had gone to Anupam Mishra's home to give him a copy. He looked at the picture of Uncle Moosa on the cover and said: "Yeh aadmi apne chhote kaam se kitna kush hai. Iska kurta bhi khush hai!"

It was Anupam Mishra's trademark humour, delivered with his customary mellifluous touch. But like everything about him, it was also full of meaning. As India's foremost authority on traditional water harvesting systems, he recognised the value of small and sustainable community efforts. So, in one glance, he could see Uncle Moosa's sense of fulfilment from creating tiny libraries in the remote villages and towns of Arunachal Pradesh. Not only was Uncle Moosa radiating happiness, but his kurta, too, was happy!

Anupam Mishra passed away on 19 December just three days short of 69. He succumbed to a brief but sapping encounter with cancer. He was a member of the advisory board of *Civil Society* magazine and my consistent and untiring friend.

Working for the Gandhi Peace Foundation (GPF) on a miniscule salary, he spent much of his life as an unsung researcher. He really didn't want it any other way. But as word spread of his deep understanding of water and conservation and the brilliant traditions of communities, he came to be valued as a speaker.

He was insightful and funny and dispensed his wisdom with a light touch. He would receive invitations to speak from across India and abroad. What he liked most was to help community groups. Towards the end he would accept most invitations and zip off every now and then, almost as though he knew he had to beat the clock. He addressed villagers, doctors, engineers, architects and people in government.

But he always found the limelight intrusive. A cover story on him in *Civil Society* in 2006 was done through subterfuge. He similarly had to be talked into allowing pictures to be taken and it meant leveraging all the affection he had for my son, Lakshman, who did the shooting. We headlined that cover story, The Water Guru — nothing less would do because so many 'water men' already existed!

He was a firm believer that quality and output were in no way related to money. He didn't see merit in chasing funding in the typical NGO way and too much money was definitely a bad thing in his opinion. Nor was he impressed by mere slogans and shibboleths. Social initiatives had to be community efforts which were self-sustained and purposeful. It was important that they be well directed. He abhorred aggressive behaviour, insisting that change could only come through persuasion and love.

So it was that on a shoestring budget he brought out *Gandhi Marg* a small, beautifully produced and professionally edited magazine in Hindi. Till the end he and his wife, Manju, would read the proofs themselves. Pieces in *Gandhi Marg* would be extensively rewritten so that they acquired a simple and easy flow.

He wholeheartedly endorsed *Civil Society's* mission of being a small and independent magazine committed to high production standards and clear



Anupam Mishra in his room at the Gandhi Peace Foundation

editorial values. He also agreed with us that it had to be a business to be recognised as journalism, instead of being an NGO or foundation where the funding would decide the content.

It was smallness and community effort that also drew him to the Civil Society Hall of Fame. He was on the jury and, together with Manju, made it a point to be at every annual recognition ceremony. It was only at the last one on 12 November that he and Manju weren't present because he was too unwell and in hospital.

Rita and I went to meet him the night before the event and though we chatted and he was alert, it was clear that the cancer was winning. He asked to be phoned from the venue so that he could know that the event had been held nicely. Of course I did that once the citations had been presented and he wanted to know why he couldn't hear Indian Ocean playing in the background. I told him it was because I had walked a bit down Lodi Road to see off Dr Mashelkar, who was our chief guest and was leaving a little before the end.

In a lifetime of barefoot research for GPF's Environment Cell Anupam

scoured much of the country trying to understand collection, storage and dispersal in traditional water systems. He tracked tanks and stepwells like no one else in India has. He went deep into cultural practices and forgotten technologies in his quest to learn how communities deal with water scarcities and equally daunting problems of surplus in India's driest state, Rajasthan.

NO ROYALTY, NO COPYRIGHT

Much of this learning has gone into two books in Hindi: *Aaj bhi khare hain talaab* and *Rajasthan ke rajat boodein*. The first title has done over 100,000 copies, which must surely be a record in Indian publishing. Anupam hasn't taken a rupee by way of royalty nor does he have the copyright. Anyone is free to print the books.

Both his books have inspired people to do their own thing with water. Many have gone from being casual readers to avid practitioners — digging tanks, building bunds and generally trapping rainwater where it falls.

Anupam's quest was a Gandhian one. His strength was his empathy and

compassion which allowed him to go deep. His was a search for solutions that involved people, particularly those who don't have a voice and live in the fragmented fringes of the economy. He spoke their language and wasn't in a hurry to understand their lives.

The Gandhian way is of governance through self-help and articulation of local needs and solutions. Nothing perhaps serves the management of water better in India because it is hugely diverse in topography, far-flung and beholden to a few months of rain in the year.

The research that Anupam undertook in the Environment Cell of GPF was really aimed at learning how people met their own needs for water for thousands of years before the centralised model of administration arrived under the British.

It is this perspective that led him to celebrate not giant irrigation works and other temples to technology, but the humble tank. Two million tanks had been dug by communities before British rule and they worked efficiently for people by collecting rain and raising groundwater levels. They were a dependable source of safe water. Importantly, tanks could be built by leaving habitats intact and

because there was a sense of ownership over them they were maintained.

The tank, the *bund* and the well for centuries served to keep the hydrological cycle in good health. People knew how to make and maintain them. They drew on them with an eye on the sky, being conservative in times of scarcity and leaving surpluses in the bank for difficult days. There was balance.

For instance, a *johad* in Churu district in Rajasthan is a marvel of engineering. It has three tiers on four sides. Till the rains end in September, water collects and comes to the top. As the months pass into winter and then to March and summer, the open water surface reduces to half together with the depth. What does this do? It reduces the evaporation. In addition, there is a narrow ledge at each level to trap silt. Why does this matter? If the silt were not trapped, it would go all the way to the bottom and getting it out of there would be much more difficult.

Similarly, the Toda Rai Singh tank was built at least 350 years ago and was meant to serve the irrigation needs of 18 villages. Incredibly, it continues to perform that role though it has been acquired by the irrigation department of Rajasthan.

What happened to these tanks and stepwells, many of which were built with great effort and expertise and can even today be regarded as marvels of engineering? Why did Anupam need to put in years of dedicated exploration to rediscover these subtle equations in water if at one time they did so much for people? Many of them remain in use today and are more reliable sources of supply than what the government has set up. Why then was it essential to seek so hard to understand their worth?

The answer lies in the shift to a centralised regime under the British and the continuance of such a top-down model of governance in independent India. Management of resources such as water and forests went out of the hands of the people who depended on them and into the files of an amorphous government. Over the years local initiatives petered out and efficient traditional technologies went into disuse.

By the late Seventies and early Eighties it was clear that serious problems related to water were looming up. Irrigation departments and their engineers couldn't deliver to people what people had been able to give themselves with efficiency at one time. That gap has only widened.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

It was in the late Seventies that Anupam began working as a young researcher, in the Environment Cell of GPF. His father, Bhawani Prasad Mishra, the poet, was a Gandhian and a freedom fighter.

The journey to GPF was, therefore, a short one. However, it wasn't an inevitable journey because Anupam had a Master's in Hindi literature and perhaps it would have been natural for him to choose teaching as a career. But the first job he got at GPF was to read proofs for ₹350 a month. Very quickly he became involved with the Environment Cell. The first area of concern was water and Anupam found himself travelling across the country for his research.

It is a strange conspiracy of circumstances that seems to have made a water researcher out of a poet's son. Anupam has a flair for writing and sensitivity to cultural traditions and both have proved to be vital in seeking an understanding of the problems relating to water.

"If I had studied engineering, I would have gone in a different direction. If I was very good I would have ended up at MIT or some such place. If I was not good I would have landed in Ghaziabad," Anupam once said to me in his usual funny way.

