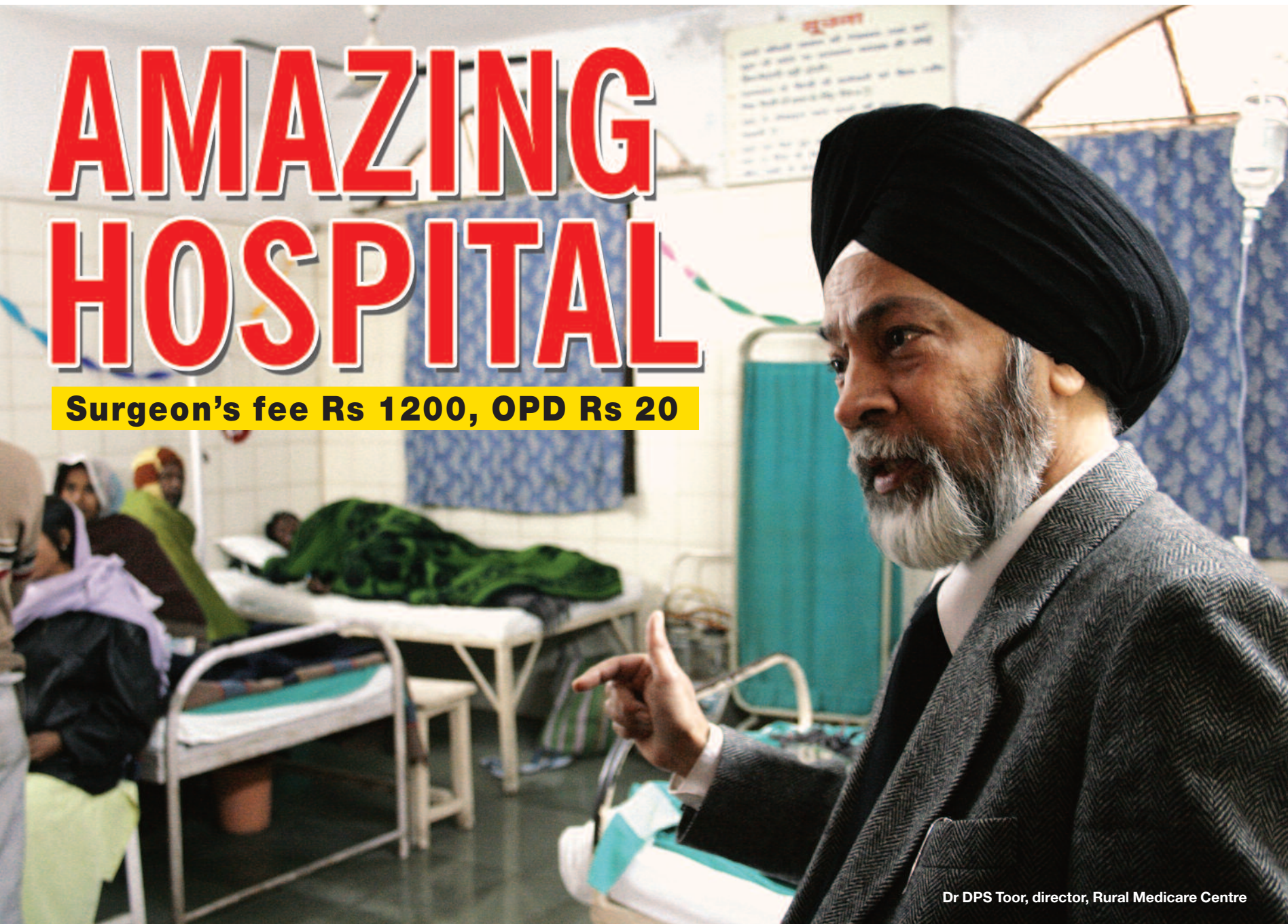


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## AMAZING HOSPITAL

**Surgeon's fee Rs 1200, OPD Rs 20**



Dr DPS Toor, director, Rural Medicare Centre



**SASAKAWA'S  
SECOND  
ROUND  
AGAINST  
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GENTLE  
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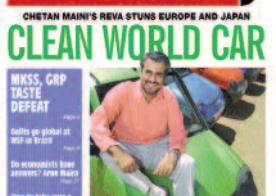
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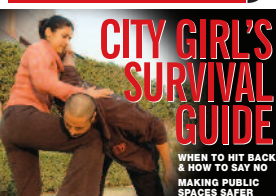
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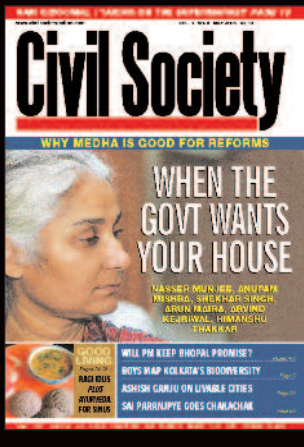
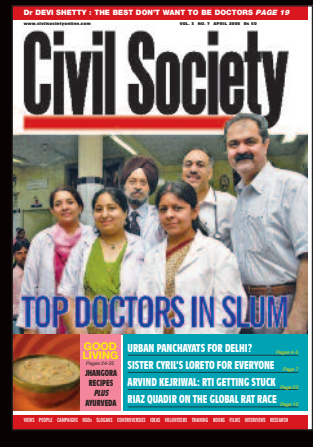
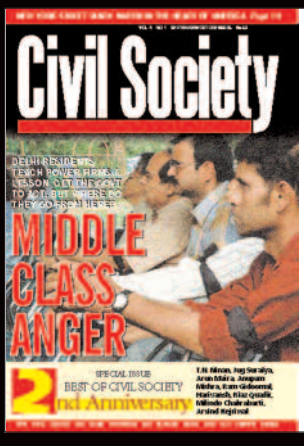
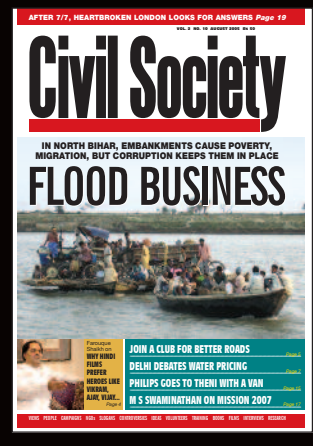
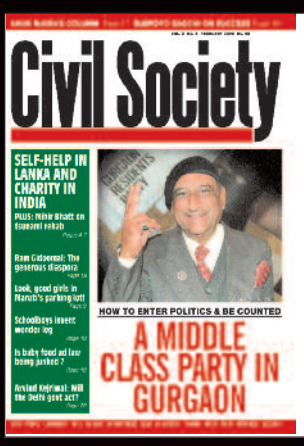
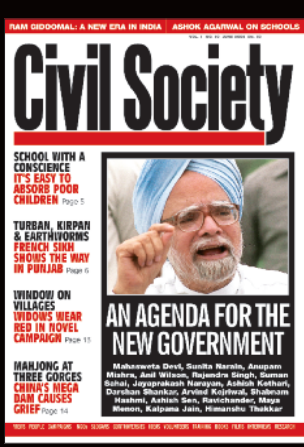
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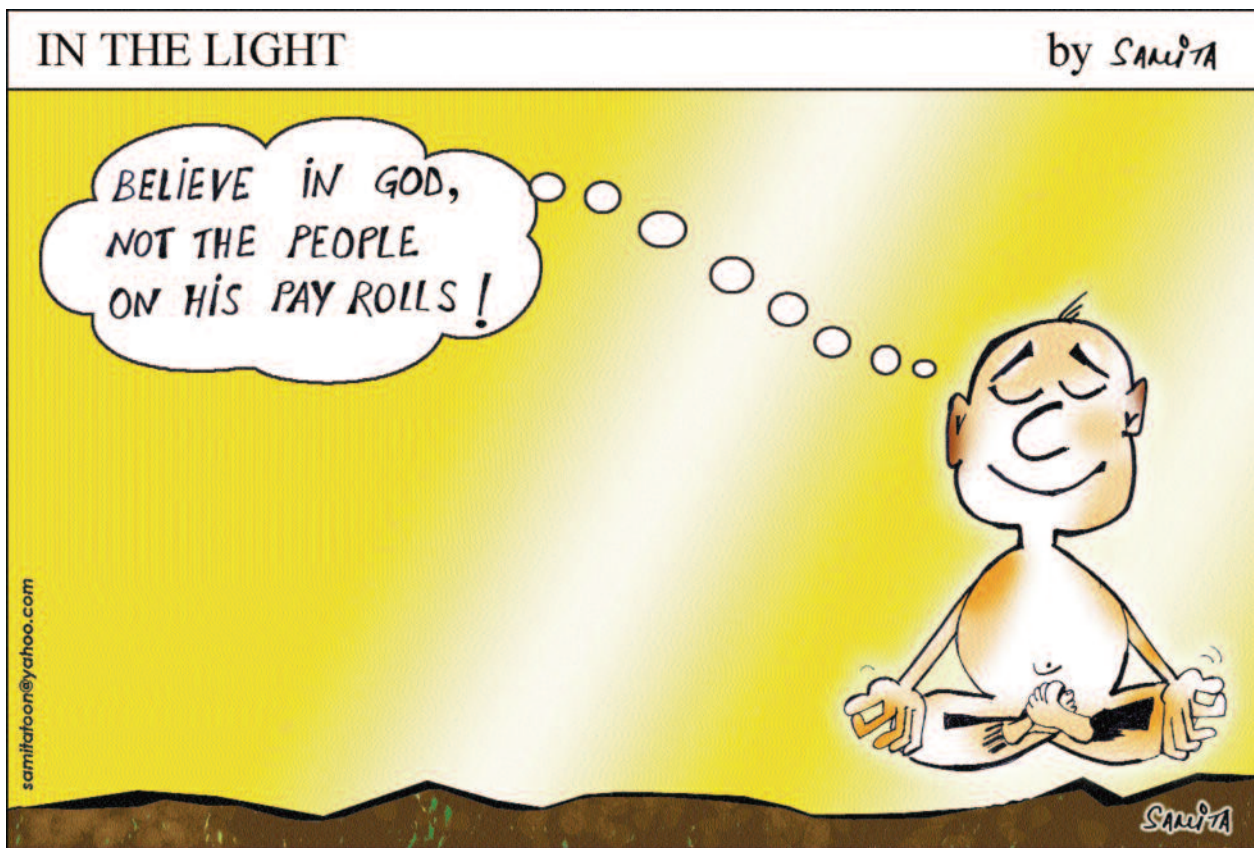
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### Business minus ethics

I am a bit surprised that your magazine has not covered any trade union leader who is sacrificing his own growth for the upliftment of the working class. There are several such known and unknown leaders in the backyard of Gurgaon be it in the Honda or Maruti factory.

I would also caution *Civil Society* from roping in CEOs and business journalists. They have a way with words and changing paradigms and concepts. The CEOs have a powerful public relations (PR) department which ensures that not a blemish is reported against them.

I would like to comment on the articles written by Arun Maira and TN Ninan in your annual issue.

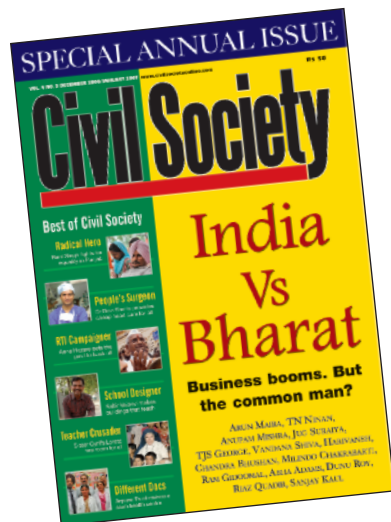
- Corporate social responsibility and business ethics are taught in all B Schools. I passed from a reputed B School and worked in industry for nearly two decades. Let me assure you that no young manager can hope to climb the corporate ladder with such beliefs, notwithstanding his sweet smiling CEO. In fact have you ever wondered why there is no sting journalism against corporates and their czars? A case of embedded journalism would you say!

- TN Ninan sounds very matter of fact when he writes about corporates being in the business of profit. But profit is not so simple. Often it is acquired through tax avoidance, tax shelters, bribes and everything else.

Recently, a colleague who is a high level functionary in a consultancy moved into a big bungalow in DLF because he got Rs 2.5 crore as consultancy fees from an international NGO for determining the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. Business is definitely overriding all other functions of civil society and that is worrisome.

**Hari Parmeshwar, Gurgaon**

## LETTERS



### Samas and education

I would like to congratulate Pratham and Solaris for their joint efforts to promote primary education for the Sama community in Kutch with the active support of some educated people in the community.

This write-up brought back memories of a conversation I had with a railway booking clerk at my native place in Rajasthan. After taking a look at my reservation slip he asked me about my occupation and expressed surprise. He told me that his previous posting was in Kutch where he came across many Sama Muslims and most of them were untouched by education. Incidentally, some sources say that the Sama community were Rajputs before converting to Islam. Samas ruled Sindh between 1351 and 1524.

**Arif N Samma, St Edwards School, Shimla**

### Mind magazine

Being a childhood friend of the publishers has one or two plus

points. You can be thoroughly abusive. And you can occasionally get your name into print. For the rest, the less said the better.

Of course it works both ways. And you could be rung at the crack of dawn and told that since you don't do anything you may as well review a book.

I take my hat off to *Civil Society*. It has staved off, for the entire three years of its existence, the temptation to expand into the glitzy world of puerile and insulting Indian advertising or to preoccupy itself with those who are supposed to be role models (why and for whom I shudder to mention), commonly referred to as The Page Three People.

Our channels and papers and magazines, with some notable and noteworthy exceptions, have degenerated into a shameful mess of pulp unworthy of representing this country. They are, for the most part, an insult to basic intelligence and to basic integrity. From concocted war coverage to so-called stings, to arm-chair reporting to unverified slander, we practice it all with unprincipled aggression.

In this swamp, *Civil Society* is an island of sanity. And offers high enough ground to keep your feet dry.

**Kabir Mustafi, Director, Prospect New Delhi**

### India versus Bharat

The article, 'Is it India versus Bharat once again?' captured the mood in the country perfectly. At a time when praise is being heaped on India globally for its industrial growth, it is sad that we have failed to tackle rural poverty. The benefits of reform and globalisation have been garnered by the rich and the educated middle-class. We should now focus all our energies on agriculture and small rural businesses and make villages boom.

**Rajinder Sharma, New Delhi**

“ For the first time the rights of Adivasis and forest-dwellers have been politically accepted and legally recognised. This provides a basis for taking the fight forward. Demanding these rights is now part of law. ”

**Ashok Chaudhury**  
National Forum of Forest  
People and Forest Workers  
on the Forest Rights Bill

“ We have eight and nine per cent GDP growth these days, but it is only for 20 per cent of the population. What does that 20 per cent of the population do to enable the others to share in its prosperity? ”

**Dr JK Banerjee**  
founder of the rural  
surgeons' movement

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COVER STORY

## AMAZING HOSPITAL

At the Rural Medicare Centre on the fringes of South Delhi, surgeons save lives and show that affordable healthcare can be made available for the urban and rural poor.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY LAKSHMAN ANAND

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# Civil Society

## Rural surgeons and the health business

**A**RE our governments too limited in their approach to reforms? Many people we come across tend to think so. It is not enough to be focussed on big ticket investments by private sector industry, though these are important and must continue. It is also necessary to foster a spirit of enterprise which seeks to change social equations and bridge gaps created by poverty. Huge backlogs in tricky sectors like health and education defy cut and paste solutions. Multiple and innovative efforts are needed. It is the responsibility of governments to create the space in which people can look for new answers.

The story of the Rural Medicare Centre at Saildulajab, near Saket in South Delhi, appealed to us as an example of how skilled Indian professionals can find solutions to the problems of infrastructure and make a difference to the lives of ordinary people. The hospital attracts thousands of patients and gives them care at affordable charges. There is no waiting list. Its doctors are well qualified and satisfied with the modest fees they take.

Is this hospital unique and to that extent unreal? Can it be replicated? We believe it can if it is showcased as one of the ways forward. Doctors will use their skills in ways that serve millions (instead of just the few with money) if they believe that is what society expects of them. An equitable health policy and the use of medical science for inclusion finally have to be national priorities.

The Rural Medicare Centre has been born out of the movement of rural surgeons launched in the early seventies by Dr JK Banerjee and his wife. What they have provided is an alternative business model in health care.

The rural surgeons have an association and are 400 plus in number. They offer a form of privatisation which the government must examine and, in our opinion, support. Small 30- and 40-bed hospitals that perform general surgeries can become a valuable network whether in the countryside or in the cities. They can provide sentinel services and take much of the load off central facilities like AIIMS, where people from all over flock because there is nowhere else to go. Such small hospitals can be a referral network, sending only cases that require specialised attention to the big hospitals.

What do the rural surgeons seek from the government? They want a policy framework which accepts that small hospitals serving communities and sustained by them have a role to play in the health care system. If this were to happen voluntary organisations and groups of doctors could take over primary health care centres and run them so that people in the peripheries of the economy are served.

There are other spin-offs as well. It is a part of the mission of rural surgeons that they train local people to serve as para-medical staff. This will mean a rapid spreading of skills. They also want rural surgery to be treated as a discipline. Physicians can be taught essential surgery and allowed to perform minor operations.

Government recognition will also embolden banks and financial institutions to back ventures by rural surgeons. It will prompt insurance companies to look at them. The idea is not to do charity but rework the business of healthcare.