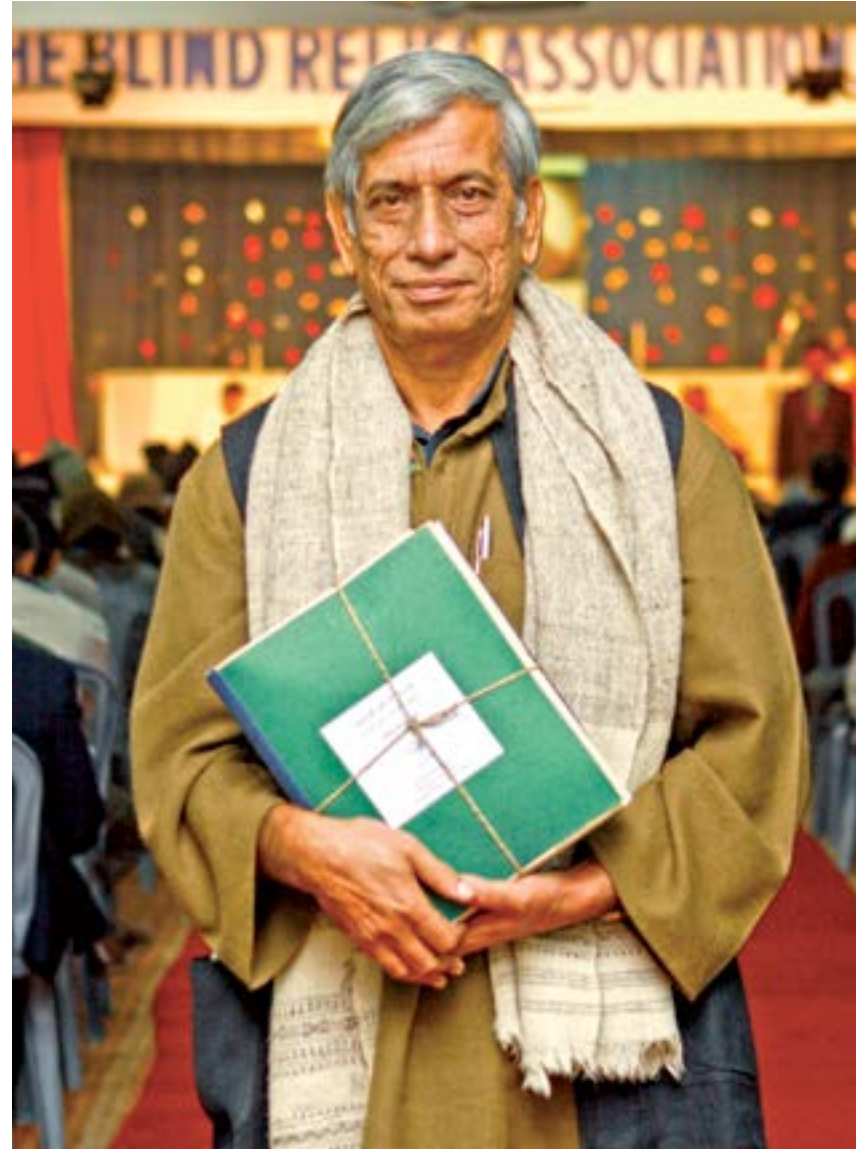
A student of literature on the other hand has no hesitation in entering through cultural trapdoors in search of lost science and technology. "Technology gets absorbed and embedded in culture. Rediscovering it means understanding culture first," Anupam explained.

So it was that *Aaj bhi khare hain talaab* got written over 10 long years and published in 1993, a slim book almost poetic in design, embellished with fine line drawings and packed with vivid accounts of community efforts in water.

In 23 years, this book, going from hand to hand, growing from one imprint to the next, has done more to change the way people think about water than any other work. It is available in Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Bengali and Urdu. GPF only publishes one of the Hindi versions. It is always sold out even before it comes off the press. All the editions, apart from the GPF one, have been brought out by people who have read the book and felt influenced by it. Stories abound about each imprint.

Perhaps this is the only example of its kind of community publishing and absence of copyright for truly original work. It is not insignificant that such an effort should relate to water. So severe are the scarcities that the country is facing and so ineffective are the efforts of governments that people feel the need to take over as they once did. ■

LAKSHMAN ANAND



LAKSHMAN ANAND



AJIT KRISHNA

AJIT KRISHNA



Clockwise from top: With copies of the *Talaab* book in different languages; His empty room with his desk; Family and friends pay their last respects at the Gandhi Peace Foundation; At a conference on Braille in New Delhi where the *Talaab* book translated into Braille was released.

AJIT KRISHNA



Ratna Vishwanathan: 'Over the last month collection has slowly picked up and we are at around 70 to 80 percent'

'MFIs are coping with note ban' But going cashless is challenging for many reasons

Civil Society News
Gurugram

THE microfinance business works on a model of collection and disbursement. Traditionally it has been dependent on cash because loans are small and so are repayments. When demonitisation was announced, this cycle was disrupted. At stake were the finances of 40 million women. Their problems were far removed from the focus on queues at banks in cities.

But in three weeks collections have reached 70 percent or so. Women have stood in line and withdrawn their small sums to keep the wheels of microfinance turning. There are, of course, other issues like loans put in accounts that can't be readily accessed and repayments that have been delayed. The thrust to go cashless in microfinance has many hurdles but it is also an opportunity. We spoke to Ratna Vishwanathan, the CEO of Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN), a Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO), on how the sector has been coping.

What has been the effect of demonitisation on the microfinance industry?
We cover around 40 million women across 32 states and our loan book size is about ₹70,000 crores. The agricultural sector, cooperatives and the corporate

sector all have a constituency. Big people speak for them. But the low-income, non-agricultural unorganised sector has no constituency. It is practically invisible.

We initially requested the government to allow us to collect old notes from our customers since most of them are in rural or peri-urban areas and their access to new money would be limited. We would, of course, account for every note and put it in the banks. But last minute our request was turned down.

Despite that, collection has not been bad. Over the last month collection has slowly picked up and we are at around 70 to 80 percent.

You are saying that 40 million women had started accessing the new notes?
Yes. They were standing in line, in queues. What is commendable is that all these women depend on daily earnings and their income is sporadic. They run vegetable stalls, *kirana* stores and so on. Almost three weeks after demonitisation we have reached collection levels of around 70 percent. Not bad for an industry that wasn't allowed to collect old notes and lacked access.

Where did they exchange their old notes?
They went to post offices. They went to banks. They must have gone at least four or five times. Bank branches had been made agnostic and that was helpful. We

haven't done a study on how demonitisation has impacted the livelihoods of our borrowers. But it must have affected them. It also reflects their desire to repay.

Disbursement has become an issue. Banks don't have the cash to give out or there is this restriction that you can withdraw only ₹50,000 from a current account. That is meaningless for us.

Our model is a collection and disbursement one. It is not an attempt to work around the banking system. It is very imperative for disbursement to happen because MFIs don't take deposits. They only collect and disburse. It's an old model but a fragile one primarily because MFIs borrow from banks at commercial interest rates ranging from 12 to 18 percent. So they have to repay the banks. It's all MUDRA (Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency) money. They pay the women who take small tab sizes. Liquidity has to be constant. If one part stops, the entire cycle gets disrupted. So MFIs have started disbursing smaller amounts of cash just to maintain liquidity in the system.

It's important for glitzy financial papers to understand this model. This is the only place where women, who are marginalised and don't have a voice, can get unsecured funds through a regulated and formal framework. In the last four to five years we have pulled nearly 40 million women away from the informal lender. It's a doorstep delivery model, which is why you are not standing at a bank counter. If you disrupt this model the women will go back to the informal lender.

What was the immediate reaction to demonitisation?

The immediate reaction was panic. Nobody knew the outcome. You were told that from midnight 8 November ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes will not be legal tender. So there was a degree of confusion. On the first two days people took time to understand and the banks, too, were closed. Most MFIs had some money they had collected. The government allowed them to deposit it so the first two weeks were all right. As an SRO (Self-Regulatory Organisation) we issued an advisory to our members not to collect old notes. So collection of old notes stopped. Disbursements went down quite badly. But they are coming back very slowly.

It's not particularly on the downside?

No it's not. Our other big issue is a circular issued by the RBI. The normal definition of an NPA (Non-Performing Asset) is an asset that does not perform over 90 days. The circular gave an extra dispensation of 60 days to anything originating between the period from 1 December to 31 December for NPAs. This meant that the NPA would have 150 days to perform instead of 90 days.

Unfortunately, the circular was worded such that everybody, including the media, took it to mean that your loan has been deferred by two months so you can pay after two months. And this misinformation went viral.

Of course MFIN put out advertorials, made press statements, issued press releases, spoke on TV, saying this is being misread. The circular has only to do with asset classification for balancing balance sheets of banks. It has nothing to do with actual repayment. You need to repay your loan on due date or the interest will start accumulating.

It didn't really help a lot. In the states of UP, MP, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and a bit in Karnataka misinformation created problems for us. Small political functionaries, and its party agnostic, began encouraging women to default. That is why I have been meeting senior functionaries in the political and bureaucratic hierarchy. In Karnataka it worked because the chief secretary's office issued letters to all district collectors that these are MUDRA loans and have to be paid back else they will affect the NPA of banks. On the whole, the bureaucracy and the government have been receptive.

What is the size of the microfinance sector in India?

If you take NBFCs 10 percent of their portfolio can be lent to microfinance. Then there are Section 8 companies and banks that do microfinance either through business correspondents or directly. The actual share of NBFCs/MFIs is only 34 percent. For SHGs it is 38 percent, though here there is an overlap factor between SHGs and MFIs so it's really not all 38 percent. Banks account for 22 percent. With the small finance banks going to move out in the next three or four months, 50 percent of today's sector will again go into the banking sector. But if you take the overall pie it's almost close to ₹2 lakh crores gross loan portfolio size.