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# Rehab demands grow but



LAKSHMAN ANAND

Medha Patkar, leader of the National Alliance of People's Movements

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

THE government may be keen to quickly finalise a national rehabilitation policy but activists say it will take a while. Over the years, three drafts of a national rehabilitation policy have been drawn up. The first was framed by the NDA government in 2003. The second was put together by NGOs and people's movements in 2004. And the third was drawn up by the ministry of rural development in 2006.

The NDA government's draft policy was rejected by NGOs and people's movements who found it totally inadequate. They came up with their own

draft, after extensive consultations. It was given to the National Advisory Council (NAC) through Aruna Roy and NC Saxena. It is believed NAC passed this draft and forwarded it to the government.

Then came the ministry of rural development's draft national rehabilitation policy. It was posted on its website and comments were sought in the short span of seven to 15 days. NGOs and people's movements objected to the unseemly haste. Anyway, after studying the rural ministry's draft they rejected it pointing out that it was similar to the NDA one.

On 27 December last, the ministry of rural development called activists who had been instrumental in preparing the NAC draft to a meeting. Among

those who attended were Medha Patkar, leader of the National Alliance of People's Movements, Shekhar Singh of the Centre for Equity Studies and Shivani Chaudhury of Housing and Land Rights Network.

NGOs and people's movements say they are open to discussing the NAC draft. Industry and state governments and any of the stakeholders can come up with suggestions. They have rejected any discussions on the rural ministry's draft. They want the NAC draft to be translated into five languages and circulated.

Secondly, the NAC draft should be reviewed by a consortium of ministries including the ministry of social justice and empowerment, ministry of tribal affairs and the ministry of urban development and not just by the ministry of rural development.

Thirdly, they point out that the rural ministry's draft does not take care of displacement in all its manifestations and lacks a comprehensive agenda. For example, it is aimed only at rural areas. But large scale displacement of people is taking place in cities too so the new policy must include urban displacement and eviction.

Fourthly, NGOs and people's movements want the archaic Land Acquisition Act of 1894 to be abolished. The principle of eminent domain, by which the government claims right to acquire land for 'national benefit' and then pass it on to the private sector for private gain has to be done away with. There should be new legislation that endorses the resources and rights of the people.

The NGOs say companies must acquire land directly from the people at market prices. The government should be a moderating force and ensure that communities do not end up getting a raw deal. It should also set a ceiling for how much land the private sector can acquire.

Fifthly, the thrust of the policy must be on minimising displacement whereas the rural development ministry's draft justifies it. For instance,

## Tinkering officials weaken

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
New Delhi

THE National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW) has always fought relentlessly for the rights of tribals and forest dwellers to live in and around forests and access minor forest produce. These communities face constant harassment by the forest department which wrongly sees them as encroachers. No schools, health clinics or roads have ever been built for them. As a result, forest villages are mostly the poorest in India.

So, finally when the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on December 15, it should have been an occasion to celebrate. After all, a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) had listened sympathetically to the NFFPFW and incorporated their views into the Bill.

Instead, a pall of gloom descended. The sweets

were put away. The reason? Amendments had been made to the JPC Bill and pushed through the Lok Sabha hurriedly at the eleventh hour, when only a few MPs were present. These changes make the rights of forest people ambiguous and the process of getting tenure rights cumbersome. A law that was meant to put uncertainties to rest will now be mired in disputes over interpretation.

NFFPFW believes only senior forest officials could have made such alterations because the omissions have been cleverly done. Since passing the Bill was seen as the politically correct thing to do, it went through without MPs taking a close look at the last-minute amendments.

"Every political party was under pressure to pass it. They thought their credibility will go if they question it," said an activist with the NFFPFW.

After the Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha, activists quickly contacted several MPs, including those from the Left to remedy the situation when the Bill came up in the Rajya Sabha on 18

December.

"The Left, led by Brinda Karat, took it up. But the Minister of Tribal Affairs just gave an assurance in the Rajya Sabha that some of these issues will be dealt with in the Rules. We cannot depend on this," a deeply disappointed **Ashok Chaudhury**, convenor of the NFFPFW, told *Civil Society*.

**Is the Forest Bill a victory for forest dwellers?**

No. The form in which this Bill has been passed is woefully inadequate. The Bill is a classic case of giving with one hand and taking back with the other. Parliament ignored the recommendations of the JPC and the government played into the hands of powerful vested interests: forest officials, so-called wildlife protectors and commercial forces. There will be major problems in implementation as the forest department, zamindars and the forest mafia will create hassles. People will be able to get the law implemented only in those areas where their own organisations are strong.

*Continued on page 8*



# where is policy?

options to displacement must be examined.

Also, development planning is missing. The rural ministry's draft proposes the setting up of development commissioners to oversee the process of rehabilitation. These commissioners will be paid by the agency that acquires land. As a result, their loyalty will always be suspect. Therefore, NGOs and people's movements are asking for an independent agency that will include representatives of the project affected communities to be set up.

Widespread unrest over land is finally forcing the government to put on hold its plans for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the country. Activists at the grassroots all along saw SEZs as a brazen land scam engineered by politicians and sections of industry. Interestingly, many businessmen privately agreed with that assessment. But even as hundreds of proposals for SEZs came and awaited approval, the UPA government didn't feel the need to take a second look at the policy. Scant attention was paid to voices that questioned the importance to the economy of SEZs. Many of these views were expressed from within the establishment and academia by people who you could call staunch supporters of liberalisation.

Now the UPA government says SEZs will be on hold till a rehabilitation policy for people who are forced to give up their land is put in place. The fact is that the NAC draft was lying with the government. This magazine in fact published it in detail last year. Intriguingly, we got many requests from industry to know more about the draft, which was based on consultations among activist groups across the country.

There is also talk of giving displaced people equity in projects. This is a dangerous and reckless proposal because the projects can come with their own risks. It is also important to build the capacity of communities to understand such commercial arrangements.



**NGOs and people's movements want the archaic Land Acquisition Act of 1894 to be abolished.**

Nor is it good enough for the government to step aside and let industry strike deals for land directly with farmers at the best possible price. The kind of land that can be acquired, the composition of the package and how much land should go to industry and for what purpose need to be thought through.

The government now says that a rehabilitation policy will be pushed through in two months. The question is whether this is good news or bad? A hurriedly drafted policy on a complex issue of land rights and rehabilitation will serve more as a cover-up than a solution.

# N-plant cloud over Haripur

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

THE government's plans of building a nuclear plant at Haripur, a nondescript cyclone prone region in West Bengal's East Medinipur district, are being resisted by NGOs, people's groups and the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF).

Six nuclear reactors of about 1000 MW to 1500 MW capacity each are planned at a projected expenditure of Rs 30,000 crores. It is believed that the project will start off with two reactors and the others will be built in phases.

Villagers at the core and periphery of the plant, an area of around 10 km will have to be shifted. These include Haripur, Baguran-Jalpai, Saula, Junput, Bichunia, Kadua, Gopalpur, Deshdattabar, Aladarput, Majilapur etc. Altogether, it is believed, 35 villages will have to make way for the plant.

The people of Haripur have come together under the banner of the 'Haripur Paramanu Vidut Prakalpa Pratirodh Andolan'. On November 17 last they drove away a high level central team that had arrived to visit the site and the group continues to maintain vigilance.

The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) has also stepped in. "The NFF opposes the setting up of a nuclear plant," Harekrishna Debnath told *Civil Society*. "We are committed to the protection of livelihoods and the right to habitat. There are environmentally sound options like wind farms and solar energy. We will not support hazardous technology."

This densely populated area has 1,200 people per square km. Majilapur has a population of around 19,360. "But there is another 20,000 invisible population, namely the fishing community," says Debnath.

This region, he points out, is the fish basket of West Bengal. "Their main income is dry fish production valued at around Rs 150 crores. The core area of the nuclear plant will close down six fish landing and drying sites and 20,000 members of the fishing community. There will be another 30,000 to 40,000 communities like farmers located inside the 10 km radius. The government has not cared to consult the panchayats before taking this decision." Besides, the government is violating its own coastal regulation zone rules.

The hazardous effects of nuclear plants on people and ecology are well known here. Documentaries on Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and Jadugoda have been watched. Questions are being asked about how nuclear waste will be disposed.

It seems Bengal's entire 120 km coastline is up for grabs. Nandigram, where the SEZ of the Salim Group is planned, is not too far from the proposed site. A special tourist zone coming up on the coast will squeeze the space for the fishing community further. "They are saying 'You can't give us another sea to fish,'" says Debnath.

# forest rights Bill

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Ashok Chaudhury, convenor, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers



# Sharmila to fast till AFSPA goes

LAKSHMAN ANAND

**Jauymini Barkataky**  
New Delhi

FOR seven years now Irom Sharmila has been on hunger strike to demand revocation of the infamous Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) which has led to widespread human rights abuse in Manipur.

So when the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh made the landmark statement on December 1, that the government would look into possible repeal of this draconian Act, there was hope in the air. However, the official announcement that followed made it clear that the Act would not be repealed, but that amendments could be made to give it a 'more humane' angle.

*Civil Society* met Sharmila to ask her opinion. Would she then withdraw her fast? Surprisingly, she was no longer at AIIMS but had been shifted to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. "There was no prior information. She was shifted on December 18 last, at 10:30 pm. I was out for some work and had to rush to her in an auto at that time," said Singjit, Sharmila's brother, who has stood with her throughout her epic struggle. The shift came within just two weeks of the official announcement regarding the Act's amendment, he said.

The time allotted for visitors was between 7 am to 9 am. So at 8 am on a frosty winter morning, this writer accompanied Singjit to Sharmila's room.



Sharmila in hospital

Singjit warned me not to identify myself as a member of the press. There were gun-wielding guards outside her room. After a thorough search I was allowed to see Sharmila. She appeared to be meditating and it was Singjit who answered on her behalf.

He said that on January 7, a joint secretary from the Ministry of Home Affairs, accompanied by the Delhi Commissioner of Police, had come to visit Sharmila. He asked if she would end her fast since the government had decided to amend the Act. But Sharmila refused. Singjit said, "Our demands are non-negotiable. Complete repeal or nothing." He added that though the government itself might be willing to repeal the Act, there were defence per-

sonnel who were vehemently opposed to this as it would mean losing the special powers and privileges they enjoyed.

I asked Sharmila what she intended to do if she was released, Singjit said, "Go straight to Jantar Mantar and continue our struggle...the doctors and nurses here are nice and helpful but what they have to understand is that Sharmila is not a patient but an activist. So they should treat her as such and not as a patient."

When we asked Singjit about Sharmila's well being he replied that she was growing weak. At this moment Sharmila opened her eyes and spoke for the first time. "I'm perfectly fine", she said. "My brother

speaks out of concern for me." It was heartening to see that her eyes had lost none of their steely resolve.

We asked Sharmila if there was any special message from her for Republic Day and she said, "On Republic Day all the prisoners get some relaxation from the vigil that surrounds them but in my case..." she trailed off.

Sharmila has made it clear that only the complete repeal of the AFSPA would induce her to break her fast. On the other hand, the complete disregard by the government towards the recommendations of the Reddy Committee's report submitted on June 2006, about the AFSPA, only seems to go against what is just.

## Tinkering officials weaken forest rights Bill

Continued from page 6

**What were the JPC recommendations that were ignored?**

The JPC had said rights would be given to villages in and around forest areas. But the final document has left out the word 'around'. Nearly 70 per cent of villages are located on the fringes of forests and not inside. The Bill excludes them. Besides villages within forests are not revenue villages. Some have shifted several times, hounded by the forest department. The rights of *jhum* cultivators will also not be recognised by this legislation.

Secondly, the JPC had clearly categorised different communities whose rights would be duly recognised. But the Bill specifically mentions only scheduled tribes and other forest dwellers. The wording of the Bill will make it difficult to establish the rights of communities like pastoralists and taungya villages. Many households are headed by women and we would have liked the word 'women' included.

Thirdly, the JPC had treated the gram sabha as the supreme authority to determine the rights of claimants. But now the gram sabha can only recommend. The authority to decide is vested in the District Level Committee consisting of government officials, including forest officials. This will result in delays and corruption.

Fourthly, the Bill states that claimants must have stayed three generations on the land. Each generation is calculated at 25 years. This means the effective cut-off date has been pushed back to 1930 that is pre-independence and unconstitutional. Also people displaced by development projects and natural calamities have been forced to live in and around forests. Where will they go?

In a nutshell, democratisation of forest administration has been forgotten.

*The wording of the Bill will make it difficult to establish the rights of pastoralists and taungya villages. We would have liked the word 'women' included.*

**What does NFFWFP plan to do?**

We will lobby with the state governments on the Rules. Generally, the states have political leaders who are closer to the people. In UP, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, political leaders will have to go with the people on this Bill. We think people living in forest areas should have a monitoring committee, like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, that will define rules and monitor implementation.

We are consulting our local and regional groups and we will hold a national consultation. We have held *Mashal Julus* (torch-light processions) in Ranchi. Disenfranchised groups like the Dalits and Adivasis will form a social alliance to fight capitalist forces. We will work to strengthen people's organisations.

As mainstream India doesn't want to give space to Dalits and Adivasis, a campaign of reclaiming lost space is beginning. All those lands that have been taken by the forest department but actually belong to the *gram samaj* (village society) will be reoccupied. Then, a fight against joint forest management will be declared as it has misled the nation and destroyed village autonomy. In Uttarakhand, it is destroying van panchayats – the only legally existing system of peoples' forest management.

**Do you see any positive aspect at all in the Bill?**

Yes. For the first time the rights of Adivasis and forest-dwellers have been politically accepted and legally recognised. This provides a basis for taking the fight forward. Secondly, as objections raised by us have been recorded, they can't declare us Naxalites anymore. Demanding these rights is now part of law.



# Waterman tells government Tank Authority is needed

## Civil Society News

New Delhi

**A**MONG Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's pre-Budget briefings, one went completely unnoticed, though it dealt with an issue that has many implications for the health of the economy: the water scarcity in the country and newer ways of dealing with it.

Rajender Singh of the Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) suggested to Chidambaram that the government support his idea of a *Johad Jodo Yojana*. The *johad* is a water tank and Singh sees good sense in the creation of a National Tank Authority. TBS has shown in Alwar and other districts of rain-deficient Rajasthan that the *johad* works wonders in bringing up the water table and meeting community requirements. The water tank can also be used to collect water in areas where there is excessive rain. Then again, it can serve as an alternative surface source where pollution has made groundwater unfit for human use.

Singh has proposed that the collective learning from water harvesting be put to use in a national programme supported by the government but managed by hands-on water activists with assets created by and for communities. A Jal Biradari or Water Network consisting of groups and individuals like Singh and TBS already exists.

Will this be the new way forward with the government declaring 2007 as Water Year? **Rajender Singh** spoke to *Civil Society*.

### What does your *Johad Jodo* programme plan to do?

Our *Johad Jodo* programme is aimed at curbing pollution and overuse of groundwater. More than 70 per cent of our aquifers are depleted. If 80 per cent of our agriculture and industry depend on groundwater then recharging those aquifers becomes critical. Since independence no government either at the centre or in the states has thought of this. No budget has ever allocated money for recharging depleted aquifers.

The humble *johad* is one method of recharging aquifers. It is cheap and can be owned and managed by communities. The *johad* can be used to recharge underground water sources where there has been over exploitation. It can also be used to trap surface water for agriculture and domestic needs. This would be particularly useful in areas where there is arsenic, excessive fluoride or salinity in groundwater. Thirdly, the *johad* can play an important role in preventing silting and erosion.

The more tanks we have the less will be the use of underground water.

### How will you do this?

First there should be a National Tank Authority which will make it mandatory for every panchayat to have at least five tanks. Its agenda should be development with restoration and not destruction in the name of development.

**Who will work for this Tank Authority? If the government is involved it will be manned by**

**babus. Your Tank Authority won't fulfill any of these purposes.**

The government should understand why all its other authorities have failed. This Tank Authority must have people who have worked with their own hands on water, who have grass-roots experience in water conservation. We should not have policy planners, bureaucrats, engineers and politicians in this authority.



Rajender Singh

*There should be a National Tank Authority which will make it mandatory for every panchayat to have at least five tanks*

**But we have never had such an authority in the history of this country.**

Yes, I agree. But good states will be keen to do this.

### Has any government approached you?

I have spoken to the finance minister. I told him there should be a Tank Authority and that every panchayat should have at least five tanks and the response from him was very positive.

### How much money will the government need for this?

I think the money can come from the Rs 25,000 crores the government has set aside for the

National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and from the irrigation budget and the agriculture budget. I think if we want agriculture to revive we have to stop the destruction of water resources and instead slow down the run-off of water so that it can be used for irrigation. Water management must be in tune with nature. There is no need for credit.

### Who should be given this money for building tanks? The panchayats?

No, not the panchayat, but the gram sabha. The government and society must come together for this task. The government should just lend a helping hand to this process. The government can also help by getting the people ready for this task. Otherwise if the people are not ready then the money will go waste or lead to corruption. Create an atmosphere and identify the people who have the experience to build *johads*.

### But there is high likelihood of the money going to waste.

No, money for the Tank Authority money will not be wasted because it is rebuilding the environment with the support of poor people. Instead of expensive technologies like sprinklers and drip irrigation, build tanks to ease water shortages. Since the past five years we have been seeing massive farmer suicides. A major reason is lack of water. The farmer needs help.

The money should be spent in a completely transparent manner. The Right to Information can be used. Secondly, the *johads* should be managed by the people. Say 10 families in a village can be made responsible. Thirdly, diversity must be respected. The National Tank Authority must have the freedom to build the tanks they want to build according to each region's soil, climate or rainfall pattern.

### How will you ensure that marginalised communities like the Dalits are not excluded?

Dalits do have the right to access water from *johads* because it is a common property resource. It is in fact the only refuge of the poor – a place where a lower caste person can take water for his cattle or for himself. I can say this with confidence because I have built 8,400 *johads* in Rajasthan, which is India's most feudal state. The *johad* is like a common man's tap.

### Will you work for the Tank Authority?

I can work with them. It is a project close to my heart. The Jal Biradari has good people. It is a national network. Our water workers are already spreading awareness. They can get the village and the government together, supervise tank construction and point out mistakes.

### What about laws to manage groundwater?

We are working on that as well. Water belongs to the people, not to foreign interests. If a common man breaches a canal to get water he can be jailed but if some industry exploits groundwater there are no laws to check it.



# Saffron farmers blame government

**Jehangir Rashid**  
Srinagar

A premier product of export from the Kashmir valley, saffron is fast losing its glory. There are many reasons for this decline. Saffron growers are losing interest in its production, and if this situation persists then the saffron trade will dwindle.

The reasons saffron growers cite for their despondency are the absence of a saffron research centre, non-existence of a saffron *mandi*, lack of sprinkle irrigation facilities, non-implementation of the market intervention scheme (MIS) and unabated construction on saffron land.

"No action has yet been taken despite repeated assurances from the government that our problems would be looked into. There is an immediate need for setting up a saffron research centre in Kashmir. In fact, the government had promised that they would provide land for the centre but did not do so", said Ghulam Mohammad Pampori, president of the Saffron Growers Association. "We are still waiting to be handed over the promised 70 kanals of land on which the saffron research centre is to be built," he said.

"In other parts of the world steps are taken to boost trade but the story here is altogether different. It was the duty of the government and related agencies to step up the setting up of a saffron research centre but nothing has happened so far. Research programmes should have been carried out so that there is improvement in saffron cultivation", said Mohammad Ramzan, a saffron grower.

The saffron growers also complained that despite an announcement of an amount of Rs 50 lakh made by the government to set up a saffron *mandi* in the valley no action has been taken. "In 2005, the then govern-

ment led by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said in the legislative assembly that Rs 50 lakh would be provided for setting up the saffron *mandi*. Abdul Rahim Rather of the National Conference wanted it to be built at Badipora-Chadoora but the government made it clear that it would be constructed at Pampore. We were hoping that action would be taken at the earliest, but the promise is yet to be kept", said Pampori.

Saffron growers also believe that sprinkle irrigation facilities should be introduced in fields to increase saffron's productivity. "The sprinkle irriga-

tion facility has been a great success in the saffron fields of Iran and Spain. Although the government had started this trial in four wells, the process was discontinued later, and thus desired results could not be achieved. The whole scheme needs to be looked into so that saffron's production is increased", said Ali Mohammad, a saffron grower.

The promise by the government of introducing a Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) too has not been kept. The saffron growers say this laxity on the part of the government is seriously compromising the promotion and branding of saffron.

ABDUL QAYOOM



**It was the duty of the government and related agencies to set up a saffron research centre but nothing has happened so far.**

"It was on August 26, 2005, that the agriculture minister Abdul Aziz Zargar promised in the town hall at Pampore that the MIS would be introduced in the saffron sector. Almost a year has passed since then but the government has still not introduced the scheme. In such a situation how can you expect the saffron growers to be motivated to excel," Pampori said.

Saffron growers are increasingly concerned over rampant construction on saffron land despite assurances from the government that it will be stopped. "The government should remove these constructions at the earliest so that people are discouraged to resort to such moves", said Pampori.

# Kurinji plant gets sanctuary

**Susheela Nair**  
Munnar

THE Eravikulam National Park is 15 kms from Munnar. As you drive up rolling hills, past sprawling tea plantations and undulating green valleys, you bask in the glory of nature so wild, yet so beautiful. The park houses Anaimudi, South India's highest peak and the endangered Nilgiri Tiger. Most importantly, it is home to the purple-blue Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes Kunthianes*), which envelop the hills in a blue shroud every 12 years.

Nowhere is the Kurinji euphoria as prominent as in Eravikulam National Park and Rajamala area where hordes of visitors flock to catch a glimpse of blue hillsides.

Dr Rathan Kelkar, IAS, Sub Collector, Devikulam in Idukki District, joined hands with the PWD, police, forest officials, politicians and NGOs to popularise and create an awareness

of the legendary flower.

The last few decades have witnessed massive damage to the bloom. The indiscriminate destruction of Neelakurinji bushes by vandals around Ooty in the Nilgiris and the proliferation of commercial plantations of tea, cardamom, timber, eucalyptus and pine have stunted the flower's growth. Battling for survival, the Neelakurinji thrives in a few remote valleys and gorges.

Realising the need to conserve and protect the Neelakurinji, the Save Kurinji Campaign Council observed 2006 as the Year of Kurinji by organising a march from Kodai to Munnar in May 2006. The council demanded the declaration of a 95 sq km expanse between Kodai and Munnar at a height of 1,600 m as a Kurinji sanctuary.

The Neelakurinji Festival 2006 was organised in Munnar from October 7 to 9 by the Department of Tourism, Forests and Wildlife and other depart-

ments of Kerala government as a tribute to the wondrous blossom. "Munnar was gripped by kurinji mania for three days, and the festival featured a photo exhibition of kurinji flowers and its habitat. Also organised were cultural shows by the Todas of the Nilgiris, seminars on the kurinji's protection and poster competitions," said Dr Kelkar.

The highlight of the festival was the decision to form a kurinji sanctuary on 3,800 hectares of mountain land, adjoining the Pambadum Shola. "Conversion of an erstwhile *ganja* cultivation (narcotic area) into a sanctuary is indeed a golden chapter in the history of the conservation movement," said Dr Kelkar. The sanctuary will comprise the habitats of Neelakurinji in Kottakamboor and Vattavada villages in the state's Idukki district. The new sanctuary is adjacent to Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary and Anaimudi and the Pampadum Shola National Park.

Another remarkable initiative by the postal department is the release of the Rs 15 postal stamp on the Neelakurinji in Ooty in May 2006. The Kozhikode Philately Bureau has brought out a special postal pack 'Bouquet of Western Ghats' in connection with the stamp's release.

**The highlight of the festival was the decision to form a kurinji sanctuary on 3,800 hectares adjoining the Pambadum Shola.**





Yohei Sasakawa

# Sasakawa's second leprosy battle

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

**Y**OU can be cured of leprosy, but still be a leper. Millions of Indians have been rescued from the scourge of the disease, but they remain outcasts. It is tough for them to earn a living. Banks don't give them funding for small businesses. They can't find schools that take their children. Socially spurned, they continue to inhabit anonymous, shifting leper colonies. Fleeing recognition, those in the north go south and vice versa. Invariably, you will find them on the streets, begging to keep body and soul together.

But for all the ostracism they face, leprosy patients in India have one good reason to smile. It is a Japanese reason. Yohei Sasakawa has been their guardian angel for several years now. A very wealthy man, Sasakawa, 67, stopped running his businesses when he was in his early forties and decided instead to devote himself to the work of his Nippon Foundation. He has also been the World Health Organisation (WHO) goodwill ambassador for the elimination of leprosy.

Sasakawa, with his sustained efforts, can take credit for elimination of the disease. However, he has found to his surprise that a medical cure is not enough. Social remedies are needed because cured leprosy patients continue to live in the fringes even after they have been medically treated. It is with this in mind that he has set up the Nippon-India Leprosy Foundation, which will look at rehabilitation and absorbing of afflicted people into the mainstream of the economy.

Sasakawa has brought leprosy patients together

nationally in the hope of making them more assertive and society at large more accepting. He has conducted a survey and found that there are 1,000 colonies of former leprosy patients. Sasakawa plans to launch a major campaign, involving local leaders and grassroots groups, to eradicate the colonies.

On January 29, Sasakawa and 11 others, includ-



Yohei Sasakawa with leprosy patients

**Sasakawa, with his sustained efforts, can take credit for elimination of the disease. However, he has found to his surprise that a medical cure is not enough.**

ing five Nobel Peace Prize laureates and the presidents of two countries, were to jointly issue a "global appeal to end stigma and discrimination against people affected by leprosy." They want the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to take up this matter as an item on its agenda and issue principles and guidelines for governments to follow.

"Five years ago, most people were sceptical about the eradication," said Sasakawa, who last year assumed the chairmanship of the foundation that his father, Ryoichi Sasakawa, set up.

Now the world is coming very close to conquering a disease that has afflicted societies in most parts of the globe for centuries. Worldwide 14 million people have been cured and of them 11 million are in India.

The number of countries where leprosy is endemic has plummeted from 122 in 1985 to seven – Nepal, Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Brazil and Central Africa.

India, which accounted for most of the patients in the past, in January declared its success in conquering the disease while Brazil is expected to issue a 'conquer declaration' soon.

The 'conquer declaration' is issued, as per World Health Organisation standards, when a leprosy-plagued country with a population of 1 million or more has reduced the number of patients to one in 10,000 of the population.

Leprosy treatment was speeded up by the development in the early 1980s of multi-drug therapy (MDT). The Nippon Foundation has delivered MDT free since 1995 and has so far spent approximately 30 billion yen since 1975 on helping to eradicate the disease.

Sasakawa is a simple man. He wears cotton kurtas and comes from a tradition which believes in caring for humanity. Asked why he took up the cause of people with leprosy, he says it is because the number of people affected by the disease and their families in turn runs into tens of million. Someone has to speak up for such a large part of the world's population.

Sasakawa's spirit of service and his attitude to money come from his father. He recalls a rich entrepreneur going on and on about how many assets he had acquired and his father looking more and more bored with the monologue. Finally when he had finished, the elder Sasakawa said to the entrepreneur: "Now that you have created all this, I hope you have made arrangements for taking your wealth with you when you go to heaven."

Sasakawa belongs to a tradition of giving. Private ownership appears to bore him. "Although we are private people, we are entrusted with using a large amount of public money," he says.

He spends about one-third of the year (134 days last year) abroad, mostly in developing or underdeveloped countries, to promote foundation programmes, deliver speeches and meet leaders and people. Last

year, he visited India seven times mainly for the crusade against leprosy.

He has met top leaders of many countries and persuaded them to cooperate in defeating leprosy. "No one can deny the importance of the cause. If the President gives an instruction, the administration starts to work. I visit colonies of leprosy patients and talk to them. If you want to promote important and worthwhile programmes, and accomplish something, it is better to address the issue both from the administration side and from the grassroots level."



# Toxic Hindon mucks up Yamuna

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Meerut

EVERYBODY knows that Delhi's Yamuna is a dirty river. But do you know that there is another toxic river adding to the Yamuna's woes? The Hindon river flows through six districts of Western Uttar Pradesh. Loaded with industrial waste, sewage, chemical pesticides and fertilisers, this river spews into the Yamuna, south of Tilwara village in Gautambudh Nagar district.

A scientific study, called 'Hindon River, Gasping for Breath,' was carried out by Heather Lewis, a British environmentalist, with the Janhit Foundation, an NGO. The report was released at a function in Meerut.

"Our study should be an eye-opener to policy-makers to save this river on which millions depend in Western UP," said Anil Rana, director of Janhit Foundation. "Our findings clearly show that industries, virtually devoid of effluent treatment plants along with chemical agriculture are responsible."

Dirty rivers and contaminated groundwater have led to villagers along the Hindon suffering from cancers, neurological disorders, stomach problems, skin infections and respiratory illnesses. Villagers spend over Rs 500 every month on medical expenses.

"Like elsewhere, here too, poor and marginalised communities are suffering because of this human-made environmental disaster. The government is violating the peoples' right to safe water," said Heather Lewis. A poignant film made by Rakesh Khatri, called *Holy River or Dirty Drain*, was shown.

Ironically, the Hindon river, historically known as the Harnandi river, was once so clean that its waters, it is said, cured a bad cough. The river originates in the lower Himalayas at Pur ka Tanka village in the upper east area of Saharanpur district. It winds its way through Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Ghaziabad and Gautambudh Nagar. The Hindon has two tributaries, the Krishni and the Kali (West). It drains a catchment of around 5000 km of largely agricultural land.

For the study, water samples were taken from 14 sites of the Hindon and four from its two main tributaries: Kali (West) and Krishni. Groundwater was collected for analysis.

Research findings show that the Hindon and its tributaries are just dead rivers.

Dissolved oxygen should be 4 mg/l, as per standards set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Instead, it was much below this mark everywhere except in two samples taken from the upper reaches of Kali (West). Biochemical oxygen



Devi of Barnawa suffering from thyroid cancer



Untreated waste water being released into the Hindon river

**The biggest culprits are paper mills and sugar plants. Out of 32 paper mills, 24 are located on the Kali (West). Star Paper Mill mucks up the river almost entirely at Saharanpur. The Hindon has no freshwater left.**

that supports aquatic life should be 2 mg/l. But it ranged between 1,700 mg/l to 9,600 mg/l.

Lead should be 0.01 mg/l, cadmium 0.005mg/l and chromium 0.10mg/l. These heavy metals exceeded permissible limits between 16 to 179 times!

The river's water is a cocktail of pesticides like Endosulphan, Aldrin, Heptochlor Epoxide and Fipronil. The average concentration of these pesticides far exceeds any standards set by the Bureau of Indian Standards and WHO.

Groundwater studied from 12 sites in seven villages found levels of lead exceeded acceptable limits. In Chandenamal village lead was 35 times over acceptable WHO limits! Pesticides above detectable levels were identified in all 12 samples. Villages have no alternative to contaminated groundwater.

Who is responsible? Sixty industrial manufacturing units take large volumes of water from the Hindon, Kali (West) and Krishni and then discharge all their effluents back into these rivers. The biggest culprits are paper mills and sugar plants. Out of 32 paper mills, 24 are located on the Kali (West). Star Paper Mill mucks up the river almost entirely at Saharanpur. Other dirty industries include dairy units, textile manufacturers and slaughter houses.

There is no freshwater left in the Hindon and its tributaries. The main crop grown in Western UP is sugarcane which requires a lot of water. Substantial

amounts of dirty water are taken from the Hindon. This leaches through the soil into the aquifers. Chemical fertilisers and pesticides contaminate the soil further. Besides, sewage and municipal waste from urban centres is dumped in the rivers. The entire Hindon river has only one sewage treatment plant.

Satish Chandra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, who was the chief guest at Janhit's book release function, said the government was beginning a pilot project to contain river pollution in the 11th Plan.

The sad state of India's rivers is well known. India ranks 120 out of 122 countries in terms of water quality. Ninety per cent of India's water resources are polluted with industrial effluents, domestic waste, pesticides and fertilisers. We do need to rethink water.

The government should also do its job. The Janhit Foundation recommends that the CPCB stop untreated industrial effluents being directly released into rivers. Along with the Uttar Pradesh State Pollution Board it should close down dirty industries who do not comply with Environment Protection Rules. The ministry of agriculture must promote natural farming. And remedial steps should be taken to remedy groundwater contamination.

The Janhit Foundation plans to launch a mass awareness campaign about the state of the Hindon river in the coming months.

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# An Indian Muslim women's union

**Amit Sengupta**  
New Delhi

It might take years to make another world possible, but such is the indomitable spirit of human beings, especially women in the peripheries of metros, small towns and villages of 'invisible India' that they don't really need a morbid, profit-driven reality show to prove their point. Last week, 100 women's organisations, from the remotest parts of 'reality India', sat together and made a resolve, which, even if it partially comes true, might change

is a collective struggle; but in the same way as women in domestic spaces or Dalit women face historically conditioned problems in a patriarchal society, Muslim women too go through this vicious cycle."

Sitara Begum, in a burqa, works with Muslim women in the interiors of Orissa; she is based in Cuttack with the Muslim Women's Welfare Organisation. "It's not easy. If we want to study or work or reinterpret Islam within the positive frameworks of religion, the men don't like it. It's tough to push the idea that Muslim women are also mothers, that they sustain society, that they nourish family,

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Zakia Jowhar

the political, social and cultural landscape of the feminist question in India, especially when it comes to the oppressive twilight zones of Muslim women.

"The idea of Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan was born out of the necessity for Muslim women to speak for themselves and demand social, economic, political, civil, legal and religious rights for the realisation of equal citizenship," said Zakia Jowhar of Action Aid, the organisers of the event. "This platform aims to propagate a positive and liberal interpretation of religion which buttress the values of justice, equality and human rights enshrined in the Constitution of India," she added.

But why Muslim women, why not all women, and does it not sound apparently sectarian? Explains Zakia, the catalyst behind the dream, who has relentlessly worked among the survivors of the Gujarat genocide while being hounded by the Narendra Modi regime with threats of false cases, physical intimidation and, consistent local level 'VHP terror': "Gujarat has taught us many lessons. Women are often the first victims of male, fascist mobs. We want to assert that Muslim women can be Muslim, and yet believe in secularism and women's empowerment, demanding their political, social space and human rights under the Indian Constitution. We don't have to follow the diktats of the mullahs and the sectarian, patriarchal Muslim bodies to reaffirm our independent identities as secular, progressive Muslim women."

This reflects in the resolution passed unanimously by women representing 12 states of India. Said young Shital from Mumbai, who works with the poor, "You can check out, 30 per cent of the delegates here are non-Muslims. While pushing for enlightened liberation among Muslim women specifically, we are striking a bigger alliance with Dalit, Adivasi, working class and other women's groups. Finally, it

**'We want to assert that Muslim women can be Muslim, and yet believe in secularism and empowerment.'**

nature and civilisation, that they too deserve dignity as per religious texts. But once men are convinced, it's a wonderful miracle." She smiles, and you know that she is not going to give up so easily. "I come here and meet other women, Muslim, non-Muslim, feminists, women who are staking their lives for justice in Gujarat and elsewhere. And I go back from here with the knowledge of civilisation, leadership qualities and the will to change the world."