So there was no strategy for ₹2 lakh crores in circulation in the economy?
I wouldn't say that. The banks doing microfinance were allowed to collect old currency. It was the NBFCs, the Section 8 companies and the NBFC/MFIs that had to steer their way through.

Our biggest request is for disbursement. Once that is cleared then the industry will settle down much more. I can transfer any amount to my borrowers online. But my borrower faces severe constraints in accessing money from the system. There are limitations on access. From an ATM she can get ₹2,000. If she goes to the bank she is entitled to ₹24,000 from a cheque.

There is a need to understand that Jan Dhan accounts don't have cheque books because they are no-frill, zero-balance accounts. The RuPay cardholder is given a passbook but not a cheque book. So borrowers only have the ATM route. Of course some people who may have proper bank accounts could use cheque books, but banks are rationing cash because of the shortage so you may get only ₹10,000.

The whole microfinance sector works only in cash?

See it's good to try and move microfinance to a cashless system. But there needs to be practical understanding of the extent and degree to which this is possible. One limitation is the move to digitisation. Only 27 percent of the population has smart phones. Sixty-seven to 68 percent have feature phones. Some wallets can be accessed on feature phones, but there has to be an understanding around cyber security. It's not just about having a phone. For a seamless cashless system you need electricity, net connectivity.

Can the microfinance industry become cashless?

Disbursal can be cashless to a large extent. Collection becomes a challenge. You need access to banks and POS machines. You need to be linked to a mobile wallet enabler.

Some MFIs have been disbursing 60 percent or 40 percent of cash through the online route. Smaller MFIs do 100 percent online disbursement. Today, there is another impact. The MFI can disburse cash into your account but you can't withdraw the money. However, your interest begins from the day of disbursement. We have to be fair to borrowers. People are now asking for reversal of the transaction because unnecessarily you end up charging interest to the customer. These are issues we are grappling with.

There is another fallout. The entire data of our borrowers is uploaded on the credit information bureau. NBFC/MFI borrowers have rock solid credit histories. The data is updated to credit

bureaus on a weekly basis as mandated by the RBI. As an SRO, MFIN will penalise you if you don't do so.

Because of the current dysfunction people are not being able to pay, not because they don't want to, but due to other reasons. But the credit bureau is not designed to reflect this. So these will all become delinquent accounts. We are now working with the RBI and the credit bureaus to see how these accounts don't become delinquent for this period and the credit histories of the women remain unaffected.

How has the new financial architecture worked? Did business correspondents (BCs) help borrowers tide over this crisis?

Some of our NBFCs have BC companies. Their collection has been fine. But there is a delicate nuance here. The NBFC has a set of customers. The BC to the bank also has a set of customers. The BC goes to the same geography and collects old notes from the customers of the bank. But he won't collect old notes from the NBFC/MFI borrowers. That created a lot of confusion. The women complained to the police that the BC was collecting old notes from particular women and not from them. The police would call the BC and ask him why aren't you taking old notes from these women, why are you harassing them.

What is the status of financial literacy programmes?

So far it has been a bit piecemeal. But we will be introducing a literacy app soon. It has been designed with icons and not numbers or letters. It has comic strips that explain what is a loan, what are interest rates and a ready reckoner. We will need to bring in the digital aspect. In most homes it is the man who has the smartphone. Every woman should have at least a feature phone so that she can access her account. It's better to work with the system. In the long run everybody will benefit. ■

Cosmetics made to order

Civil Society News
New Delhi

WHEN Kavita Bhatia-Gupta makes a face scrub, it is so fresh that you can smell the ingredients each time you apply it. It is as though it were made just for you — and in fact it often is. Her customers, once they have tried her formulations, invariably end up calling up to tell her precisely what they need. Someone's skin is too oily or too dry. Or there is a problem with blemishes and patches. Much-feared wrinkles could be making their first appearance.

Kavita has got restorative potions to offer for these and many other personal grooming requirements, but be prepared that nothing she sells is meant to last more than 90 days. It is also not available off the shelf — and of course it can't be because that would kill the freshness and mean using chemical preservatives. She believes in being as natural as you can get.

Her small herbal cosmetics outfit, Svayam, which appropriately means 'self-help', makes a range of hair oils, scrubs, packs, face serums and bath oils that she sells on her own website and e-commerce sites like Flipkart and Amazon.

Svayam's mustard oil with *methi* and *karipatta* is gentle and restorative. "It's brilliant for your hair," she says. "The oil arrests falling hair and promotes hair growth." Olive oil with cinnamon will prevent premature greying. "Cinnamon is a natural darkener," says Kavita. There is also a nutritive coconut oil with *amla* and *neem* stems.

One face serum has sesame oil, almond and saffron, another has apricot oil with patchouli and almonds. There are bath oils with coffee and face packs using neem, urad and orange.

You can pick four kinds of face scrubs: apricot, rice, orange peel and almond-oats, depending on your kind of skin.

"I have 16 products from the family chest," says Kavita. New formulations she plans to introduce are a walnut scrub and a marigold face pack and one with *besan* for brides.

For Kavita nothing but the best will do. She sources saffron from Iran, apricots from the Himalayas, coffee from Coorg and cinnamon from Kerala. The turmeric is bought fresh and hand-pounded. Rose petals are really, actually dried in the sun.

Prices are reasonable and vary from ₹400 to ₹600. If you think all this sounds too far out, you can be forgiven. But really it isn't. From trying to cobble together a small, home-based business, Kavita has actually dropped anchor in the waters of high-end personalised care. Her business is built around the special offerings that are small, natural and suffused with goodness derived from the knowledge that came from her grandmother and mother. It is the beauty stuff they used at home. Often it came from the kitchen or garden. If one knew what to use it was there.

Two years after her first order came in, Kavita has a growing roster of repeat users. She gets a lot of inquiries from men for herbal formulations to combat baldness. "It's a real concern among men.



Kavita Bhatia-Gupta at her manufacturing unit with her wholly herbal products



The thing is boys don't take care of their hair when they are young. They think oiling their hair is a girlie thing. We persuade girls to do it. But consistent care from a young age can help hair growth," says Kavita.

Her business grows by word of mouth. But its huge potential is in being unique and small.

An MBA from the Birla Institute of Management and Technology (Bimtech), Kavita set up Svayam with just ₹2 lakh taken as investment from her husband. There wasn't the cash to burn on retail space or fancy branding and commissions. She needed to go direct to her customers, which in turn reinforced her personalised approach with an emphasis on purity and freshness. Now these attributes distinguish her products.

"People call asking to speak to the sales department, but it is I who take the calls because there is no sales and marketing department. From these conversations I get to know what customers are looking for and can tweak my formulations to suit individual needs," says Kavita.

Lack of capital has also meant using a floor of the family house in east Delhi. A factory however small in size would have been a significant overhead. A few girls from low-income families have been

trained to make the cosmetics to the proportions that Kavita knows. At every stage Kavita's supervision is paramount. Now one of the girls helps her with computer work.

"It is less expenditure on one hand but it also means that I am hands-on and can ensure quality," says Kavita. "The ingredients are powdered and ground by hand and mixed as they traditionally would be, which is vastly different from a mechanised process."

Creation of the brand and packaging has happened, in much the same way, at home and by using the Internet. Labels and logo design have been done on a website, which also gets them printed.

"Since we don't keep inventories," says Kavita's husband Venugopal Gupta. "We only print what we need to use."

Venugopal is not unfamiliar with start-ups, having been into angel funding. Apart from the initial ₹2 lakhs that came from him, he has also been on hand to provide advice and perspective.

"When we looked at costing we found that the big brands were charging high prices because of what they were spending on retail, branding and packaging. The costs were being passed on to the consumer," says Venugopal.

"Actually their costs are not much different from ours. But it is all the rest that they do that makes them expensive. For Kavita it was essential to cut out such additional costs."

The challenge for her now is to grow, keep costs down and ensure the unique purity of her products. It is a delicate balance, but all three things need to happen simultaneously for Svayam to be a truly valuable enterprise into the future. ■

PICTURES BY AJIT KRISHNA

INSIGHTS

OPINION | ANALYSIS | RESEARCH | IDEAS

Teach teachers better



DILEEP RANJEKAR

BACK TO SCHOOL

INDIA has the largest schooling system in the world with 1.5 million schools, over eight million teachers and 250 million children in these schools. Under the National Policy for Education 1986/1992 the Government of India created an elaborate administrative and academic support system involving institutions at the central, state, district, block and cluster levels.

If we ignore central institutions such as NCERT, NUEPA, UGC, AICTE and NCTE, the numbers at the state level alone would add up to about half a million people outside the schools. These would include over 33 State Councils for Education Research and Training (SCERT), about 700 District Institutes of Education Training (DIET), over 7,000 Block Education Offices, 7,000 Block Resource Centres and over 81,000 Cluster Resource Centres. Some of these numbers are evolving and thus are current estimates of numbers.

We are therefore referring to a total workforce of 8.5 million people and growing as more and more states strive to achieve the appropriate teacher-pupil ratio as prescribed by the Right to Education Act.

The number of NGOs in India is currently estimated at about three million and while accurate numbers are not available, it is often stated in various reports that over 40 percent of them work in the education domain. That is a whopping number of 1.2 million organisations in the education space.

Assuming each organisation employs just 10 employees, they would need at least 12 million professionals with qualifications, perspective and professional competence in education. In reality, the numbers required would be much more since many of these organisations recruit employees far in excess of ten. The Azim Premji Foundation alone currently employs around 1,200 employees and needs double that number within the next 18 months.

We are, therefore, referring to a total of about 20 million education professionals being employed by the government and non-government sector.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan recommended that the root cause of the poor quality of pre-service and in-service Teacher Professional Development is the absence of high quality Teacher Educators and we need to have about 5,000 Teacher Educators per state. India currently has 29 states and seven Union territories. Thus the total requirement of such

dedicated Teacher Educators would be around 150,000.

Some of the critical processes that are a must for effective management of such a large workforce are: manpower planning, a robust process of recruitment that ensures selection of people as per the competencies required for the roles for which they are being recruited, good induction and assimilation into the system, people processes to realise the optimum potential of the people, issues such as performance management (including the risk-

and hospitality education institutions. Expecting a major boom in these sectors, both the government and industry took pro-active steps to create extensive networks such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, the National Institutes of Technology and several hundred government and private engineering colleges across the country.

As a result, India produces 1.5 million engineers and over 50,000 doctors each year. India is recognised as a leader in the software services industry primarily due to the investment in

AJIT KRISHNA



reward system, accountability, performance assessment) and professional development.

While these are generic issues for all people employed in the government system, the importance of finding professional talent in a critical sector like education is something special since most people engaged in this domain are involved in nation-building. They, in many ways, have the responsibility to contribute to developing the future citizens of our nation.

Therefore, the most important action by the government should be to establish universities, schools that are interdisciplinary but dedicated to education to meet the qualitative and quantitative demand of the sector.

Illustratively, there has been a relative revolution in sectors such as information technology services, the hospitality industry and health services in the country. The critical enabler for such a revolution was extensive proliferation of engineering, medical

engineering education. Similarly, the growth in the hospitality industry saw the proliferation of reasonable-quality schools for air-hostesses and professionals in the catering and hospital management domains.

However, in the education sector, the government took no such initiative beyond the six Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs). The National Policy for Education came into being in 1986 and the National Curriculum Framework articulated the philosophy and the process of our education. The real question was: How do you develop professionals who understand the intent of these philosophies and have the overall competence to reach them to the schools?

The answer to this question was that the government should have set up high-quality universities and colleges that developed thousands of professionals with deeper understanding of

Continued on page 26

Chasing the Koh-i-Noor

MURAD ALI BAIG

THE Koh-i-Noor is very much in the news today despite the fact that it is not, by far, the largest diamond in the world. It is not even in the top 10. It is, however, one that has been most fiercely fought over and the most acclaimed in legend. It is believed to have originally been 1,304 carats (621 gm), which was less than half the size of the Great Star of Africa, or the Cullinan Diamond discovered in 1905 that had weighed 3,105 carats.

The Koh-i-Noor, which means fountain of light in Persian, was discovered in the Kollur mines, near Guntur on the Krishna river. For centuries, these were considered to have been the only diamond mines in the world. In recent years, diamonds have been found in South Africa, Brazil, Russia, Botswana, Sierra Leone (blood diamonds) and several other countries. Today the Kollur mines are exhausted and the mines of Panna in Madhya Pradesh are India's only diamond mining area.

Diamonds are found in very ancient volcanic rocks called kimberlites, which, after eroding over time, spread the stones into alluvial soil. They have been legendary since early times. A huge diamond was evidently found in an Egyptian pharaoh's sarcophagus or coffin in 3,000 BC and Greek legends spoke of diamonds as the 'tears of God'.

The Koh-i-Noor is first clearly recorded as being in the possession of the rulers of Warangal in south India, which Malik Kafur, a converted Hindu eunuch slave of Alauddin Khilji, conquered in 1309 AD. He returned to Delhi with mountains of treasure mainly looted from Hindu temples.

The Koh-i-Noor was, thereafter, owned by the Khiljis and Lodis until 1526 when Babur led the Mughals to India. When he won the First Battle of Panipat, his son, Humayun, rushed his cavalry to

Agra to capture the dazed city and its fabulous treasury that included this diamond.

After he was defeated by Sher Shah, Humayun gave the diamond to him and fled to Persia. In return Sher Shah provided him 14,000 soldiers for the reconquest of his empire.



Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Indian to own the Koh-i-Noor

The fabled stone's greatest glory was during Shahjahan's era when it adorned the Peacock Throne in 1656. Concerned with pomp and glory, Shahjahan built the Peacock Throne. It took seven years to complete and was engraved with 56 maunds (2,100 kg) of richly enamelled gold and encrusted with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and sapphires. The throne was topped with a canopy of pearls supported by 12 gold pillars.

These pillars had vine like wreaths of emeralds and other precious stones. On top of each pillar were two peacocks with raised tails made of

emeralds, rubies and diamonds designed to resemble the fabled throne of Solomon with the jewelled peacocks as guardians to the gates of paradise who could consume the snakes of the devil. The throne also contained another great diamond, the Dariya-i-Noor (Ocean of Light).

Nearly a century later the decaying Mughal capital was pillaged in 1739 and some 40,000 inhabitants were massacred by the Persian king Nadir Shah who defeated three Mughal armies near Karnal. As the Peacock Throne weighed eight tonnes and was too heavy to transport to Persia, it was broken into eight pieces. Nadir Shah was later murdered and an Afghan officer, Ahmad Shah Durrani, took the stone back to Afghanistan. The sad skeleton of the throne is in the Teheran museum. Ahmed Shah's grandson, Muhammad Shah, fled to Lahore in 1813 and gave the Koh-i-Noor to the great Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh in exchange for support. Ranjit Singh had heard the legend that the diamond could only adorn God or a woman, so he had it mounted on an amulet strapped to his right arm. He made a will gifting the diamond to the Jagannath Temple in Odisha, but his heirs did not honour it.

The British took possession of the Koh-i-Noor after the second Anglo-Sikh war in 1848 and sent the diamond to the East India Company in London two years later. The ship was jinxed from the start. It lost half its crew to cholera and was then nearly wrecked in a terrible storm. Queen Victoria was ruling and did not seem too impressed by the treasure given to her. It was, however, cut and made much smaller and now adorns the British crown where it has the company of the Star of Africa, which, too, was cut and made smaller.

India has asked for the Koh-i-Noor to be returned to India. Its tortuous history clearly shows that it never belonged to any country but to a succession of rapacious rulers. ■

prepare our teachers very differently, very intensely and over a longer duration of time (as compared to a 10-month B.Ed programme). The revised draft of the new teacher education policy was released in 2009 with no radical change in the approach to preparation of teachers.

It was only recently that the government accepted the structure of a two-year B.Ed programme. It was evident that as a nation we took a leap towards the development of the child as required by the current national and social context but took no initiative to equip the teacher with the competencies that were necessary to reach it to the child. Nor did it create an ecosystem of administrators and academics with a certain perspective to effectively support our schools.

Abysmal results in the Teacher Eligibility Tests across the country have clearly established the inadequacy of our teacher education as well as the absence of quality teacher educators.

A large education system such as ours needs

topnotch leadership in each state — to pursue our education vision with a perspective and deeper understanding that is necessary to drive the vision consistently. The National Policy for Education of 1986 prescribed a separate specialised cadre of Indian Education Services (IES). There hasn't even been deep thought about it. Instead, we have generalist IAS officers — many without a deeper understanding of education — leading the education department. The situation is worsened due to the frequent transfers of officers and the discontinuity it creates — with each bringing a fresh ideology of how to make things work on the ground.

If we are serious about improving the quality of education in India, all this needs to change. Mere tinkering with the education system, driving different programmes as the 'flavour of the year' and having frequent conferences/discussions on how to improve the quality of education won't lead to any results on the ground. ■

Dileep Ranjekar is CEO of the Azim Premji Foundation

Modi's ₹ call is politics first



SANJAYA BARU

DELHI DARBAR

ECONOMICS is a political science. In the 18th and 19th centuries the discipline was in fact known as 'political economy'. The earliest economists were all focused on policy and politics and right into the middle of the 20th century they grappled with real-life problems. When political economy entered the ivory towers of academia it was reshaped by mathematics and statistics and became an increasingly esoteric discipline.