Other eminent intellectuals too contributed to this enrichment of a new idea: Muslim women's empowerment with other feminist and subaltern alliances. Said reformer and Islamic studies scholar, Asghar Ali Engineer, "The basic core of the Quranic message was that of justice, a comprehensive concept that included gender justice as well. Injustice to women goes completely against the grain of Quran's teachings."

Dr Hameeda Nayeem from Kashmir University said, "The status of Muslims was better vis-à-vis Muslim women in India or Pakistan because of reforms in the Islamic laws as early as mid-20th century. The campaign needs to create an alliance of Muslim women across the nation but in the larger context it will also benefit from alliances with women from other communities."

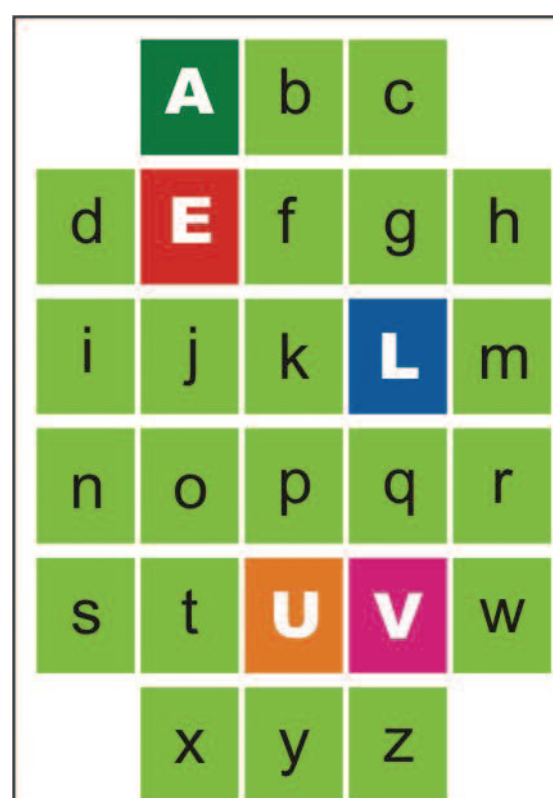
To enable the Muslim community attain full citizenship the final resolution of the national conference of Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan demanded the following:

- To provide an enabling socio-economic and political environment to achieve full human potential.
- To enable participation of the Muslim community in mainstream education to ensure their right to education.
- Immediate halt to the persecution of the Muslim community on the pretext of curbing terrorism.
- Initiation of reforms and a humanistic approach in personal laws with community participation and justice for women.
- And that economic policies should be reviewed to account for the loss of livelihood of marginalised classes owing to the impact of globalisation, privatisation, imperialism and capitalism.

"This is perhaps for the first time that so many woman representatives from various groups came

together on the Muslim empowerment platform from 12 states. By 2007 we plan to set up our units in all the districts and wards of these and other states; we want to build a 10,000 strong women's force in the country by next year. If you don't believe me, we shall meet again in 2007," says Zakia and laughs.

Indeed, all those who know Zakia, and her incredible work, will not dare to disbelieve her incredible dream. She might be quiet, polite, non-dogmatic and low profile, but in her pink cotton saree and relentless energy, she can be a formidable dreamer and doer. Like Sitara Begum and Sheetal, and all those, preparing to carve a special niche of freedom and dignity outside the clichéd male domain of invisible India's reality show.



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LAKSHMAN ANAND



Dr Antonia Neubauer

# READ gets Nepal reading

**Jauymini Barkataky**  
New Delhi

**I**N 1988 Dr Antonia Neubauer, an educationist and social worker from Philadelphia, founded Myths and Mountains, a cultural adventure travel company for the socially conscious tourist who wanted to understand different cultures and people.

One day she was trekking up a mountain slope in Nepal. On an impulse she asked her guide, "Dormi, if you could do anything in your village, what would it be?" He replied, "I'd like a library."

Dr Neubauer was elated. "Light bulbs went on for me," she says. A library could become the focal point of an entire community of readers – teachers, students, women and the elderly. And so she founded READ, (Rural Education and Development) the non-profit branch of Myths and Mountains.

In 1991 eight porters carried 900 books and a card catalogue into the tiny village of Junbesi, crossing the 11,800 ft high Lamajura Pass. It was a historic moment. READ had started its first library.

In a mountainous country where the literacy rate is nothing to boast about READ has built 40 libraries. Each has books, periodicals, educational toys, women's books and computers. More than half a million children and adults use the libraries.

Right from the start, Dr Neubauer did not want READ libraries to depend on foreign aid. She developed a sustainable model and the libraries have flourished through Nepal's difficult years as 'Zones of Peace'.

"I personally believe that people can't really depend upon governments. You've got to take control of your own lives. And a lot of the problems of cities are because of migration from villages. If you make villages sustainable, happy places you can alleviate a lot of burden. A village needs four things at an absolute minimum – roads, education, medical care and irrigation," says Dr Neubauer.

The READ model uses a three-pronged system to be sustainable. The library spreads not only education, but economic and social development as well.

"If you built a library in a village with a secondary school, surrounded by elementary schools you can

reach out to a lot of people," says Dr Neubauer.

READ does not seek out communities to build its libraries. Instead the community must approach READ with a proposal which includes a budget, a timeline and a Library Management Committee. Villages also have to come up with a project that will earn enough money to support the library after it is built. In this way, infrastructure and jobs get created in the village.

The community contributes land and around 15 to 20 per cent of the library's construction cost. "The land has to be separate from the school so

*One of the biggest spin-offs from READ is that it has created a market for books, especially children's books, in Nepal.*

that everyone can use it during hours that reflect the need of the community, with a librarian from the community," says Dr Neubauer.

"The initial funds for the library, about 85 per cent, are usually generated from outside – with the trekking company that we have. We have done a lot of touring and people who have travelled through us are some of our donors," she explains.

Once the business of making the library starts, the village sets up its own NGO. It opens a bank account and has committees to manage the library, its finances and educational programmes. According to Dr Neubauer, multiple management committees make for transparency. "If you try to

steal something everyone in the village will get to know and they will hang you by your toes," she says.

Villagers have come up with business ideas to support the library. Tukche village started a furniture factory. It now makes Rs 15,000 per month. Renting the ground floor of the library to shops has been lucrative and is a popular option. Some villages choose multiple projects.

In Jhuwani the community opted for an ambulance to provide transport for medical emergencies. An ambulance can net anywhere between Rs 18,000 and Rs 26,000 a month, while it costs just Rs 9,000 to support a library. The extra money goes back into the village.

READ partners NGOs to deliver services like literacy classes, health clinics, a pre-school, micro-finance or livestock training. It also trains schoolchildren, teachers or interested villagers on how to publish a wall newspaper. Every library has one.

"Mothers tell us, 'For the first time my kid is not playing in the dirt. He's in the library.' Or that their teenagers are not taking drugs but watching a film in the library," says Dr Neubauer. "It has changed lives and we are so proud!"

Villagers travel from miles to take a look at the books, she says.

"It's contagious even within the village. The school looks and says, 'Hey, the library's getting all the money. If they've got a sustaining project, I'm going to try

the same thing.' So they start their own project."

Library membership is free. Each user is issued a card. The only thing libraries charge for is use of the internet or fax. READ trains library staff to do decimal filing, maintain a card catalogue and look after readers.

READ organises a national reading day and a national writing contest. It brings librarians and management committees together from different areas to interact with each other. READ tracks membership circulation. One of their projects this year is to upgrade some of their early libraries.

"We've also started mobile libraries in several villages. Some have a bigger collection of books to reach out to small communities around. This is something that really needs to be expanded," says Dr Neubauer.

In Nepal, the Nepali language strings together 50 ethnic groups. So each library has 3,000 to 5,000 core books in Nepali. The English books consist of a complete set of world book encyclopedias and school books.

"There's latitude for villagers," says Dr Neubauer. "The library might be in a Tibetan area where people want some Tibetan books. We've had people in the Terai region say they want Hindi books."

One of the biggest spin-offs from the READ project is that it has created a market for books, especially children's books in Nepal. "By building 40 lending libraries serving about half a million people, you have created half a million readers. And if you buy the books from Nepal, you're giving business to Nepali publishers. We've also tapped into some publishers in India," explains Dr Neubauer.

The best impact READ has had is getting children to read. "Tukche never had a graduate and children always failed to pass school, but suddenly it has students clearing their exams and finishing school. The entire Terai region had zero education. Now suddenly books are circulating and people are reading. A generation that never went to school currently attends literacy classes," says Dr Neubauer.

The International Reading Association has only recently done an evaluation.

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Ward scene: At the Rural Medicare Centre there is action round the clock

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAKSHMAN ANAND

# AMAZING HOSPITAL

## Surgeons save lives and redefine the cost of reliable healthcare

**Rita and Umesh Anand**  
New Delhi

**T**HE life of Sunita, 25, was saved by a series of coincidences the other day. She was very ill with a foetus festering in one of her fallopian tubes and blood collecting by the litre in her abdomen. Left like that, she would have died, like so many women do in remote parts of Uttar Pradesh because they can't find affordable medical help. Sunita's family had all but given up hope of saving her when chance encounters delivered her to the Rural Medicare Centre at Village Saidulajab, on the outskirts of Saket in South Delhi.

Once an ultrasound confirmed her complicated condition, the physicians at the centre were quick to act. The gynaecologist, Dr Seema Malhotra, said that she would operate. Blood was needed, for which Sunita's husband and some well-wishers went to the White Cross blood bank in East of Kailash. By the time they returned, braving Delhi's deadly evening traffic, Dr Malhotra was in her surgeon's gear and waiting to begin the operation. A statement in Hindi was ready for Sunita's husband to sign. It said that her condition was very delicate and she could die on the table.

The operation went on for more than two hours. Internal bleeding had resulted in the intestines and adjacent organs in the abdomen getting affected. Bleeding makes tissues friable and difficult to handle and suture. Halfway through, Dr DPS Toor, director of the centre, arrived on a routine visit and decided to help Dr Malhotra in the operation theatre. Together they worked dexterously to clean up Sunita and completed a surgery that might just never have been performed.

In her delicate condition, Sunita would probably have been shut out by most private hospitals in Delhi. On the other hand, if a good hospital took her in the fees would have been way beyond her means. In a government hospital she would have had to await her turn and then, too, it is unlikely that the doctors would have taken the risk of opening her up. Government doctors know there is hell to pay for cases that go wrong.

Sunita is back in her village some 40 km from Agra. She and her husband live on a few acres of farmland. They have two children. The family survives on what they grow and sell. Her case need never have been so complicated. But the first time she complained of her problem, a private clinic in Agra took her in for a few days, gave her blood and charged Rs 20,000. When she complained again,



the local midwife was called and performed her own procedures, causing more harm than good. Another visit to Agra followed. This time a blurry ultrasound showed she was in some serious trouble.

Her visit to Delhi it now seems was ordained and had more to do with sheer luck than the working of the healthcare system in the country. Her mother is a trusted maid in some houses in Gurgaon. It was further circumstance that people in one of those homes took her to the Rural Medicare Centre and put her in the missionary hands of Dr Malhotra and Dr Toor.

Most women in Sunita's situation aren't so lucky. They rarely reach the city from their villages and the city mostly does not reach them. It is even more unlikely that they will make it to a "rural" medical centre that can access the sophistications of urban healthcare.

The Rural Medicare Centre's team, of course, goes much beyond medical competence. They add soul to their professional skills and keep their centre going in order to serve the needy. Dr Malhotra's fee for the operation was an unbelievable Rs 1,200. The charge for the first examination in the OPD was Rs 20. All in all, Sunita's life was saved for just Rs 12,000, which includes the cost of blood, a reliable ultrasound at a nearby facility, taxi fare and five days spent at the centre after the surgery. If she had gone to a private hospital in Delhi, she would have spent at least Rs 60,000.

But for Dr Toor and his 20-odd colleagues, this is no act of charity. They don't flit in and out of the Rural Medicare Centre merely to cleanse their consciences. They do have their own practices where they earn more, but the Rural Medicare Centre functions as a professional establishment in its own right. For instance, Dr Malhotra is one of four gynaecologists who serve there. Three days in the week she performs surgeries and on three days she attends the OPD. The doctors take turns to be on Sunday duty, and on two days of the month each one is on standby for 24 hours.

If a surgeon sees a patient in the OPD and a surgery has to be performed at short notice, then the operation is that surgeon's responsibility. So it was with Dr Malhotra after she had seen Sunita for the first time. It wasn't her day to operate, but she had to come in. In fact, on that night the son of one of the anaesthetists was getting married. Dr Toor and Dr Malhotra should normally have been at the wedding.

The Rural Medicare Centre has taken aid for some of its capital investments. But it runs on what it earns. It isn't a funded institution propped up by remote munificence.

However, it does get the odd free gift of blankets or cloth for making OT uniforms. Grateful patients turn up with heaters and desert coolers. It also has a poor fund drawn from interest on Rs 5 lakhs given to it by some generous individual a decade ago.

But the centre's mission is to treat people by charging reasonable fees. Its business model is aimed at demystifying the cost of reliable healthcare. What this really means is that though its fees seem paltry they are enough to provide professional services. The centre's doctors earn on an average Rs 25,000 a month. That is not much and they all supplement it with their own practices. But the decision to spend time here involves forgoing a substantially larger income. These doctors have raised an ethical question: When millions need healthcare should doctors remain wedded to a system that makes them obscenely rich or should they redefine the paradigm by which they serve and earn?

The Rural Medicare Centre



Dr Seema Malhotra, who saved Sunita's life

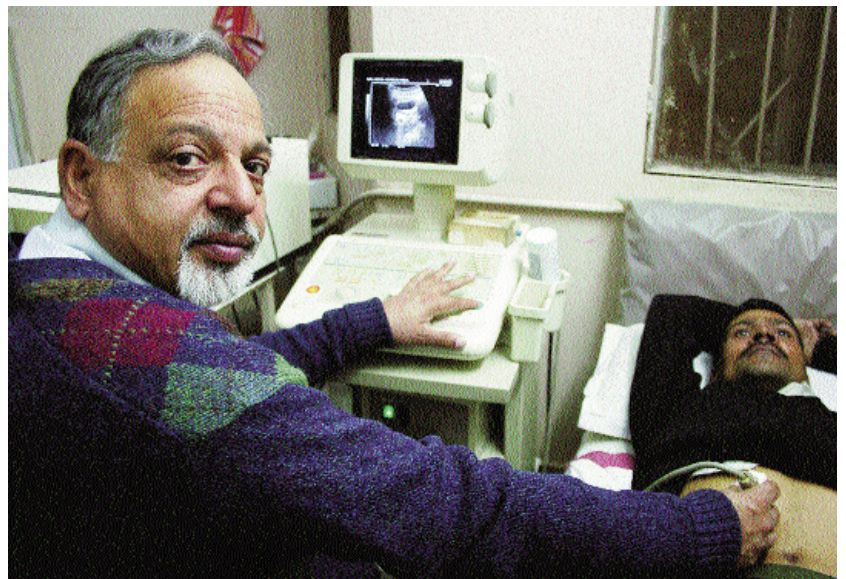
**Rural surgeons don't do heart and brain surgeries. They take care of the everyday cases for which there is no reliable medical infrastructure in the country. Where can someone with limited means go to have a hernia repaired or gall stones removed?**



A patient being shifted from the OT to the ward



Poorer women can have their babies here



Dr Pravin Rohatgi, one of the two ultrasound specialists



Dr Megha Vaze, a laproscopic surgeon



was born out of such introspection. It was set up in the seventies by Dr JK Banerjee and his wife, Shipra, in a ramshackle godown in Mehrauli. Dr Banerjee had trained in England and returned to work in the Ramakrishna Mission hospital in Haridwar. He is a great admirer of Vivekananda. After working for the hospital for six years, he decided to make his personal contribution to taking quality healthcare to the masses at an affordable cost.

"In England I saw that what defined a developed economy was equality in access to facilities," says Dr Banerjee. "In India on the other hand there are facilities only for a few with the vast majority being forgotten and having to fend for themselves."

It is necessary in such a situation for the privileged few to reach out and share the benefits of progress. "We have eight and nine per cent GDP growth these days, but it is only for 20 per cent of the population. What does that 20 per cent of the population do to enable the others to share in its prosperity?" asks Dr Banerjee.

When he set up a medical centre in a godown in Mehrauli in the seventies, he found that there were other doctors ready to join him. Similarly, he found some support for his ideas among members of the Association of Surgeons of India.

They tried to get the association to endorse rural surgery as a specialisation, but met with serious opposition, not just from within the association but from the teaching fraternity as well. Finally, they walked out and set up the Association of Rural Surgeons.

At the age of 69 and with a stroke behind him, Dr Banerjee now lives in Dehradun where he helps the Ramakrishna Mission. But the work he began has been carried forward. The Association of Rural Surgeons has some 400 adherents across the country.

Internationally they are not alone because there are also associations of rural surgeons in the US, Africa and Europe. The next international meeting will be in Tanzania because the African countries are very eager to learn from the Indian experience.

Dr Banerjee recalls how when he spoke in Sweden at a conference on surgical economy and efficiency in 1987 he was mobbed by the media there which wanted to know more about his approach to the delivery of healthcare.