It was the economic crisis of the interwar years of the last century, the 1920s and 1930s, that elevated the status of economists from that of problem-solvers to that of social saviours. Robert Skidelsky, the historian and biographer of John Maynard Keynes, put it well in his biography of the 'great saviour of capitalism' when he said: "Keynes and his fellow economists viewed themselves as members of an activist intelligentsia, claiming a right of direction, vacated by the aristocracy and the clergy, by virtue of superior intellectual ability and expert knowledge of society. They saw themselves as the frontline of the army of progress."

So, it is not surprising that so many want to know the views of professional economists on what I believe was an essentially political decision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi — the de/re-monetisation of ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes.

The fact that the de/re-monetisation decision has been defended in the media more by the government's political spokespersons than its economic policymakers also suggests that the government views the decision and its consequences more in political terms than just economic ones. Perhaps it is just as well that the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and the Chief Economic Advisor of the Government of India have stayed away from public debate, though much to the chagrin of bankers, financial analysts and economists.

The views of most economists, at any rate, appear divided along political lines. Thus, economists known for their Left-leaning views have all criticised the government. Most economists who have worked

for Congress party governments have also criticised the decision. There are economists with other political affiliations whose views also reflect their political preferences, like Amit Mitra in West Bengal. Even if all their arguments are well-informed and important, most are bound to discount them for their political leanings.

Who, then, are the 'objective' and 'politically neutral' economists whose views on demonetisation/remonetisation one may regard as professional and politically unbiased? I cannot think of many and, in any case, I would not waste my time looking for them. That is not because I do not value their views, but because I believe we would be barking up the wrong tree.

Prime Minister Modi took a political call on the currency issue. He would certainly have been aware of the short- to medium-term problems it would

critics of the government continue to put forward economic arguments to defend their criticism of the government, while the government's spokespersons keep changing the economic arguments in defence of the Prime Minister's essentially political decision.

In the end, the politics of demonetisation will trump its economics. If Modi is able to convince the electorate that he has imposed this enormous burden on ordinary Indians in the interests of the country he will have won the political argument. On the other hand, if the political mood goes against the government, no amount of economic logic can save it.

There is one political gain that Modi has already secured from his monetary move. He has embedded himself firmly in the consciousness of almost every Indian across the length and breadth of the country.

AJIT KRISHNA

No other policy intervention since Independence has touched every citizen in the way this one has.

One can think of many politico-economic decisions that have had a wide social impact, like Indira Gandhi's nationalisation of banks and P.V. Narasimha Rao's termination of the licence-permit-quota raj. But even these major economic policy interventions did not have the kind of widespread social impact as Modi's de/re-monetisation drive. Overnight, the name of the Prime Minister has become a household name across India.

In terms of branding and name recognition this is a coup that every marketing

manager dreams of. Hate him or love him, you cannot ignore him. Having lodged himself in the mind of every voter, Modi has to now make sure that the voter will prefer him to someone else the next time she is at the hustings.

Viewed this way, the de/re-monetisation decision has profound consequences for the Delhi Darbar. For centuries the average Indian believed a Mughal ruler sat on the Delhi Darbar's high throne. Even when the British ruled large parts of India, many did not realise that real power had slipped away from the occupier of the Red Fort. The British then built a huge new capital with enormous buildings to show one and all that they were now in power.

In free India generations have come to believe that the natural masters of the Delhi Darbar are members of the Nehru-Gandhi family. The rest were interlopers or pretenders. With one simple decision Prime Minister Modi has let it be known to citizens across the country that there is now a new ruler on the throne in the darbar. He has minted new currency for which you have to queue up. The Rupee is Dead! Long Live the Rupee! ■



Puppets with wit and wisdom

BHARAT DOGRA

SOME of the most prominent social movements in recent times have seen the creative use of puppets. This is especially true of campaigns for the right to information (RTI) and the rural employment guarantee scheme. Many public meetings and protest *dharnas* were greatly enlivened by the interesting and lively presence of puppets.

The history of puppetry is an old one. Most traditional communities involved in this art, especially in Rajasthan, used only wooden puppets which were manipulated on stage or on the floor from behind a curtain or cot.

Traditional puppet artistes started getting new avenues for their skills when they were introduced to tourist circuits. An even bigger fan following emerged when some puppeteers started being approached by schools. Their puppets proved to be a hit with students.

However, by and large, these artistes continued with their old stories of kings and queens like the stories of Amar Singh Rathore. Sometimes new characters like Gulabo the dancer were included but within the old format of telling folk tales and stories. However, due to the introduction of puppets in schools some institutions like the Literacy House in Lucknow started feeling that new puppet characters, who could disseminate educational and social messages, needed to be introduced.

Thus was born the legendary puppet character, Jokhim Chacha. Created by S. Nathani of Literacy House, Jokhim Chacha was presented as an elderly person of wit and wisdom dressed in traditional Lucknow style whose words would be remembered and relished as these were often laced with humour. A new trend of introducing puppet characters more conversant with contemporary themes followed.

As communication trainees from all over India were being trained in Lucknow these new ideas about use of puppets for contemporary themes spread. A group in Tilonia's Barefoot College in Rajasthan took Jokhim Chacha to more villages and performances than anyone else.

This group was particularly well equipped to take forward the new role of puppets. Its communication team had already been experimenting with puppets for messaging health, sanitation and related issues. This communication team included members from traditional puppeteer communities like Chotuji and Ramlal. It also included well-known communicator and satirist Shankar Singh and Ram Niwas.

"It was important to introduce puppets which

could be used in more participative ways and which could be carried more easily from meeting to meeting and from village to village," explained Ram Niwas.

The choice fell on glove puppets which could be worn on the hands and manipulated with the movement of fingers. These puppets were generally



The legendary puppet, Jokhim Chacha

The role of puppets has changed from folk tales to social messaging with sardonic humour.



Shankar Singh with the irreverent puppet, Moofat

made with paper, old newspapers and sponge, unlike traditional wooden puppets.

Glove puppets are sometimes supplemented with puppets made with rods called rod puppets. During large rural gatherings like fairs, bamboo puppets are sometimes used to provide an overwhelming

presence to an image.

The Barefoot College integrated puppets with its programmes on health, education, water and sanitation. Puppet performances in villages were oriented to suit local conditions. Recent events taking place in and around the village were incorporated giving a strong local flavour to the puppet show unlike say, a documentary film. The antics of puppets made it possible to include a lot of humour even in repetitive themes. Puppetry got a new lease of life.

There was also a lot of interaction with the audience in village shows which sometimes led to important changes in content. Punia Ram, a former member of the puppet team, gives an example. "Most women liked a puppet show on problems created by liquor addiction among men for their families but objected strongly to the puppet show ending with a woman's suicide as they felt that this could send out the wrong message unintentionally. A discussion took place which ended with the puppet team getting convinced about the need to change this sequence in future presentations."

As the women's empowerment programme is very important here several puppet shows emphasised the concerns of women. A popular puppet character was created in the form of Dhanno Bua, a paternal aunt who comments very freely on social issues.

Subsequently as the RTI campaign, led by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), picked up in Rajasthan, the communication and puppet teams of the Barefoot College decided to take the message of this campaign to many villages, meetings and *dharnas*. As a founder-member of the MKSS, Shankar Singh decided to devote himself completely to the RTI campaign.

"The contribution which Shankar Singh made with his great communication skills to the RTI movement has been invaluable. He used puppets very creatively and innovatively. In fact, his use of puppets was one of the great lessons we learnt of how to use traditional media to spread awareness about people's rights," said Nikhil Dey, a leader of the MKSS.

This is true of not just the RTI movement but also of the rural employment guarantee movement which followed the RTI movement. Glove puppets were used with songs and slogans to enhance their impact.

Shankar Singh and his colleagues created a puppet character called Moofat or Mr.

Outspoken who became hugely popular at meetings and *dharnas*. True to his name Mr Moofat's fame spread far and wide as he spoke freely with wit and humour. He spoke the truth. On corruption, for instance, Moofat could say things brazenly and yet appear innocently inoffensive. That is the power of puppetry. ■

LIVING

BOOKS | ECO-TOURISM | FILM | THEATRE | AYURVEDA

In search of money

Adoor's *Pinneyum* is a sharp, insightful film

Saibal Chatterjee
Thiruvananthapuram

TELLING engaging, crowd-pleasing stories comes easy to competent filmmakers. Exceptional directors possess the skill to go beyond simple linear narratives and craft insightful chronicles of their times. But it is left to the truly gifted and perceptive to transcend historical time-frames and capture the continuum of an entire socio-cultural and political ethos. Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 75, one of India's most accomplished living filmmakers, belongs to the third category of cinematic auteurs.