The rural surgeons' movement is based on the belief that science and technology must be used as tools for inclusion. Doctors must seek out their social relevance. Specialised and expensive hospitals have their own roles to play. But an entire country cannot remain focussed on tertiary care. Rural surgeons are needed to cater to the periphery, which in a poor country like India is burgeoning and mostly neglected. If all doctors work at top-notch

hospitals who will be around to use modern science to save the lives of people like Sunita?

Rural surgeons don't do heart and brain surgeries. They take care of the everyday cases for which there is no reliable medical infrastructure in the country. Where, for instance, can someone with limited means go to have a hernia repaired or gall stones removed? Which doctor is on call to pluck out a poor person's infected appendix just in time?

Last year, thousands of patients visited the Rural Medicare Centre. There were 171 surgeries to remove gall bladder stones. There were 86 operations to fix hernias and 15 to remove kidney stones. Five cases of enlarged prostate were dealt with surgically. There were 138 ENT operations, 61 cataract removal cases, 189 normal deliveries, 223 caesarean sections, 135 hysterectomies.

These figures are not exhaustive, but are intended to provide a quick picture of what an important role the Rural Medicare Centre plays in the lives of people.

At a time when a career in medicine is equated with fat earnings and super specialisations, the rural surgeons prefer to get down to basics. It isn't easy to buck the trend and so many of the physicians who get drawn to the Rural Medicare Centre are initially enthused but then begin to fade out. However, those who stay would have it no other way.

Dr Malhotra, for instance, first turned up as a replacement for a friend gynaecologist who was going on leave. That was a year ago. She has opted to work at the centre on a regular basis. "There is mental and academic satisfaction at providing service at a minimum cost," she says. She studied at Rohtak Medical College and completed her senior residency at AIIMS. Her husband is a very senior physician and she could, given

**The rural surgeons' movement is based on the belief that science and technology must be used as tools for inclusion. Doctors must seek out their social relevance.**



**A newborn is brought from the OT. And below: the wards, a physician checking out one of the patients and people at the gates of the hospital**







Some of the team members of the Rural Medicare Centre

her qualifications and professional contacts, quite easily be anywhere else.

Dr Malhotra's story holds true for all the other doctors who bring their professional expertise to the Rural Medicare Centre. If her case finds repeated mention it is because we watched her work on Sunita's case.

Dr Toor used to be employed at Moolchand Hospital in Delhi before he made the switch in 1993 after a chance meeting with Dr Banerjee, who became his mentor.

Dr Toor has a clinic at Khan Market, but it is at the centre that he spends all

his time. A short, energetic and jovial Sardar, he says: "I tell people that I spend the day in Bharat and come to India in the evening."

He is at the centre on all days till afternoon and then back again in the evening for some unfinished work. He attends his clinic for a couple of hours on Sundays as well because for many poor people it is the only day they can get off to see a doctor. Hawkers and others who live on the streets around the centre go there for treatment. A peanut vendor will have his cataract removed at the centre shortly. There are others who come with common ailments to see the general physicians in the OPD.

The faith in Dr Toor is enormous. It is not uncommon to see families pleading that he conduct an operation himself, though this is not necessary and often not possible. Dr Toor may be in full flow as the director of the centre, nimbly moving from room to room and ward to ward, but at his core he is a team player. He will introduce you to Dr Megha Vaze, also a general surgeon, emphasising that she is a laproscopic surgeon and is better qualified than him. "I depend on her when I am in trouble. She is the one who bails me out," he says.

"A centre like this depends on teamwork," says Dr Toor. "You need everyone feeling involved and working together. Above all, this applies to the centre's employees who are not doctors. After all, we doctors perform the surgery and go away. It is the others who look after the patient – checking the temperature, blood pressure, administering blood, saline, and drugs. A medical centre has to run round the clock and for that it needs dedicated and happy people."

Dr Toor's own involvement in the early nineties began by sheer chance when he came across Dr Banerjee and his anaesthetist wife and began helping them. The Rural Medicare Centre was then still its smaller avatar in Mehrauli. But it was a busy place because people from the surrounding areas knew they could go there and find treatment.

Dr Banerjee's own reputation was huge. People who went there would only ask for him. In those years, Dr Toor seemed inexperienced because of his slight build and youngish looks. At 54 now he remains youthful, but he has greyed and his eyes tell you that he has seen a lot. But at the Mehrauli clinic no one wanted to go to him. They only knew of Dr Banerjee.

Then one day a man turned up with the tip of his finger cut off. He burst into Dr Toor's cabin and said: "My finger is cut, will you stitch it for me?" Dr Toor took a look and found that the finger was severed and there was nothing to stitch back. The man then fished in his pocket and took out the severed portion







All faiths are respected and so there is Christ's picture on the wall

of the finger and asked Dr Toor to stitch it back. Dr Toor demurred saying it wouldn't heal. The man insisted: "How do you know unless you try," he said.

Dr Toor stitched back the finger and told the man to come back the next day convinced that the surgery would not work. The man returned and to Dr Toor's surprise the finger hadn't turned black, but was instead red and showing signs of life. In coming weeks the finger healed completely.

The man told his story to others and began sending patients to the Rural Medicare Centre who now asked for Dr Toor and his reputation as a lucky surgeon grew. He finally took over as director when Dr Banerjee and his wife moved back to Uttaranchal. "He is a team player," says Dr Banerjee, explaining the choice. "A director must be someone who does not dominate and carries others along."

People flock to the Rural Medicare Centre because, like the man who almost lost his finger, the doctors there are their only hope.

Dr Toor points out that the role of the general surgeon is often not fully understood. For many ailments and diseases a patient can go to one doctor or the other. The medication can change as indeed can the diagnosis. But when surgery is needed nothing less than a surgeon will do.

So, the finger that needs to be stitched back or the appendix that must be plucked out or that corrosive ectopic pregnancy in a festering fallopian tube, all need to be immediately attended to by a surgeon.

It is this role that the rural surgeons fulfil. Dr Toor does three operations on his surgery days and so do the other surgeons at the centre and their work is just a drop in the ocean considering the vast number of Indians who have no access to healthcare.

"When I go to conferences I always say that we are all needed. We need Max, Fortis, AIIMS, Escorts and our Rural Medicare Centre. You need a strong core but you also need to reach the periphery. If doctors serve only the rich, who will treat the poor and the needy? In fact the importance of serving the periphery keeps increasing. The government hospitals are overburdened and the doctors there struggle with inefficient and inadequate systems," says Dr Toor.

Moreover, with an increasing number of people leaving rural areas to come to the city, the majority of them in slums and on the streets, there will be an exponentially bigger need for affordable services of the kind the Rural Medicare Centre provides. "Soon 50 per cent of India will be living in its cities, and where are the facilities for them," Dr Toor points out.



This vendor will soon have his cataract removed at the hospital

dignity across the counter."

In the Mehrauli godown where it began in 1976, the Rural Medicare Centre had just three beds. The front of the godown was converted into the OPD where barely three patients could sit. The consultation fee was Rs 5.

Leading the way at that time were Dr Banerjee, Prabhat Mukherjee, Arvind Das, Dr Jharna Sen, and Dr Shipra Banerjee. Nitish De was the chairman of the society and Prabhat Mukherjee the founder secretary. They were joined by Dr Gurjeet Singh, Dr J Trikha, Dr Shashi Ghosh.

"I still remember the thrill of performing the first caesarean section on a diabetic mother in a 6 ft x 9 ft operation theatre," says Dr Basu. "I must admit that the act was not without a sense of trepidation as infrastructure at that time was virtually non-existent. Neither did we have the requisite number of colleagues to give us the much required encouragement and moral support."

Over time, the doctors moved from the godown to a small building in Mehrauli. The shift to the current location at Saidulajaib, near Saket, came in 1993 when the then Lt Governor of Delhi, PK Dave, who gave them the land. SK Chakravarty and his wife Monica played an important role in this.

The building went up as a simple red brick structure, quite unique in its architecture. It

now has 30 beds, a modern operation theatre, 22 serving doctors, 66 paramedical staff and four resident doctors. There is a pharmacy and a canteen. There are two ambulances which are frequently pressed into service.

Dr Banerjee believes that what India needs is several such small hospitals. The idea of creating the centre at Mehrauli and the one that now exists at Saidulajaib was to showcase a workable business model which others could replicate. "You need 30 and 40-bed hospitals staffed with qualified physicians and paramedical staff and sustained by local communities. You also need to train local people," says Dr Banerjee.

But to go beyond isolated examples such as the Rural Medicare Centre, a policy framework is required. Healthcare that reaches the masses will have to become a political priority. Right now there are no incentives for setting up decentralised, high-quality and affordable facilities. Instead the emphasis is on large corporate institutions, which are expensive and accessible only to a few. And so, doctors who want to serve where they are needed most have to, like the rural surgeons, cut their own paths in search of professional relevance.



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**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

INDIA and Bharat mingled at a conference organised by the Nasscom Foundation, the non-profit arm of the National Association of Software Companies (Nasscom). The meet was for its grassroots partners. The foundation got leaders from IT and the development sector to address people who manage IT kiosks. The objective was to get these telecentres to become knowledge centres.

The foundation's first project is to set up 100 Rural Knowledge Network (RKN) centres. After a change of CEOs, the foundation seems to be on course. It is partnering about 35 non-profits.

Some problems that telecentres said they face are lack of appropriate content, connectivity and money. But there are also innovative projects like Ramakrishnan Thiruselvam's IT-rural.com that has created a detailed databank of five thousand farms in Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh and helps farmers with crop management and finding markets. Mobile games for AIDs awareness have been developed by ZMQ Software.

The speakers at the conference included Dr Ashok Khosla of Development Alternatives, Vijay Thadani of NIIT, J Satyanarayana of the National Institute of Smart Governance and Saurabh Srivastav, the chairman of Nasscom.

A majority of the Nasscom Foundation's partners in the Rural Knowledge Network run computer training classes. Many users visit to access email. But from the interchanges it was apparent that rural India, fuelled by stories of employment in the IT industry, has a large appetite for IT skills training. In one centre in rural Maharashtra where power supply is intermittent, we were told that classes start at 4 am. The question that lingered was whether rural youth would get really disgruntled if they did not get IT jobs after training.

The grassroots participants came to the conference with differing expectations. Prakruthi, an NGO which is located on the outskirts of Bangalore, was looking for funding. The NGO trains rural youth in employable IT skills and has placed people in companies like iGate at salaries of Rs 13,000. "Cognizant has 6000 employees. Just Rs 400 per employee would take us a long way. We have approached several companies but they are not interested," said Nazar PS of Prakruthi.

Rajen Varada of Technology for People, a non-profit which teaches computer skills to inner city girls in Hyderabad, had brought women coordinators from his centres. Varada, a technologist, said it was a problem to get local content. His centres run



Ramakrishnan Thiruselvam's IT-rural.com has a detailed database of farmers

**ZMQ Software has developed a mobile game for AIDs awareness. Nine million people have downloaded it.**

bridge classes for girls who are first generation learners. "I wanted to see if we could use technology to speed up learning. We paid Rs 3 lakhs to a consultant who visited us several times but never delivered. Creating content is expensive and research skills are not available," he explained.

Varada also pointed out that it was very tough to get anything from the IT industry. "It took us three months to get one internet connection from Tata Telecom, who are the Nasscom Foundation's partner for connectivity. We are now experimenting with setting up a wi-fi network in some locations," he said.

The participants found the session on content stimulating. John Hopkin's public health centre in India has developed games for children to spread awareness of AIDs. ZMQ Software, an e-learning company, developed this material. Zubi Qureshi, the founder of the company explained that about 25 per cent of their efforts are focused on developing learning solutions for the grassroots. The company has made a mobile game for AIDs awareness. Nine million people have downloaded it including people from Africa and Latin America.

**THE FARMERS' IT HUB :** One of the most enlightening presentations at the Nasscom Foundation's conference was by Ramakrishnan Thiruselvam of IT-rural.com

His project has not only created pertinent content

LAKSHMAN ANAND



for farmers, it even helps them manage their farms better and find markets for agricultural produce.

In just two months using 200 local college students Thiruselvam has digitised data for 30,000 people and 5,000 farms in Pulivendala, the mandal headquarters of Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh.

The database has master details on each farm and every member of a household. It has transactional data on what has been planted along with features like cultivation practices for crops. The database can provide information based on the farmer's land, size and location. It has facilities for scientists to offer advice and visit farms. It also has applications for updation, diagnosis tools and software to manipulate the database.

"Internet technologies can be used for integrated rural development," says 33-year-old Thiruselvam, a software engineer from a farming family.

In 2000 he sold his dot.com venture called getbusticket.com to start IT-rural.com. He has spent six years on it with his classmates funding him nearly Rs 55 lakhs.

"While running our dot.com venture we read a news story about farmers of Madanpally having to throw away their tomatoes," he says. "It occurred to us that this happens because a farmer has no information. He has to know the demand and supply position when he is planting a particular crop. Our database is updating in real-time so the farmer is aware of who has planted the same crop," he says.

Thiruselvam's model is self-sustaining. Unlike proponents of village knowledge centres or the Common Services Centre (CSC) model floated by the government, Thiruselvam does not expect each computer installation to be profitable. The CSC model puts pressure on the franchiser to make money. That would tempt him to just run computer literacy classes or games to earn revenue, feels Thiruselvam.

"IT is just an enabler. We have to have a movement to create economic freedom. Computers can provide real-time accurate data for the administration. After this you have to win the confidence of the people," says Thiruselvam who understands the pulse of a village.

IT-rural.com earns an income by marketing farm inputs. "This is a semi-automated e-commerce model. We organise the logistics so that farm inputs reach the farmer. He does not have to travel miles by bus. We take advertisements and make sure all brands are available so the farmer has a choice. We also help with markets and tie up logistics for the final produce," explains Thiruselvam.

It took him 18 months to set up his pilot project. He went to a Loyola polytechnic college in Pulivendala and spoke to teachers and students. "These students have never been charged up in life. This was a chance to fire them up. I told them how I was motivated by stories of people who would do anything for their country. Initially they bantered. But in the end there was pin drop silence. I told them that collecting accurate data was their chance to do something for the country," says Thiruselvam in spotless English, speckled with all the right tech business jargon, although he studied in Tamil till college.

In three sessions he mobilised 200 college students and 20 teachers as volunteers. He trained them for a week. It took another week to explain his plans to villagers.

"This is a tough task. The strongest opponents have to be countered. Eventually they turn into your staunchest allies. They would ask me why I needed to help them. I had to appeal to their pride and sentiment. I told them I was a software engineer who was valuable globally. But I was often humiliated at immigration because they assumed that all Indians were poor and wanted to immigrate. I want to change that," he explains. He enlisted articulate and

respected local people and traveled to 30 villages meeting around 40,000 people.

Then a questionnaire was designed. It took a week for the students to collect accurate data and another week to digitise it. Thiruselvam hired eight software engineers for eight months to create applications to enter and manipulate data.

Their database now covers 24 villages, 30,000 people and 7,000 acres. It contains the family's ID, citizenship ID and generation ID. Several applications have been built to access this data. About 11 systems assistants, who are agricultural graduates, manage the 11 computers in 11 panchayats. They are given enough time to update all data. The graduates interact with farmers. If a pest strikes a crop they take pictures and enter it into the database before the attack escalates. The computers are not networked. "We cannot wait. We just use CDs" says Thiruselvam.

But this is not merely an IT solution. Thiruselvam wanted to increase the incomes of farmers. He enlisted Rama Subba Reddy, a respected agricultural scientist who had retired after 40 years of service. The scientist willingly volunteered and visited farms.

The applications allow digital pictures of plant diseases to be uploaded so the scientist knows the problem before going to the spot. For example a worm was cutting the leaf of red gram lentil. Reddy suggested growing a different variety of red gram alongside the main crop, peanut. The seeds were available some 80 km away. The farmers collectively bought the seeds in bulk, thereby lowering costs.

Twenty-five per cent of saplings would get destroyed by pest. Reddy recommended an anti-pest powder that cost Rs 25 per kg. The saplings were saved.

All this advice increased the net profit of farmers by 50 per cent. "It is only a matter of information reaching in time and the material being easily available," explains Thiruselvam.

To help farmers sell produce, Thiruselvam got in touch with factories in Coimbatore that make masalas. The factories agreed to buy chillis and red gram lentils. By eliminating the middle-man and assuring quantity and quality, the profit margins of some farmers increased.

To ensure fruits like banana, pomegranate, sweet lime and guava were of good quality, IT-rural.com paid youngsters to harvest. "We got a red carpet welcome from fashionable retail outlets in Chennai when we graded and packed these fruits attractively," says Thiruselvam. IT-rural.com even exported a consignment of sweet limes to Mustafa, a store in Singapore where most South Asians shop.

"This showed that the farmer who would have got Rs 8,500 a tonne could get Rs 20,000. We paid them all by cheque. Their confidence increased.

They are now exporters who get paid instantly instead of being farmers at the mercy of wholesale traders," says Thiruselvam.

The programme does not stop at increasing income. "We have data on illiteracy and malnutrition. We explained to villagers how these could be tackled with a very small budget," says Thiruselvam. Farmers have paid for mid-day meals in schools and a literacy programme.

He also used his database to create an appropriate audience for the horticultural department's annual event. "Earlier they called anyone to show numbers. Now if they want farmers growing sweet lime to come, we get them. Our involvement increases the project's credibility. We charge the government for event management. We will do farmer events for anyone" says Thiruselvam.

The Andhra Pradesh government has signed a MoU with him to set up 1000 IT-rural.com centres in Cuddapah. He has also agreed to create a database for Nasscom's rural partners.

"This will have to be a national movement. A similar database can be created across the country in one year if there is urgency," says Thiruselvam.



Scientist Rama Subba Reddy helping farmers with sweet lime



IT-rural.com explains agricultural practices to farmers

**Thiruselvam's database has master details on each farm and every member of a household. It has transactional data on what has been planted along with features like cultivation practices for crops.**



LAKSHMAN ANAND



Rufina Fernandes, CEO of the NASSCOM Foundation

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

THE Indian software industry's mega image has mostly been built by Nasscom. In 2001 Nasscom expressed its intention of starting a foundation to enable the use of ICT for development. In 2005 the Nasscom Foundation launched its first project – the setting up of a Rural Knowledge Network of 100 centres. This was to have contributed to Mission 2007 whose target is to set up a 100,000 Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs) by August 2007.

A year ago, Nasscom hired a new CEO for its foundation. Rufina Fernandes is from the tech industry and has good knowledge of development issues. Under her leadership the foundation has built a network of grassroots partners to set up VKCs. *Civil Society* spoke to Rufina Fernandes.

#### **What is the charter of the foundation?**

Our flagship programme is the Rural Knowledge Network (RKN) where we are setting up 100 knowledge centres. About 70 are part of Mission 2007. Nearly 30 are a segment of the tsunami project where we have set up 30 centres in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

#### **What does a typical rural knowledge centre have?**

It has three to five computers, some content and training.

#### **How did you choose your grassroots partners?**

We have 34 or 35 grassroots partners now. We looked for like-minded people who have built rapport with the local community, would like to serve and have some resources. We picked up small or medium local non-profits, met their management and did a physical

*'We looked for like-minded people who have rapport with the community and would like to serve.'*

# 'We are setting up 100 rural knowledge centres'

due diligence with the community.

**But several of your partners are large non-profits like SEWA and Grasso who have resources of their own...**

We actually have three models. First, the greenfield projects where they have no ICT experience. Secondly, the early innovators like Suraj Foundation, an educational institution which runs computer training classes but has no experience of ICT for development. Thirdly, there are veterans like MSSRF, Byraju Foundation and Grasso. The idea is to get people from these institutions to train others.

We have conducted workshops in several states including Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. We have carried out training in conflict management. For example, what does one do when a man does not want his wife to go to a knowledge centre or when a community suddenly decides not to use the centre? We have done workshops on gender sensitisation, participatory action and techniques, soft skills, content and applications, on what is a knowledge centre and how to make it sustainable.

*'We have to identify processes that can be done by the differently abled. We also have to sensitise companies.'*

#### **What do foundation partners get?**

They get a monthly grant for running the centre which covers salaries, electricity, and communication costs. Our partners get support for training and capacity building. We give them content and applications including Microsoft training material, educational content from the Azim Premji Foundation, the TCS adult literacy material and the UNICEF material on education and livelihood programmes. We also have some connectivity relationships with Tata Telecom and Qualcomm where we give these centres free connectivity if available.

#### **You also have a disability initiative...**

We have three programmes under this initiative – web accessibility, affordability of tools and employability. We have to get all Internet and intranet material accessible to the differently abled. We are motivating Nasscom member companies to sponsor development of tools. For example GTL and Mphasis have commissioned a screen reader that is being developed by Charu Jadhav, a blind person himself.

In employability we have a lot of work to do. We have to create awareness. We then have to identify processes that can be done by the differently abled. We also have to sensitise companies on the issues that they face. We are looking for a group of companies that will provide the seed fund for this initiative. Iridium Interactive has come forward. Our RKN programme is largely funded by Microsoft.

#### **Are you seeking funding from companies for specific programmes?**

Yes. We are going to launch an HIV/AIDS awareness programme sponsored by Mphasis and Genpact. We want IT leaders to be thought leaders. Also, the IT industry's young and vibrant work force is the age group under risk. So we have to spread awareness.



# Worldview

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## LATITUDE MATTERS

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

# Power games in Nepal?

**Yubaraj Ghimire**  
Kathmandu

**N**EPALIS showed great determination in restoring democracy in the country. In those 19 days which shook Nepal ordinary people not only defied curfew, political parties, often divided over petty issues, got glued together by a much larger binding factor – democracy. That obviously meant defeating the dictatorship King Gyanendra represented. In all these events, Nepal's civil society played a crucial role.

But in the eight months that followed the triumph of democracy, parallel to a peace process between the government and the Maoists to end an 11-year-old conflict, there are fears that it's not the principle of democracy, but the lust for power that is in store for Nepal. And the interim constitution, which came into force from January 15, is proof of this.

Although the interim constitution is valid only till the Constituent Assembly, due to be elected in June adopts a new constitution, the conduct of the interim government and the precedents it sets will influence the future constitution and governance.

"This is the anti-thesis of everything that we fought for all these years," says Ganeshraj Sharma, a senior advocate, who has consistently fought legal battles for the past 39 years, often free of cost, on issues related to human rights and political freedom.

He is not alone. The Nepal Bar Association, a section of the media that championed liberal democracy and the entire Supreme Court asked the government to make major changes in the interim constitution.

Prime minister G P Koirala said he was not happy with some of the provisions, but he refused to amend them. Dangerously, top leaders of the eight parties (all seven parties in the ruling coalition and the Maoists) put their seal of approval on the interim constitution on December 16. Home minister K P Sitaula, who is also the chief government negotiator with the Maoists, warned his own prime minister that there would be bloodshed in Nepal if even a comma was changed in the agreed draft. And Koirala relented.

The interim constitution gives Koirala unlimited powers as prime minister. In addition, he will be acting as head of state since the king will virtually be a nobody. Worse, it brings the judiciary totally under executive control as the judges of the Supreme Court will now be appointed by a constitutional

council headed by the prime minister in which the speaker and three ministers nominated by the prime minister will be members, along with the chief justice. There will be no representative from the judiciary to recommend the name of the chief justice. The executive will have the power to transfer any judge, including the chief justice, anywhere at will.

The interim constitution does not have any provision to make the executive accountable to Parliament. Nor can it move a no-confidence motion against the prime minister. It places eight political parties (constituents of the interim government to be formed in the first week of February) at a far more advantageous position during the election to the constituent assembly since other parties will have to secure 10,000 signatures to be eligible and to be treated as parties to contest polls, in clear infringement of the right to equality.

Yet voluntary organisations, which were active during the movement for democracy, came on the streets demanding that the interim constitution be enforced. They chose to keep mum on the question of the independence of the judiciary and the principle of separation of powers besides endorsing the theory of executive supremacy.

Surprisingly, Kathmandu's muscle flexing civil society includes many faces linked with donor agencies and high-paid consultancies. Some of them draw pension from the government and others work with the present government. They belie the hope of ordinary people that an emerging, vibrant civil society in Kathmandu will consistently crusade for democracy and peoples' rights, maintain its independence from political parties and keep moral authority intact.

Kathmandu's civil society's single agenda at the moment is the establishment of a republic. It seems least bothered about inserting the basic principles of democracy in the interim constitution. The big question is: can Nepal's who fought and defeated King Gyanendra's dictatorial ambitions, afford to see G P Koirala as a people's dictator?

A government declaration, endorsed by parliament soon after the success of the people's movement, not only brought the king under the tax net and took away the immunity he and his family members enjoyed, it also for the first time brought Nepal's army under civilian control. It pledged to end the culture of impunity. But the culture of impunity can be ended only with the enforcement of the rule of law.

The current regime has, however, embarked on massive repression and harass-

*Continued on next page*



**In Kathmandu, civil society's single agenda is the establishment of a republic. It seems least bothered about inserting the basic principles of democracy in the interim constitution.**





# Kill corporate corruption or perish

## LETTER FROM EUROPE



Riaz Quadir in Versailles

**A**N optimist glancing around at the traditional year-end festivities as we crash-landed into 2007, could hardly discern any feelings of despair at the world 2006 was leaving behind in shambles. As such, the rituals of the holiday season were not only mandatory, they were therapeutic for the modern psyche bombarded with the chaos of recent times and unable to absorb much more. The brief respite over-

the turkey, oysters, foie gras, barely digested – we returned from our respective retreats to reality, rejuvenated as it were, to our battle stations.

As though by Mephistophelian extortion we are now being made to pay for our brief moment of joy and festivities by an endless stream of malevolent events across the world. From the new and vehement twist to the polarisation of Iraqi politics in the shape of Saddam Hussain's hanging and the plans of the Bush government to send between 20 to 30 thousand additional troops to Iraq (against the wishes of everybody in the US), to the rampant deluge of scandals that are breaking new grounds, even for those of us jaded enough by the misery handed out to mankind in recent years in the name of politics and business. The realisation that those two 'great callings' have merged into one, has yet eluded the vast majority of humanity as they trudge the byways of day-to-day survival, hoodwinked and side-tracked by the most powerful psychological tools in the arsenals of governments and industry.

The most glaring example that comes to mind is the BAE scandal in the UK. The story goes like this: British Aerospace wanted to sell military planes to Saudi Arabia, and as in all such deals, had to grease princely palms (and more) to get the contract. This was in the 80s under Margaret Thatcher, in what is known as the Yamamah Deal. Word got around and other hounds chasing similar prey (global, mainly European competitors) started throwing the OECD book regarding anti-bribery laws (to which the UK is a signatory) demanding an enquiry. The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) in the UK did start such an enquiry – pushed mainly by anti-bribery groups in the UK. In Saudi Arabia the coterie of thugs, er, I mean Princes that run that fiefdom, threatened to cancel its military contracts with the UK if investigations weren't stopped within 10 days.

Having perfected the use of fear-and-national security as the ultimate political tool to cow down the nation, despite all its democratic trappings, in stepped Prime Minister Blair, personally stopping the investigation deemed as damaging to UK's relationship with a valued partner in the Middle-East Peace process and countering terrorism.

The various anti-bribery groups reluctant to give up, are continuing on whatever legal avenues are available to them. They have also hit upon another strategy:

**Who in the early 1940s could imagine the Germany we know today? Yet there it is! As distanced from its nefarious past as possible. Perhaps it is in the nature of things that only when we hit rock bottom do we make a turnaround. Perhaps a threshold has been reached in British politics.**

unearthing similar BAE practices in other nations less threatening than Saudi Arabia, a relatively easy task considering such practice has become part and parcel of the marriage of government and industry on a global scale. Sure enough, they found one closer home.

It is BAE's 2002 Tanzanian Radar Sales in which 30 per cent of the contract value was apparently paid in bribe by BAE through its secretly owned off-shore company called Red Diamond. (Apparently SFO has also unearthed another scandal in South Africa where BAE was selling aircrafts between 2000 and 2005, and has paid over \$160 millions through its Red Diamond cover-up company).

Blair might find it a wee bit more difficult to find justification in stopping investigation on this one as Tanzania doesn't have the same clout as Saudi Arabia. Moreover, all fingers seem to be pointing at this British poodle who teamed up with his 'massah' across the pond to wreck more havoc upon the world than anyone since Hitler. Some of the fingers pointing in his direction belong to members of his own Cabinet (past and present), the next prime minister to be, Gordon Brown and Clair Short (the development secretary) and most importantly Robin Cook (former foreign secretary) from the grave. The nearer blood, the nearer bloody, said the English sage some 400 years ago.

Even as I write, Sir John Scarlett, head of MI6 (British Intelligence) distanced himself by refusing to endorse Blair's claim that continuing the investigations would endanger national security. There is no way of predicting history. Will the Blair story end, not with an appropriate bang, at the ICJ docks in the Hague as befits a war criminal of his stature, but with a tame whimper as an Al Capone nailed on tax fraud? Even if that were to happen, European civilisation might find some redemption in the eyes of the rest of humanity for having finally put the brakes on its long slide to depravity and loss of credibility.

Who in the early 1940s could imagine the Germany we know today? Yet there it is! As distanced from its nefarious past as possible. Perhaps it is in the nature of things that only when we hit rock bottom do we make a turnaround. Perhaps a threshold has been reached in British politics that leaves it little option but to take a closer look at the shameful legacy it has recently added to its already chequered colonial

past, and go the other way -or perish.

Particularly with special emphasis on Africa, where it has worked the twin evils of big business and government to its optimum to pillage a continent that was least prepared to survive the post-colonial global politics. Nurturing mayhem in a perfectly choreographed tragedy, in concert with France, the US, and other nameless businesses, it stripped Africa's resources, created a culture of corruption and threw its polity into disarray. Nor do I mean the eyewash of the new Save Africa programme. I mean really cleaning up the act, prosecuting every business or government and financial enterprise that immorally profited there, and most importantly, leaving Africa to Africans and lightening the white man's burden - which of late has been getting increasingly heavy.

### Continued from previous page

ment of political opponents using the state machinery in a clear quest for revenge – something which goes against the rule of law. These activities, coupled with the prejudicial treatment certain political parties are given by the constitution violate the spirit of democracy.

Despite these negative aspects, people are cautiously optimistic about Nepal's future. For them, peace is the overwhelming need of the hour. The ongoing peace process and the Maoists joining the parliamentary system have

**People are cautiously optimistic about Nepal's future. For them, peace is the overwhelming need of the hour. The ongoing peace process and the Maoists joining in have already paid some dividends.**

already paid some dividends. Yet the possibility of conflict erupting cannot be ruled out. Last year, during the conflict, 18 people on an average were killed every day. That, at least, has stopped. But parts of Nepal, especially the plains adjoining India, are witnessing 'violent movements' demanding 'regional autonomy' and representation of indigenous peoples in power sharing.

The eight parties which are out to monopolise power in the future set-up did not take cognisance of this. Neither did Kathmandu's civil society.

There are, however, groups in different parts of Nepal working for Dalits and ethnic groups, seeking their representation in the political system and their rights to forests and water.

Years of conflict have witnessed the plunder of forests. The illegal felling of trees and a clandestine timber trade have been thriving because of government patronage. The Maoists too used the power of the gun to influence the awarding of contracts in order to raise money for the insurgency and their political campaigns.

But, viewing emerging Nepal in the background of the April Movement and restoration of democracy, the current leadership, including the Maoists and voluntary organisations, have lost much of their standing. Nepal's interim constitution in its present form only makes a mockery of democracy.



# Brazil's motorists drive on ethanol's Barralcool

Dr Mae-Wan Ho

**P**RESIDENT Lula has recently inaugurated Barralcool, the first integrated biofuels plant that will produce sugarcane-based ethanol and biodiesel from oilseeds. Brazil's bioethanol programme goes back to the oil crisis in the 1970s, and has been the world's most advanced biofuels market for decades. There are currently nearly 300 sugar-ethanol mills in operation, with 60 or more under construction.

The Lula government recently passed legislation that will mandate a two per cent blend of biodiesel from oilseed crops like soybean, sunflower or castor beans in all commercial sales of petroleum diesel by 2008 rising to five per cent by 2013. A few hundred filling stations already offer blends. Brazil has about 10 biodiesel plants in operation and another 40 under construction.

Currently, about half of Brazil's sugarcane crop has gone into bioethanol production with the rest being refined into sugar.

Motorists today can choose to fill up with 100 per cent ethanol at half the price of gasoline at over 30 000 filling stations nationwide, or petrol blended with 20-25 per cent ethanol. Ethanol accounts for 40 per cent of all non-diesel consumption.

Brazil produced 15.9 billion litres of bioethanol in 2005, more than one-third of the world's supply and second only to the US. Brazil's bioethanol is the only large-scale biofuel programme now able to expand without government subsidies. US bioethanol from corn, in contrast, is heavily subsidised.

While Brazil is set to double its bioethanol production in the next decade, the futures market rose by 62 per cent in 2005, thanks to growing demand in the EU, US, China, Japan, India and elsewhere. Brazil is also poised to vastly expand biodiesel production for export, using soya, palm oil and castor oil. Brazil is emerging as the biggest of the new biofuel republics in the world.

Brazil's bioethanol is often held up as a model of sustainable biofuel production, and this appears to have been confirmed by a report released in October 2006 by the International Energy Agency's Bioenergy Task 40, which analyses the international bioenergy and biofuels trade. The report concluded that, in general the production of sugarcane-based ethanol as currently practised in Brazil, is

"environmentally sustainable." Biofuels are rated in terms of energy balance, the units of biofuel energy produced per unit of input energy; and carbon saving, the percentage of greenhouse gas emissions prevented by producing and using biofuel instead of producing and using the same amount of fossil fuel energy.

Sugarcane ethanol is estimated to have an energy balance of a staggering 8.3 on average, but could be 10.2 in the best case; it far outstrips the energy balance of any other biofuel, especially those produced in temperate regions. The carbon saving at between 85 and 90 per cent, is also more than any other biofuel.

The results are significant for Brazil's export of sugarcane ethanol, and Europe will be a main importer.

The relative success of sugarcane bioethanol stems from the prolific growth rate of the crop in tropical Brazil, and a closed cycle production process, where the energy for refining and distilling comes from burning sugarcane residue, hence no fossil fuels are needed.

But is it really sustainable as claimed by the report? Among the main concerns are ecological and social impacts, including food security. It is as yet unclear how additional land use for sugarcane will impact on biodiversity, or compete for land needed for growing food. The report did not deal at all with social welfare. There are also no considerations on health impacts to workers and the general public.

The impact of intensive sugarcane cultivation on soil organic carbon, particularly as the result of changes in land use, has also not received due attention. A study published in 1999 found a decrease in soil organic carbon of 24 per cent over 20 years when forest is turned into pastureland in Brazil. This was further reduced when a sugarcane

plantation was established on the pastureland.