His latest film, *Pinneyum* (Once Again), released in late 2016, the 50th year of his directorial career, is proof that the maestro has lost none of his sharpness although he might have, in terms of plot and directorial touches, opted to make a few minor concessions to woo an audience that exists beyond the one that he has hitherto been content to engage with.

A part of the very first batch of Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) pass-outs, Adoor has been bringing Kerala alive in all its depth and complexities for cineastes around the world since the mid-1960s. He started off by making a series of documentaries and shorts, ranging in length from 50 seconds to 60 minutes. In 1972, he delivered his first narrative feature, *Swayamvaram* (One's Own Choice), which inaugurated the Malayalam New Wave cinema movement.

Swayamvaram bagged a quartet of National Awards — Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress (for Sharada) and Best Cinematographer (for Mankada Ravi Varma). It told the simple story of a man and a woman who go against the wishes of their families and relocate to a new town only to find life getting messier and tougher every passing day.

The manner in which the debutant director handled the nuances of the man-woman relationship and the way he revealed the ways society impinges upon individuals were marked by



A still from *Pinneyum*. The film is about a family grappling with serious financial problems



Adoor Gopalakrishnan

clarity and precision. Adoor's subsequent films, too, lent new prestige to Malayalam cinema. It became clear that there was nobody quite like him anywhere in India.

The flow of time is central to Adoor's grasp on the present is second to none — it stems from his deep understanding of his home state's eventful past. He blends what is gone with what is on to deliver vivid, multi-layered portraits of a people and a culture in an inevitable state of flux.

Take *Pinneyum* as an illustration. In what is only his 12th narrative feature, and his first since 2008, Adoor explores material greed in a society in the grip of rampant consumerism. But the story he narrates — *Pinneyum* is inspired by a real-life

incident involving a man who faked his death to claim a huge insurance payout — is set at an indeterminate point in the 1990s.

"The present is too close to us to be fully comprehended and the future is uncertain because it is yet to unfold. Only the past is tangible," says Kerala's first-ever recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. "But the past," Adoor is quick to add, "has no relevance to us unless it impacts the present."

Pinneyum is about a Kollam-based Nair family grappling with serious financial problems and the ramifications of seeking shortcuts out of their difficulties. The choices they make, driven as much by fate as by avarice, tear husband and wife apart and spare nobody around the couple the consequences of an ill-advised get-rich-quick conspiracy.

In a way, *Pinneyum* is perhaps an extension of Adoor's last film, *Oru Pennum Randaanum* (A Climate for Crime, 2008), which was about four separate acts of crime committed by people from across the social spectrum — by the dispossessed, by the landed gentry, and even by those entrusted with the job of law enforcement.

Those four stories were adapted from Thakazhi

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 29

Sivasankara Pillai's fiction and set in the princely state of Travancore in the last years of the British Raj, a time of great scarcity and strife. In *Pinneyum*, Adoor put his own twist on the theme of criminality by locating it in an ordinary middle-class milieu.

While he constantly holds up a mirror to what is unfolding in his social environs, Adoor also delves into the varied reasons for the many fissures and flashpoints that contemporary Kerala has been witness to.

His work, of course, possesses the power to transcend time. So much so that Adoor has attained with the help of only a dozen feature films what the less talented take three to four times that number to do. No film personality has ever won the coveted



'I am never under pressure to get on with my next feature film,' says Adoor. 'A new film happens only when I feel the urge from within.'

Phalke Award for a smaller body of work. It was 2005 and Adoor had only nine features in his kitty at that juncture of his career.

Such is the value and weight of his output that numbers have ceased to matter. Yes, it is a fact that he has also made 30-odd short and documentary films, many of them focused on Kerala's rich performing arts traditions, but it is his fictional narratives that have brought him worldwide fame.

A purist who makes a film only when an idea animates him enough to want to go behind the camera, he firmly believes that the process of a film's evolution is no less important than the film itself. He revels in retaining complete control on the entire film, from conception to execution.

Four of his films have drawn inspiration from literary works, but all of them have served to spell out his worldview. *Mathilukal* (The Walls, 1990) was based on a biographical story written by Vaikom Muhammad Basheer and set in a prison. *Vidheyam* (The Servile, 1993) was an adaptation of a

Paul Zacharia novella that probed a migrant Kerala labourer's relationship with a tyrannical landlord in southern Karnataka.

More recently, Adoor worked with eight stories authored by Thakazhi — it yielded two films, each with four episodes — *Naalu Pennungal* (Four Women, 2007) and *Oru Pennum Raandanam*. The former, split into four segments (The Prostitute, The Virgin, The Wife and The Spinster) was a beautifully realised depiction of women from Kuttanad negotiating their space in a world bent upon putting them into boxes.

"I am never under pressure to get on with my next feature film," says Adoor. "A new film happens only when I feel the urge from within." No wonder his approach to the medium is unique — it is never driven by commercial exigencies. Even when he works with the biggest stars of Malayalam cinema (Mammootty in *Mathilukal* and *Vidheyam*; Dileep and Kavya Madhavan in *Pinneyum*, for instance), it is the director who holds the reins. Like all the other resources that he employs to make a film, Adoor uses the actors only as tools to further his vision.

Although in his formative years, Adoor was inevitably influenced by the east European masters as well as Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak, he was too individualistic a filmmaker to build his career on borrowed ideas and styles.

From *Swayamvaram* to *Pinneyum* — the two films are separated by four and a half decades — all his films hinge on adroit psychological probing rather than on sweeping dramatic thrusts. Understatement underpins his craft of probing socio-political realities and their impact on individuals.

Among his career's most luminous signposts are *Elippathayam* (The Rat Trap, 1981), which is as fine a study of the effects that the collapse of feudalism has had on people accustomed to its advantages; and *Mukhamukham* (Face to Face, 1984), which turned the spotlight on Kerala's tryst with Communism through the story of a popular trade unionist who returns from the 'dead' ten years after a memorial has been erected with his name on it.

Adoor's triumphs continued through *Anantaram* (Monologue, 1987), a film that erases the line between the real and the imaginary; and *Nizhalkuthu* (Shadow Kill, 2002), a sensitive and poignant study of an old, infirm hangman grappling with pangs of guilt in pre-Independence Travancore.

The world he lives in and the industry he works in have changed dramatically since he made his first film five decades ago, but the purity of Adoor's inimitable cinema has remained intact through it all. ■



The Chaukhandi of Hazrat Khalil Ullah, an octagonal mausoleum

Sights and sounds of medieval India alive in Bidar

Susheela Nair
Bidar

THE silence of the morning was broken by the chorus of birds. Several colourful butterflies flitted around. Langurs pranced from tree to tree and peacocks sprang a surprise by making a sudden appearance. We were on a nature trail in Blackbuck Resort, a unit of Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd. Perched on a hillock behind a barren facade, between the Honnikere Reserve Forest and the Vilaspur lake, this nature retreat is an 18-km drive from the town of Bidar in north Karnataka. It gives added zest to a weekend getaway as one can combine bird-watching and boating. The cottages here are well spaced out and built at various elevations following the natural contours of the hillock. Spanning three categories, the cottages come in varying sizes with each offering a unique view of the pristine lake.

Escorted by Hussain, our driver-cum-guide, we ventured into the surrounding open grassland in

Dumsapur village, five kilometers from Bidar. We sighted herds of free-roaming blackbuck grazing their way across the grassland. The light brown fawns, easily camouflaged by the tall grasses, are a lovely sight to behold. The males looked graceful as they flaunted their corkscrew horns. The blackbuck sprinted off the ground as we drew closer. From there we headed to Bidar, the historic town founded by the Bahmani dynasty during the medieval era.

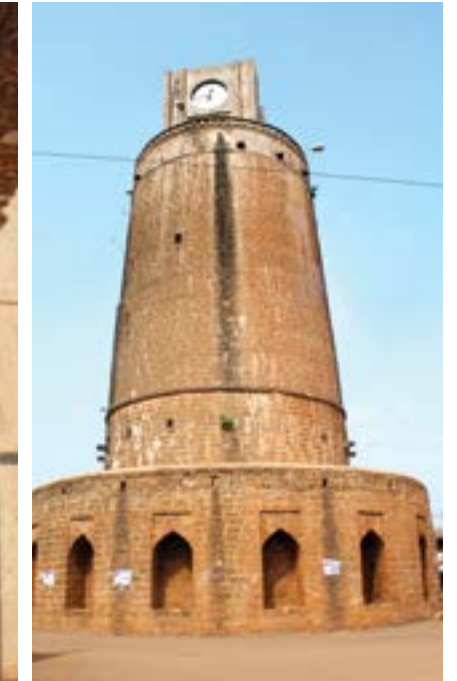
Entering Bidar was like being caught in a time warp. Encircled by eight imposing gateways and intricate battlements, Bidar was for centuries the capital of two of the most illustrious dynasties in south India, first the Bahmanis and then the Barid Shahis. I took a leisurely stroll to the innumerable forts, palaces, Sufi shrines and Bahmani-era mosques that dot this pleasant little town and the neighbouring villages. From here, we rambled through the crumbling ruins of the former royal enclosure — a sprawling complex of ramshackle palaces, royal baths, kitchens, *zenanas* (women's quarters), pleasure pavilions and assembly halls.

The rugged 15th-century fort, surrounded by a triple-moat wall hewn out of red rock, with intricate battlements and an imposing gateway in the centre of the town is the highlight of the old walled town. The first prominent building inside is the charming Rangin Mahal which comprises cisterns, tanks and underground rooms to beat the heat. The interiors flaunt the finest surviving Islamic art in the Deccan with superb wood carving above the door arches and Persian-style mother-of-pearl inlay on polished black granite surfaces. We visited the nearby Archaeological Society of India museum, which houses an interesting collection of artifacts from the Sultanate period, including Hindu temple sculpture, weapons, coins, pottery, huge fort locks and Stone Age implements.

Opposite the museum is the Solah Khamb mosque (1327), the oldest Muslim monument in Bidar and one of the largest in the Deccan. Its most striking feature is the intricate pierced-stone calligraphy around its central dome and the covered



Rangeen Mahal has wooden carvings and mother-of-pearl inlay



Choubara, a watchtower with a clock



A cottage in Blackbuck Resort



The famous blackbuck

courtyard for prayers. It is so called because of the 16 pillars at the centre of its prayer hall. Our next stop was the impressive ruins of the madrasa (Islamic seminary), whose single minaret towers tower above the town centre.

The distinctively Persian-style building once housed a world-famous library containing 3,000 manuscripts which were damaged after being struck by lightning in 1695. Today, the sprawling three-storied structure has a mosque. The elegant arched facade of the one remaining minaret has retained large patches of the vibrant Persian glazed tile work which includes swirls of floral patterns and bold Koranic calligraphy.

Just a hop away from the madrasa is the Choubara, a circular watchtower with a mounted clock at the crossroads, which kept vigil for enemies and happenings in the city and from where orders were announced. The next halt on our heritage sojourn were the eight domed tombs of the Bahmani Sultans and their families in Ashtur, two kilometres east of Bidar. The graves are still regularly draped with fresh satin and flowers, and are arranged in a long line along the edge of the road.

The exteriors, embellished with stone carvings and superb coloured tile decoration, depict a strong Persian influence while the interiors flaunt coloured paintings with gilding. A quick detour from the road took us to Chaukhandi (of Hazrat Khalil Ullah), an octagonal mausoleum atop a low hillock between Ashtur and Bidar built by Allauddin Shah for his chief spiritual adviser. One can see inside the

saint's tomb and other graves, covered with green satin weighed down with stones and flowers.

Another fascinating testimony to Bidar's long tradition of the harmonious intermingling of various cultural and religious traditions are the Gurdwara Nanak Jhira Sahib and Narasimha Jhira. They are unique as they have been built around *jhiras* (springs of water). Legend has it that in 1512 Guru Nanak halted at the place where the gurdwara stands today.

When the local villagers complained about the severe drought, the compassionate Guru is said to have moved a stone from a hillock with his wooden footwear after which an unrestricted supply of water gushed out. The water is believed to possess certain medicinal properties. At the Narasimha Jhira, with its underground cave temple, we had to wade through chest-deep water in a tunnel, braving the stench of bats, to have *darshan* of Lord Narasimha. ■

FACT FILE

GETTING THERE: Air: Hyderabad is 145 km away. Road: Gulbarga (98 km), Hyderabad (145 km), Bijapur (8 hours), and Bengaluru (14 hours).

Rail: Gulbarga (98 km) is the convenient railhead.

BEST SEASON: October to February.

WHERE TO STAY: Blackbuck Resort, Vilaspur, Bidar-585402

MOBILE: + 91 97408 80119

WHAT TO SHOP: Bidriware – vases, goblets, plates, spice boxes, betelnut boxes, ornamental hookah pipes, ashtrays and bangles.

Young Indian urban women

Anita Anand
New Delhi

IN a time of skewed sex ratios, violence against women and girls and continued old and new kinds of discrimination, can there be value for daughters in India?

Valued Daughters traces the spread of ambition for lifetime careers among young women in urban India, who are changing and effecting change by stepping out of their traditional roles to pursue higher education and jobs.

In 2013, Alice W. Clark, an American historian and scholar of gender and society in India, began interviewing women between the ages of 17 and 25 in Allahabad, Vadodara and Mumbai. She added this research to her previous work done in Bengaluru. The interviews were with women who were in college or post-graduate programmes, planning lifetime careers, and whose mothers did not have higher education or worked outside the home.

Clark's goal was to gain perspective on the changing motivations of young women, the role of college education in impacting their career, marital and reproductive plans and the elements that make up female autonomy and agency.

Clark draws on the seminal work of Amartya Sen (*Development as Freedom*, 1999) and Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction*, 2010), and several Indian feminist authors and scholars. Adding feminist historiography, feminist social history and social demography to this, she argues that any current feminist and analytical orientation involves a well-developed set of complex and overlapping views and the value of intersectionality.

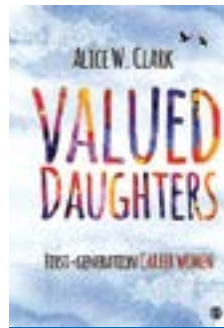
Intersectionality suggests that to understand the obstacles people confront or the advantages they enjoy, it isn't sufficient to classify them in groups with structures that impinge on their lives. In India, structures of social class, economic value, race, religion, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity and caste intersect in multiple ways with one another and then, with gender in an even more complex set of ways.

Clark uses intersecting transitions such as demographic, educational, economic, social, and cultural, with their individual histories and trajectories — as a context of her study. Using first-hand narratives of women and their families, she illustrates a new and changing sense of self among these daughters, whose mothers never had careers of their own.

Focusing on ways these young career-oriented women engage with immediate society and the world at large, the book explores how they view traditional roles and how they are, in turn, viewed by society. In an era of globalisation, with new opportunities, come challenges. While women are changing, does society change around them, and at their pace?

Clark postulates that delayed marriage, parental support — especially of fathers — egalitarian child rearing and homemaking, besides education, are essential for women to have agency. Women interviewed also spoke of their futures — where they felt spouse support would be essential in pursuing a career, as well as their ability to negotiate a life outside their homes — be it in nuclear or joint families.

The book is useful to researchers and students of women's studies, social anthropology and demography, gender studies and development studies. ■



Valued Daughters
Alice W. Clark
SAGE ₹595

The book traces changing motivations and the search for careers.

RANDOM SHELF HELP

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



Philanthropy in India, Promise to Practice
Meenaz Kassam, Femida Handy, Emily Jansons ₹750, SAGE

THIS is an interesting study of philanthropy and the way it is evolving in India. We have today many more billionaires, high-net worth individuals and a richer middle class. Alongside there is a rise in the number of NGOs, trusts, foundations and welfare projects by companies. More Indians, it appears from the book, are keen to give and help the less fortunate. The key reason is that the state does not provide quality services in health, education or public services in general. So philanthropy is seen as an antidote to poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment.

The book is the result of a three-year holistic study. It examines the philanthropic role played by non-profits, charitable trusts, religious trusts, family-run foundations and corporate giving. It also studies middle-class attitudes to philanthropy and how the poor give — often they are very generous. There is a chapter on the Indian diaspora and what motivates them to invest in social welfare. The government's efforts to encourage the diaspora to help India's social and economic development are also discussed. New trends in philanthropy like the use of information technology to connect donors to recipients or to solicit funding are examined. Venture philanthropy, which has sprouted several social enterprises, has emerged as a sunrise area in recent years. The book has several case studies and is reader-friendly. ■



Quality Management in Higher Education
Marmar Mukhopadhyay, ₹995, SAGE

MARMAR Mukhopadhyay's book is a useful quality management guide for heads of colleges and universities. The universal malaise affecting our humungous system of higher education is quality.

India has 36,000 colleges, 700 universities and 23.5 million students — the third largest system in the world. Even if we define quality narrowly as acquiring skills so that students get jobs, we still fail. Badly. Less than 10 percent of MBAs are employable and more than 47 percent of graduates are unemployable. So India's system of higher education is more about quantity than quality. It needs a drastic overhaul. A handful of colleges do meet global standards, indicating that it is possible to do better.

Professor Mukhopadhyay carefully outlines the issues heads of colleges and universities need to tackle and the process, tools and techniques that can be deployed. In the first chapter he dissects what quality implies: not just acquiring knowledge but achieving values and employability skills. "Quality is a holistic experience," he writes.