Sugarcane encroaches on the Amazon, but far more on the Atlantic forest and the Cerrado, a very bio-diverse and unique savannah-type ecosystem. Two-thirds of the Cerrado have been destroyed or degraded. Sugarcane also does not provide home for birds. If sugarcane cultivation were to expand, the outlook for the world's natural biodiversity would be grim.

A WWF report to the International Energy Agency in 2005 suggested that Brazil's bioethanol programme reduced transport emissions by 9 Mt a year, but 80 per cent of the country's greenhouse gas emissions came from deforestation.

Source: [www.i-isis.uk.org](http://www.i-isis.uk.org)

**Motorists today can choose to fill up with 100 per cent ethanol at half the price of gasoline at over 30,000 filling stations nationwide, or petrol blended with 20 to 25 per cent of ethanol.**

## Job training for Bhutan villages

**A** grant of almost \$2 million from ADB's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR), financed by the government of Japan, will help reduce poverty among rural Bhutanese through a pilot project to develop their income-generating skills.

Poverty in the country is persistent in rural areas, where people rely mostly on subsistence agriculture and are financially vulnerable during the off-farm seasons.

The project will pilot a skills development programme in 25 geogs (group of villages) in three rural districts. To be carried out during off-farm seasons, the programme will teach villagers basic modern trades such as carpentry, masonry, electrical wiring, plumbing, and construction planning.

The project will train 30 trainers and produce manuals and textbooks, and train at least 375 villagers throughout the programme's four-year period. Graduates will then be registered on a website that can serve as a database of

**Graduates will then be registered on a website that can serve as a database of workers who can be hired for specific projects.**

workers who can be hired for specific projects. If successful, the government will replicate the approach in the remaining 175 geogs in the country.

"The new skills developed under the project will not only provide the villagers means to earn income during off-farm seasons, it will also save them house repair costs," says Hiroyuki Ikemoto, an ADB economist and team leader for the project.

Villages will also benefit from the programme as on-the-job training will include the construction of public toilets and hostels for schoolchildren. If requested, the project can also provide additional training in traditional arts and crafts, and maintenance of office equipment.

The project complements the government's Village Skills Development Programme and the ADB-backed Basic Skills Development Project, which expanded vocational education and training for new graduates, unemployed youth, domestic laborers, women, and people in rural areas.

The government and beneficiaries will contribute \$340,000 equivalent toward the project's cost, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will provide technical support through short term JICA experts and JICA senior and junior volunteers.

The JFPR was set up in 2000 with an initial contribution of \$90 million, followed by additional contributions totaling \$155 million in 2002, and annual contributions up to 2006 bringing the total amount to \$360 million.

Source: ADB



# Perspectives

## CATCHING TRENDS

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

## Teach the Indian heart

ANIL WILSON



### Education Matters

ONE of the greatest sculptors of ancient Greece was a man called Phidias. Around 400 BC he was commissioned to make statues that to this day stand on the roof of the Parthenon in Athens. They are considered to be some of the greatest sculptures of the western tradition. However, when Phidias submitted his bill, the city accountant raised an objection. "These statues", said the accountant, "are located so high up on the roof of the temple on the highest hill in Athens that one can see only their fronts; and yet Phidias has sculpted their back sides as well and thus raised a fee for something that no one can see." "You are wrong" said Phidias, "the gods can see them." The accountant, as the story goes, was shamed into making the payment.

In our faithless world today when gods no longer exist and mortals lack eyes to see, the true value of education is increasingly ignored and declared irrelevant. The trends in education today are determined not so much by educators as by accountants. It is in such a world that education, meaningful education, struggles to retain some significance.

The struggle is between the obsession with the earning power of learning on the one hand and the seeming irrelevance of 'purposeless' academic activity on the other. In such a situation the first casualty is a total loss of interest in the moral dimensions of learning. As a result we are losing the most fundamental vocation of the human intellect, which is its humanising potential and its capacity to address practical moral dimensions of day-to-day living. The natural result is an intellectual and moral vacuum that is increasingly being filled by populist rhetoric on the one hand and coercion and corruption on the other.

The consequences of such an intellectual and moral vacuum abound all around us if only we have the eyes to see. The endless communal conflagrations are a case in point. The horrors of Gujarat that continue to haunt us include the fact that as lumpen elements were doing their worst with innocent human lives, the educated middle class went out into the streets, with their handbags in tow, looking for easy loot among the maimed and the dying!

But then, should this surprise us? The callous indifference with which we reject the 'other' can lead to nothing else but this. Every year when I interview school leavers for admission to college I generally ask non-Muslims about Muharram, non-Christians about Good Friday and non-Hindus about Janamasthami. A shocking 90 per cent, coming from some of the best schools all over the country, do not know what these festivals actually represent. What is unforgivable is that while schools give a holiday on these festivals, they do not bother to educate their students on the significance of the particular occasion.

The Indian Brain is today recognised as the best in the world, but alas the same cannot be said of the Indian Heart. This is perhaps because we have not spent as much effort in educating the heart as we have in educating the head. Our efforts at educating the heart have not only suffered due to a lack of understanding and direction but also because most attempts in this direction are

hijacked by power brokers who manipulate educational systems.

The need to control people is fundamental to the quest for power. Power brokers have, over the years, instinctively realised that in order to control people you first need to control the educational matrices that determine a people. Dilute education of values and you have control over people. This is because people with values cannot be ruled over except by the values they hold dear.

This is the crisis in human affairs today. That this crisis is related to the world of education is seen as indisputable. It has become axiomatic to think that society has become increasingly amoral because educational processes have been gradually divested of 'values'.

What then is the remedy? The obvious answer appears to be: introduce

LAKSHMAN ANAND



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"value education" as a subject in schools and colleges! In the euphoria of this newfound wisdom we ignore the fundamental fact that quick-fix solutions create more problems than they solve. In one simple stroke we posit the view that "value education" is a separate and separable discipline from the general mass of educational processes. We forget or we ignore that the only true vocation of education – any kind of education – is to continually enhance the humanising potential of the human race. There can be no other vocation because the only other alternative is dehumanisation and between the two, the real calling of humankind can only be to sensitise.

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# Get down to rural business

DARSHAN SHANKAR



## Ground Reality

international donors, is not really of serious concern, nationally or internationally. If sustainable livelihood programmes are to reach over a billion people then it is quite evident that resources committed to rural livelihoods by governments and philanthropic foundations are miniscule. Even in a given locality, say a district or sub-district, sub-critical investments are made for community enterprises by government and donor programmes.

What happened to the great khadi and village industry initiative by the Father of our Nation? This was the first modern initiative to promote community enterprise. Why has it not been upscaled, modernised and taken out of the clutches of *sarkari* management, like some of our other public sector ventures? Could it be better run as a public-private partnership without distorting its basic rural livelihood oriented objective?

The key areas for investment for community owned enterprises are capacity building, technology transfer, R&D, infrastructure and working capital. But there are no IIMs for community based entrepreneurs. There are no financial institutions (BRAC in Bangladesh is an

exception) specially designed to provide appropriate funds for resource poor entrepreneurs. There are no dedicated R&D institutions for addressing research and technology problems of community enterprises. With the weak societal support provided to rural entrepreneurs naturally the outputs are correspondingly limited. In numerous national and international seminars on this subject there is a great deal of sentimental hype but little substantial institutional or financial support is committed. The truth is that society is not yet willing to make substantial investment in the economic growth of the rural poor. Distributive justice is a political slogan and mere jargon used by development economists.

The dilemma is obvious. Quality societal inputs for community enterprises will be as costly as setting up IIMs or Harvards, Whartons or a network of venture capital organisations. Poor beneficiaries obviously, cannot afford to pay for those services unlike their richer counterparts.

So what should be the blueprint and strategy for promotion of community owned enterprises? Can robust pilots be started? On what scale? How will they be replicated? The problem of generating rural livelihoods needs to be solved by brilliant development economists in collaboration with grassroots institutions. They need to spend time not only estimating and articulating the magnitude of the problem at macro and micro level, but going further by providing realistic and intelligent solutions.

Several dedicated teams of brilliant and humane economists, bankers, technologists and management professionals backed by new capacity building institutions need to demonstrate successful models of community enterprises. These models need not be conventional. They could be out of the box solutions. These teams would have to devote several years to this mission in order to stabilise strategies.

Will national and international donors be willing to invest in knowledge institutions and human resources to take this movement forward? It is easier to pay lip service, provide sub-critical aid to gullible grassroots organisations and, once in a while, reward them for some extraordinary missionary feat as an alibi for societal neglect of our people who happened to be born poor in rural locations. Is it not time to change the old song and dance about rural livelihoods and do something worthwhile?

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LAKSHMAN ANAND

## Teach the Indian heart

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Our study of literature is important only if it sensitises us to the importance of human feelings and emotions, our study of economics is significant only if it sensitises us to the human condition in the context of the material aspects of life, our study of history is meaningful only if it sensitises us to the forces that impel human life and bring happiness and misery in their wake, our study of the sciences is momentous only if it sensitises us to the parameters of human existence and the infinite patterns and rhythms of life.

The human element has to be at the core of any kind of education. But in postulating a separate pedagogical space for "value education" we have divested the study of literature, of economics, of history, of the sciences, of the human element and of its fundamental purpose – to sensitise and humanise. These subjects have acquired an autonomy of their own, independent of the human factor. We no longer study them for their sensitising potential but for their earning power.

The earning potential of learning determines the importance and the 'value' of a subject in the eyes of a student. Thus, commerce is a much sought after subject today whereas philosophy, or history, or the arts, find few takers. It is obvious that the notion of value in education has shifted from the philosophi-

cal and transcendent sense and come to rest in the market place. No wonder that a college is seen as a transit camp to the work place instead of an incubator for the transformation of the individual.

The result of such an intellectualism alienated from fundamental human values is there for all to see: we have life without consciousness, sound without meaning; power without responsibility, opinion without rational process; we accept criminals, we admire dictators, we confuse teaching with learning, degrees with competence, and fluency with the ability to think afresh. The separation of 'value' from 'education' and the creation of a new discipline, 'value-education' has taken its toll and the crises in human affairs continue unabated giving more scope for play to power mongers.

Value in education proposes that there is a basic difference between 'teaching a subject' and 'educating an individual', between being 'subject-oriented' and 'pupil-centred'; and that the true vocation of education is the latter. To recognise this distinction is to recognise the fact that there is no such thing as a neutral educational process. All education – no matter what the subject, no matter what form of presentation – carries a predisposition, a specific inclination, a value. There is no such thing as an 'unbiased education'. Moreover, education in its true sense must have a subversive element. It must subvert popular perceptions, subvert paternalistic prescriptive programmes, subvert all principles or beliefs concerning human affairs that are autonomous of the human and the humane.

Anil Wilson is Vice Chancellor of Himachal Pradesh University



# Let's have model police stations

YATEENDRA SINGH



## Police Reforms

In January 2002, thieves attacked three Maruti cars in our compound. They had used the clever modus operandi of opening the cars by removing windshields. The thieves had stolen costly parts. We phoned 100 and a police patrol vehicle arrived. Its officer called the local police. An ASI started recording our complaint. Perhaps he was not adept at it, as he gave up writing and took a written complaint from us. This serial theft was obviously the work of professional criminals and deserved good investigation. However, the police closed the case as 'untraced' in less than two months. We doubt the quality of investigation.

In March 2005, a DTC bus damaged my car. A police officer, who recognised me as a former DCP, detained the bus and called the local police. A graduate SI turned up. He registered a criminal case under Sec.279 IPC, arrested the bus driver, photographed the damaged car, and gave me a copy of the First Information Report (FIR). Smart policing.

In July 2006, our car was stolen from a parking area behind our home. Our caretaker called the local PS. A head constable arrived. We gave him certain clues, but he showed no interest, and advised us to give them to the investigating officer (IO). He took a report from us containing the bare facts. The IO never contacted us. When we received a copy of the FIR, we learnt that a head constable, not an SI, was investigating this case of high value (Rs 2, 50,000)! We suspect that he did no worthwhile investigation. We saw him only the day he delivered the 'untraced' report to us.

In August 2006, we visited a PS to report damage to our car caused by a motor cycle. Most police personnel looked shabby in uniform, used impolite language and were generally brusque with the public. A woman ASI reproduced our written complaint in the Daily Diary (DD) and asked my wife to sign it. When we wanted to read it, she snapped: "Kya aap samajhte hain ki ham ne galat likha hai?" (Do you think we have written incorrectly?)

When we sought a copy of the FIR, she got a constable to reproduce the DD entry on a plain sheet of paper, and gave us a stamped copy. She said the FIR would be recorded later. We never got the FIR. The appearance of police stations is unkempt. Often recovered cars rot in their compounds. The Muddamal rooms are in terrible shape. Old dusty files crowd most rooms.

**RUDE AND HARDWORKING POLICE :** These incidents indicate that mobile patrols promptly reach the scene of the crime which is of great help to citizens. The police station staff also help in small ways. In 2003, wastewater from the flat upstairs seeped into our house. The

**P**OLICE reform must begin at the police station. It is the performance of the police station that truly affects the people's quality of life. Senior police officers need to keep careful tabs on how police stations perform. The recent killings at Nithari in Noida are a classic example of the apathy of supervisory officers to dereliction of duty by police station staff.

This writer's recent experiences substantiate public perception that the manner in which police stations work is deficient.

In 2001, late at night, a truck smashed the left side of our car. We went to the nearest police post at Vasant Kunj. The head constable refused to record our complaint and told us to go to the Mehrauli Police Station (PS). There a young sub-inspector (SI) told us about the futility of registering

an offence under Sec. 279 IPC. According to him, we would be better off getting an insurance claim for the damage done to our car rather than pursuing a criminal case for years. Meanwhile, an elderly SI, who had served with me in the Delhi Police, recognised me. He examined the damaged car, got it photographed, and called us the next day to say that he had registered a criminal case and was sending it shortly to the court.

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**The SHOs should be held accountable for their performance. If something goes wrong and evokes public outcry, the easiest answer is to suspend the erring official.**

flat owner would not repair it. One day it flowed down a wall on which our fuse-box was mounted. We called the PS. The police disconnected the water supply of the flat upstairs and got its owner to rectify the seepage. Similarly, once the fire department refused to help us when gas leaked from our LPG cylinder. But two constables from the PS came and removed the cylinder.

However, the police often avoid registering cognisable offences. If an offence is registered, incompetent or apathetic officials handle the investigation. They are mostly concerned with VIP security and law and order 'bandobast', ignoring the people's safety concerns. They also show arrogance of power. They are usually short with complainants and use sarcastic and rude language. Partly, their behaviour can be attributed to excessive workload. But rudeness and a coarse manner is their standard organisational style. The police are distant from the people, and officials from the SHO upwards are hardly available to complainants. It is ironic that the police, who are the most hard-working people in India and the last resort for victims in emergencies, have a terrible public image.

**RIGHT LEADERSHIP IS THE MEDICINE :** The rank-and-file in a hierarchical, militaristic organisation imbibe the values and attitudes of their leaders. Senior officers

seldom correct the errant ways of PS staff, and are largely indifferent to what goes on in police stations. Reports show that they often connive with their subordinates' blatant abuse of authority. Most disciplinary proceedings are for administrative reasons: absence from duty, overstay of leave, shabby turn-out, etc., and very few are for operational lapses or abuse of police powers. Follow-up action is scarcely taken on the courts' strictures, either by improving professional skills or disciplining professional incompetence or malfeasance.

The police leadership should first motivate the PS staff to be polite, shed its cynical and casual approach to public complaints and show more concern and friendliness. Second, the training of PS staff should be improved to inculcate requisite policing skills. Whereas an IPS officer's training period is for two years, the training of constables is for only nine months and of SIs, just one year. The duration of their training should be extended to two years. Third, the maximum resources of the organisation should be devoted to police stations. They should be cleaned and modernised.

Fourth, unnecessary paper work by the PS staff must be eliminated. At present, a complaint is first recorded in the DD and usually a plain paper acknowledgement given to the complainant. Later, if a cognisable offence is made out or the police cannot avoid its registration, an FIR is recorded either by hand or on a computer on the FIR proforma. It is a waste of effort and manpower. Each complaint can be recorded in the DD by computer, and its hard copy promptly given to the complainant. Enough computers should be provided to each PS and staff. SHO downward, all staff must use computers for their paper work, including writing of the DD, registering non-cognisable (NC) and cognisable offences, and building other crime records. This would speed up registration of offences, reduce paper work and improve record keeping. This writer has the copy of a NC report lodged at a police station, written in an illegible hand on a ridiculously small format. Police leaders should review and improve the proformas of all PS registers.

**THE SHO AS KINGPIN :** The SHOs, who are the kingpins of the system, should be held accountable for their performance. If something goes wrong and evokes public outcry, the easiest answer is to suspend the erring official. Otherwise, supervision is lax and the PS staff exercise wide and often abusive discretion. The police chiefs can adopt the command-and-control system created by William Bratton, Commissioner of New York (NYPD), who curbed rampant crime in 1994-95. Following Peter Drucker's Management by Objectives and Michael Hammer's Re-engineering Principles, he judged the police precincts commanders (equivalent to SHOs) by their ability to prevent crime rather than by how

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**The training of police station staff should be improved. An IPS officer's training period is for two years, but the training of constables is for only nine months.**



# Is changing Singur worth it?

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI



## Reforms Report

Acquisition of land has caused many wars and led to significant bloodshed in history. The epic battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas took place over land. The recent American war in Iraq is about the control of land that floats over oil.

The reasons for conflict over land are pretty simple. Land is necessary, in varying amounts, to produce all that we consume today. A proportionately large quantity of land is necessary to produce the food we consume, even though the land required to produce a given amount of food has been decreasing, thanks to improvements in technology. Our efforts at multiple cropping ensure that more than one crop a year is grown from a single plot of land.