The book is divided into three sections which talk about methods of quality management, in-campus changes like curriculum, exams, infrastructure, human resource development and so on. The last chapter, "The levers of change", is about how to involve students, inculcate leadership and use ICT for education. The book is simply written and full of practical ideas. ■



Fiscal Consolidation, Budget Deficits and the Macro Economy
Lekha S. Chakraborty, ₹750, SAGE

LEKHA S. Chakraborty, an Associate Professor at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, analyses the impact fiscal deficit has on macroeconomic outcomes in this book.

The commonly accepted notion is that fiscal deficit is detrimental to growth rate. Excessive fiscal deficits cause inflation, prevent private capital formation and tend to maintain a low interest rate. The central government's stated objective is to reduce the fiscal deficit to three percent of GDP.

In nine chapters Professor Chakraborty analyses all facets of the impact of fiscal deficits, including in the states — which have actually done better than the Centre — through a macroeconomic exercise. This is a thorough and detailed effort which puts a wide range of issues into perspective. It's a contribution that comes at an important time in our economic growth. ■

'Empathy is part of medical care'

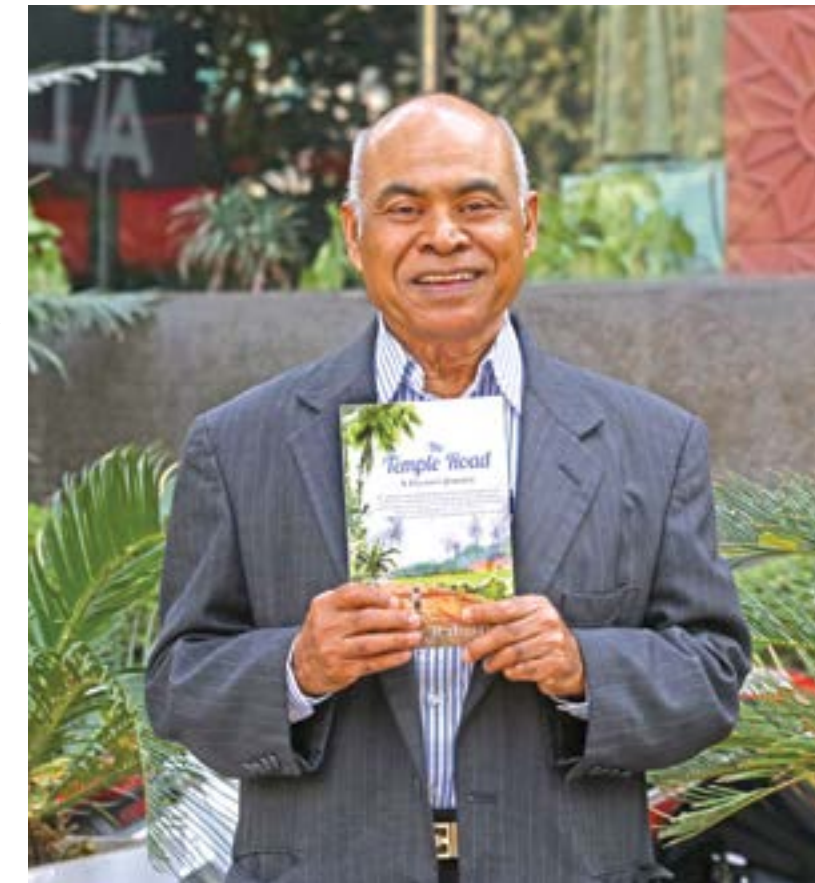
Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

Dr Fazlur Rahman's inspirational new memoir, *The Temple Road: A Doctor's Journey*, begins with his mother's sudden death during childbirth. Just seven at the time, he went on to fulfil her dream — that he would become a doctor and save lives. But his beginnings were not promising. He was born and raised in the remote village of Pora Bari, now in Bangladesh, where people regularly succumbed to deadly diseases such as malaria, kala-azar, typhoid and tuberculosis. Rahman himself almost died of kala-azar, a parasitic illness.

Through sheer willpower, self-belief and hard work he finished school, made his way to Dhaka Medical College and finally to prestigious medical centres in the US like St John's Hospital in New York and the Houston-based Baylor College of Medicine.

Rather than being a small fish in a big pond, he became the first haematologist-oncologist in San Angelo in Texas. He has now lived in the US for over 40 years and won recognition as a front-ranking, empathic oncologist both in the region and the country. Retiring in 2011 from active medical practice, he teaches medical humanities and ethics at Angelo State University.

Civil Society chatted with the modest, unassuming Dr Rahman before the launch of his memoir in New Delhi.



Dr Fazlur Rahman with his interesting memoir

How did your book come about?

The idea was there for quite a while because I had been writing on medical-ethical issues for different publications. Then I saw how much change there had been in Bangladesh. I wanted to capture my journey, where I came from and where I went and through that give an idea of history. So I thought that through my life I would not only illuminate myself but illuminate the society and culture I grew up in.

I had written parts of my memoir for *Harvard Review* and *Lancet*. Then the idea of the book came about and six or seven years ago I started putting things together.

What was the primary reason for your becoming a doctor?

My mother often used to tell me that someday I should become a doctor and save lives. I was only seven when she died but five, six or seven-year-olds remember more than we realise. I think the impact was greater because she died so suddenly.

Also, I was a sickly child myself and almost died of kala-azar. I saw a lot of suffering around me. People died of different diseases like malaria, kala-azar, typhoid, tuberculosis and smallpox.

What took you to San Angelo?

I did my senior residency at the prestigious Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. My mentor there, Dr Robert Hettig, told me, "It is better to be in a place where you are needed the most and it's a distinction to be a pioneer." My wife and I moved

especially hard for me to forget the children at Dhaka Medical College Hospital who lost their limbs to cancer.

What are the contrasts and similarities in the treatment of cancer between the US and Bangladesh?

The poor have the same hurdles to cross whether in the US or Bangladesh. But you have better support organisations in the US. Palliative care too is much more advanced in the US. Palliative care has physical, spiritual and emotional components. Hospices are well-equipped to gently and systematically take care of pain and the side effects of cancer treatment like nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. The other aspects are psychological and spiritual care.

I took my own time to understand the concept of palliative care because I was trained to believe that my job was to save people rather than talk about death and dying.

What is your opinion of the current debate on medical ethics?

We are going through very difficult disagreements in the US. One side is talking about universal access to medical care. The other, capitalistic, viewpoint is that everybody should take personal responsibility. As a result, Obama's Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has become very controversial.

In the West and other parts of the world I do see some abuse. You don't want to drain the patient's finances because that is not going to help the patient. But there is also the pressure to put the patient through MRI scans and they are very expensive. If we have palliative care it would be much less expensive and improve the quality of life.

Private hospitals are often accused of asking for such tests and procedures to boost revenues.

It is a problem in the US but I think there are checks and balances. In some parts of India and Bangladesh I see lots of MRI scan machines and other

technologies. My belief is that the emphasis in developing countries should be on immunisation, pre-natal care, and public health and hygiene.

If you look at the history of medicine — and this is a sensitive subject even for my colleagues — most of the advancement has come not because of heart transplants or kidney transplants. Yes, they have saved millions of lives but most of the advances have come from public health and immunisation. We tend to forget that but that should be a priority. ■

also for financial reasons.

San Angelo, a city in west Texas, had a population of about 75,000 at that time. I went into private practice in a group because I didn't know much about the business side of medicine. I began as a salaried employee in the first year and later became part of the group — West Texas Medical Associates. Our group started a non-profit hospital and a for-profit multi-specialist clinic that is now common in the US. Thirteen of us started it and now we have 40 doctors. I retired in 2011.

What accounts for your success as a doctor?

Partly my own suffering and the suffering I saw around me when I was growing up. One of my mentors, Dr S.M. Rab, at Dhaka Medical College, strengthened my belief that empathy is an essential part of medical care.

Another thing you learn in practice is that when a patient comes with cancer to you, his or her big burden is not only the disease but other problems in life like their jobs, children, spouses, insurance or the lack of it. It requires a certain amount of sensitivity and empathy to understand that. It was



The Temple Road: A Doctor's Journey
Dr Fazlur Rahman
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Sahu's bowls are made with bronze. Smooth and perfectly crafted the bowls are handmade. The singing bowls are Sahu's specialty and earn his family a decent income. He doesn't recall how his family acquired this skill but points out that Odisha is the birthplace of Buddhism.

It was here that the great Mauryan king Ashoka fought the battle of Kalinga in 262 BC. The sheer brutality of war deeply distressed Ashoka. He embraced Buddhism and became a compassionate apostle of peace. The rest is history. ■

For orders contact: Amay Kumar Sahu, Hindol Road, Dhenkanal, Odisha-759019
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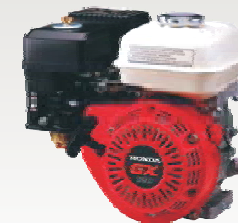


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