Such improvements in agricultural practices have led to two distinct advantages for mankind.

First, higher production from the same amount of land has ensured that an increasing human population could be adequately fed without bringing more land under cultivation. Secondly, and far more importantly, land used earlier for cultivation could be diverted to non-agricultural purposes, for instance, industrialisation, urbanisation and the construction of roads. One is not very sure though if technology will continue to boost our capability to grow increasing quantities of food sustainably.

We encounter a critical issue of choice. A single plot of land can be put to many uses often leading to conflict of interests. Obviously, the interests of the powerful always prevail. Thus forests got converted into agricultural fields much to the disadvantage of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. The change in land use conformed to the interests of communities that had mastered the art of settled agriculture and they emerged technologically superior to the former.

The onset of the industrial revolution saw the fortunes of agriculturists slip away to those possessing technology that produced more value – industrial products – from a smaller plot of land. Obviously, the investors in industry emerged more powerful than the agriculturists. This has been accepted as a norm for development. A typical text book in development economics would list a transition from a higher share of agriculture in national GNP to a lower one as a necessary condition for development.

Consequently, the land use pattern in a locality undergoes many changes over time. Such changes reflect the shift of power from one group to another. As long as scarcity of land was not felt so severely, such changes in land use happened quite silently with, at the most, some localised agitations organised by those on the losing side. Often those agitations could be smothered brutally, even though there are instances when some concessions were offered to ensure a smooth transition to the desired land use.

Indian history, especially during the British rule and even more since independence, is replete with such experiences. Institutionalisation of Van Panchayats in the Western Himalayas, formulation of the Chhota Nagpur Thika Tenancy Act or the acceptance of community rights on forests in the north-east (against the background of nationalisation of forests in the rest of India) are examples of some conciliatory gestures adopted by the British while changing the land use pattern of the country. The Land Acquisition Act of the 1890s legally empowered the British to acquire any land in 'public interest' to conform to their desired change in land use.

However, with a rapidly increasing demand for non-agricultural goods and services, in tune with the development paradigm we identified for ourselves, the pressure to convert increasing amounts of forests and agricultural land for more electricity, more cars, more roads and more minerals has increased manifold. In fact, the pressure on land is increasing and is unlikely to dissipate without repercussions that are no longer local.

The Land Acquisition Act formulated centuries ago is gradually losing steam in establishing the 'will of the stronger party' as concerns are no longer concentrated locally. The sustained agitations by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), though not very effective in stopping changes in land use in the Narmada valley, has convinced people all over the country of the need to organ-

ise themselves and not give in meekly to any plan that may ultimately harm their future livelihoods.

The national reaction to diversion of land – often prime agricultural land – for setting up special economic zones (SEZs), and the reaction of the people of West Bengal to the acquisition of land in Singur and Nandigram, confirm the 'spill over' effect of movements like the NBA to regions and people who were earlier unaffected by the issues they raised.

It would be relevant to mention that West Bengal is perhaps the first state in India to amend the Land Acquisition Act during the mid-nineties to make changes in land use much easier.

The Singur episode raises more questions than answers. I would like to raise some of them in this column. First, does Singur confirm the success of land reforms that were initiated during 30 years of Left Front rule in West Bengal or



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is it otherwise? While the Left Front argues in the affirmative, others are not convinced. They consider land reform measures to have, at best, ensured partial success. Some even feel that land reforms failed West Bengal.

Consequently, if the successes of land reforms have been partial, what could have been done to ensure complete success of the programme?

Thirdly, is conversion of some agricultural land cultivated to produce multiple crops into land for industrialisation necessary to carry forward the gains from land reforms? Or are the efforts negating the gains from land reforms – be they partial or complete?

More importantly, are the net gains from industrialisation as envisaged by the Left going to be positive, keeping in mind the loss in agricultural production and consequent employment opportunities that will result from a change in land use pattern? If yes, what are the enabling conditions that would ensure positive net gains? Are those conditions prevailing right now? If the net gains turn out to be negative, are there mechanisms in place to revert to the earlier land use? This issue is significant, because in a vibrant democracy, people can punish a political party if they feel it initiated a wrong policy. But people have no power to ensure that the wrongs committed are undone.

Finally, does the compensation principle applied in Singur conform to the ideals of equity? If not, what could have been done to ensure just compensation to the farmers who were asked or forced to give up their land?

I am convinced that there is no one answer or solution to the questions I have raised. The moment one accepts the possibility of plural solutions, the task becomes more arduous and challenging. Do respond with your suggestions.

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# Tiwa law versus state law

SUMAN SAHAI AND INDRANI BARPUJARI

**T**HE use of biological resources and the indigenous knowledge associated with it has been governed by a number of informal customary mechanisms among local and indigenous communities. There is enough documented evidence to show that customary practices and laws are of contemporary relevance in protecting biodiversity and its associated indigenous knowledge.

To understand the working of customary practices and laws in today's context, Gene Campaign undertook a study of Pumakuchi, a remote village in Assam's Karbi Anglong district. The village is inhabited exclusively by the Hill Tiwa tribe who believe in several gods, goddesses and deities. There are numerous shrines called *thaans* in the village dedicated to many deities the people worship. A *thaan* is a small clearly demarcated area with a little altar, surrounded by a patch of forest. The *thaan* and the adjoining forest may be regarded as constituting a sacred grove. Such sacred groves have been acknowledged to be of great significance in the conservation of biodiversity, with the green patches constituting a unique example of in situ conservation of bioresources.

The mathines or spirits are believed to reside in the nearby hills and forests. For instance, a spirit named Kharine is said to dwell in the *khari* (hill stream). Kharine causes fever in a person if he or she displeases the spirit by making a noise near the stream or by polluting it. The *baghrraja* is a benevolent spirit residing in the forest who offers protection against the attack of tigers. The people of Pumakuchi hold ancestral spirits in great reverence. Collectively referred to as *phitri*, they are believed to reside near the dwellings of their surviving kin in the bamboo groves.

Thus, people have given different locations to spirits for residence in their belief system. In order to avoid risking the wrath of supernatural powers, the Hill Tiwas observe numerous restrictions in these places. Gene Campaign researchers were told of an incident when a person in an inebriated state, defecated in the hill stream where the spirit of the Sajaboroi is believed to reside and in a crude language challenged the spirit to harm him. A few months later, he lost his wife in childbirth and his five-year-old son fell sick.

The Tiwas of Pumakuchi revere all life forms as sacred. They believe that there is a *jiu* (soul) in all creatures like man, animals, birds, fish, insects and trees. *Jiu* is also believed to be present in water, rocks, hills and forests. They believe that the creator's soul resides in all its creatures. Therefore, killing of animals and the destruction of trees and forests is considered sinful. The Maiha Choma Rowa ritual is observed to seek forgiveness from the supreme powers for the sin they commit in killing many insects and pests while burn-

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## Lets have model police stations

*Continued from page 29*

quickly they responded to it. He delegated them powers to deploy their resources as they saw fit.

The precinct commanders were made accountable for all errors in data, thus elevating the collation of crime statistics from a clerical to an operational task. Weekly crime statistics were compiled precinct-wise into a computerised format called the Compstat Book. It showed weekly changes in the rate of crime and compared the quality of policing between the precincts. The Compstat Book was sent to the precinct commanders, signaling that officers who controlled crime alone could be precinct commanders. The crime strategy meetings based on the Compstat data were held between 7 am and 10 am each Wednesday and Friday at the NYPD headquarters. At these meetings, a high-tech console flashed charts, maps, and graphs onto three video screens, and standing at the lectern in front of the precinct commanders accounted for increases in crime and provided strategies to combat it. Hot-spots (high-crime areas) were identified and police

**The Gaon Sabha, with its many activities including settling disputes, enforcing rules and regulations, welfare and ritual functions, serves as the apex political body of Pumakuchi village. All disputes are settled by this Sabha.**

ing the forest for *jhum* cultivation.

The Gaon Sabha, with its many activities including settling disputes, enforcing rules and regulations, welfare and ritual functions, serves as the apex political body of Pumakuchi village. All disputes are settled by this Sabha. The punishment for different types of offences are imposed by the Gaon Sabha depending on the seriousness of the offence. The Gaon Sabha as well as religious customs, forbid desecration and destruction of sacred spaces, which it believes, bring harm not only to the perpetrator but also to the entire village. A person does not require permission for cutting trees on his own property. However, custom requires that he plant a sapling in place of the tree he has felled. For trees on lands owned by the clans, permission of the clan elders is required. In the case of village lands, the Gaon Sabha may grant permission to cut trees subject to payment of a fee depending upon the economic condition of the tree cutter. Cutting down a tree without permission would entail a fine and generally the offender is made to plant five saplings in lieu and tend to them as well. In this manner, the Gaon Sabha shows a remarkable conservation ethos.

The practices of the Tiwas of Assam reflect the world view of most communities living in close interaction with nature. The Tiwas believe the same soul pervades all life on earth. They strongly believe that their deities do not reside in a far away heaven as is the belief in most religions, but they exist on earth in different manifestations such as streams, forests, stones, hill tops, trees, lakes, etc. which is why they have strict rules, social sanctions and taboos to protect these manifestations. Tiwa beliefs, taboos and social sanctions have obtained the status of law, more specifically customary law, as these practices and beliefs have the acceptance of the entire community, have existed for a considerable period of time and are enforced by the village institution, the Gaon Sabha.

In order to protect natural resources and its associated indigenous knowledge, it is crucial to strengthen the implementation of customary laws and to give it an unequivocal legal basis. Unfortunately, this is not happening. The non-recognition of customary laws and customary rights by the higher judicial bodies in recent times is leading to the undermining of the importance of these practices and norms at the village and local level. Not only do members of neighbouring villagers and other outsiders but gradually many erring community members do not heed these. For customs and customary laws to be of continuing relevance, it is essential that they are given due weightage in the formal legal system and are recognised at par with statutory law.

resources (manpower, vehicles, etc.) were moved there to combat crime.

William Bratton obtained each precinct commander's profile sheet that included his education, specialised training, previous command positions, average response time to incidents of crime and other public calls, officer absence and the latest performance evaluation. The next police commissioner, Howard Safir, added integrity monitoring to the list to emphasise the importance of public complaints and charges of brutality and misconduct. In America, the police use many software application programmes for collection and analysis of crime data and for discerning crime patterns. However, the Compstat strategy remains the most impressive. William Bratton is a much admired police officer in the western world. This writer recommends the Compstat strategy for our police departments, at least in the metropolitan cities, to begin with.

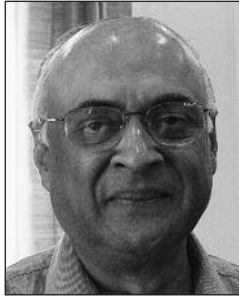
To sum up, the foremost step towards police reform is to give adequate resources to the police station staff; improve their professional skills, attitudes and values. Greater command accountability by enhanced supervision and constant performance appraisal of the SHOs should also be enforced.

*Yateendra Singh, IPS (retd), is currently a PhD Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, researching Human Rights Violations by the Police.*



# The Licence to Operate

AN SINGH



## Business & People

*(This is an edited extract from a presentation made by the author at a recent conference in Amsterdam.)*

I often turn to a chronicle of the life of our Group Founder, Jamsetji Tata, when I wish to recharge myself on the core values that sustainable organisations must follow. I re-read a quote in the book, as I have done innumerable times before. But this time it was a moment almost of being born again as a sustainability practitioner.

Over hundred years ago, he said:

"We do not claim to be more unselfish, more generous or more philanthropic than others are. But we think we started on sound and straightforward business principles, considering the interests of the shareholder our own, and the health and welfare of our employees, the sure foundation of our success."

There are three basic thoughts that he had captured in that statement made in 1895. They are:

First, "we do not claim to be more unselfish, more generous or more philanthropic than others" – this indicates the understanding that corporate social responsibility is not mere charity but an integral part of business process.

Second, "we think we started on sound and straightforward business principles" – this made uncompromising ethics and transparency the cornerstone of the TATA business practice and the source of trust in the name.

Third, "considering the interests of the shareholders our own and the health of our employees, the sure foundation of our success" – proves the vision he had for sustainability as a business value.

Today, a hundred years later, the critical factors to achieving a Licence to Operate remain a clear CSR strategy, sound ethics and transparency in addition to core business values. After all these years ethics and transparency, along with sustainability have become part of the TATA DNA.

The second and equally important understanding I place before you is, that the perceptions of trust and social responsibility have not changed. Trusteeship and Social Responsibility are timeless. With global trade and business interests acquiring the power to influence government policy and vice versa, society is now holding businesses accountable as corporate citizens. This accountability is nudging companies to acknowledge the value from sustainability. The current momentum towards a convergence around a responsive international architecture comprising standards such as the G3 Guidelines is most opportune and is available for forward thinking businesses to leverage.

Society is thus ensuring that government and business do not further disenfranchise the disadvantaged but work in tandem, by pooling complementary skills and resources, to urgently respond to development crises and impact sustainability more conclusively.

### **Is Licence to Operate valid in a world of free trade?**

At the threshold of acquiring the license to operate, or for that matter, to continue to operate, social and environmental legitimacy are now mandatory. Non-financial considerations have progressively become significant even to mainstream investors. Initiatives such as Global Compact, Triple Bottomline and GRI came at a time when industry began prospecting for a global marketplace. The surge in business growth has not delivered the promised prosperity to the planet but in fact threatens it. This has made society increasingly critical about operating norms in industry.

By placing information in a transparent structure in the public domain, beyond the mandatory financial reporting, including social and environmental aspects of performance, organisations build credibility and the right to operate in different locations.

In the era of a globalised marketplace, the failure to respond or to proactively include social and environmental factors in decision making, by remaining confined to economic factors, could result in the withdrawal of the License to Operate. This has been recognised by enlightened companies.

### **What constitutes Licence to Operate?**

The trust that an organisation will always work in the best interest of Society, leads to a social legitimacy or the Licence to Operate. Entry barriers, adverse judgments from judiciaries or customer aversion to products, constitute denials of the Licence to Operate. One example from our country is the ban on those carpet companies, who used the nimble fingers of child labour to weave

profits. Yet another is the court order to shift polluting industries away from the vicinity of the Taj Mahal, in order to protect this magnificent World Heritage Site. At a time when virtually half the world's population does not have access to basic human needs such as food, education, water and health-care, business conglomerates cannot be seen as perpetuating or accentuating problems such as hunger, poverty, depletion of water resources and inequalities, which necessarily lead to conflicts.

### **How does reporting lead to the Licence to Operate?**

Stakeholders cannot make judgments about the way sustainability is being addressed by an organisation unless it voluntarily discloses this information.

Reporting thus is the end product of the work undertaken by an organisation. Sustainability issues require to be addressed step-by-step as a part of business practice.

The first step is to engage stakeholders. All organisations operate in multi-cultural, multi-stakeholder environments. This plurality generates diverse views, leading to support and dissent for investment and economic activity. To achieve the freedom to undertake economic activity or to obtain the Licence to Operate requires us to identify and engage stakeholders to determine their needs. Balancing stakeholder needs should be a key strategic issue for companies.

Second, understanding stakeholder concerns is imperative. All too often, a lack of alignment brings even a well meaning effort to naught. My country India has aspirations of becoming a developed nation by 2020. It has among the fastest GDP growth rates in the world along with the highest levels of Foreign Direct Investments. At the same time there is an overwhelming lack of development in the rural areas. Industry cannot, we believe in the Tata Group, be an island of prosperity in a sea of poverty.

Prioritising stakeholder concerns comes immediately thereafter so as to determine those that the Company needs to address within the short-term; those over a longer-term, as well as to allocate resources for them.

Once prioritised, stakeholder concerns ought to be addressed in the business processes through a variety of mechanisms available to companies or through a judicious amalgam developed to suit individual industry, sector or national needs. For instance, while sustainability is one of seven key business measures under the Tata Business Excellence Model, the measure for social performance has considerable emphasis as social uplift of the poor is vital for India.

Addressing the concerns through business processes requires a sound management system under which the gaps are analysed, targets are set, reviewed and corrective actions are initiated to achieve benchmark improvements.

Communication and feedback to the shareholders, during the process of reporting year on year, results in achieving transparency and accountability on the activities of the business. This leads to the belief among them that "what gets measured gets done."

Reporting also helps in identification of new business opportunities, which primarily arises from stakeholder engagement.

Reporting progressively allows the organisation to work towards a clear sustainability strategy; it establishes a link between principles or values of stakeholders with practice, ultimately leading to the Licence to Operate.

### **Why GRI instead of an independent mechanisms?**

The mission of GRI is to make sustainability reporting as routine and valuable as financial reporting.

Global sustainability impacts require convergence of public and private efforts. The magnitude of the challenges facing us, especially human problems, cannot be tackled by governments alone. Industry is a user of the eco system, of resources, which are the collective wealth of society. Today, society is demanding that the resources being made available to business be put to the best possible use for the people and the planet. Reporting responds to their right to be informed about consumption and the efficient utilisation of these resources, most importantly the wealth that business, in turn generates from society.

With society encouraging industry to improve social and environmental performance, a structured model for transparency in stakeholder engagement is vital.

GRI addresses global impacts and allows business to systematically engage in responding to them. The emergence of reporting guidelines has made the difficult task of social and environmental reporting easier for managers to understand, adopt and undertake. Guidelines allow them to, within a structured framework, respond to individual stakeholders and interest groups.

*(AN Singh is the Deputy Managing Director of Tata Steel)*

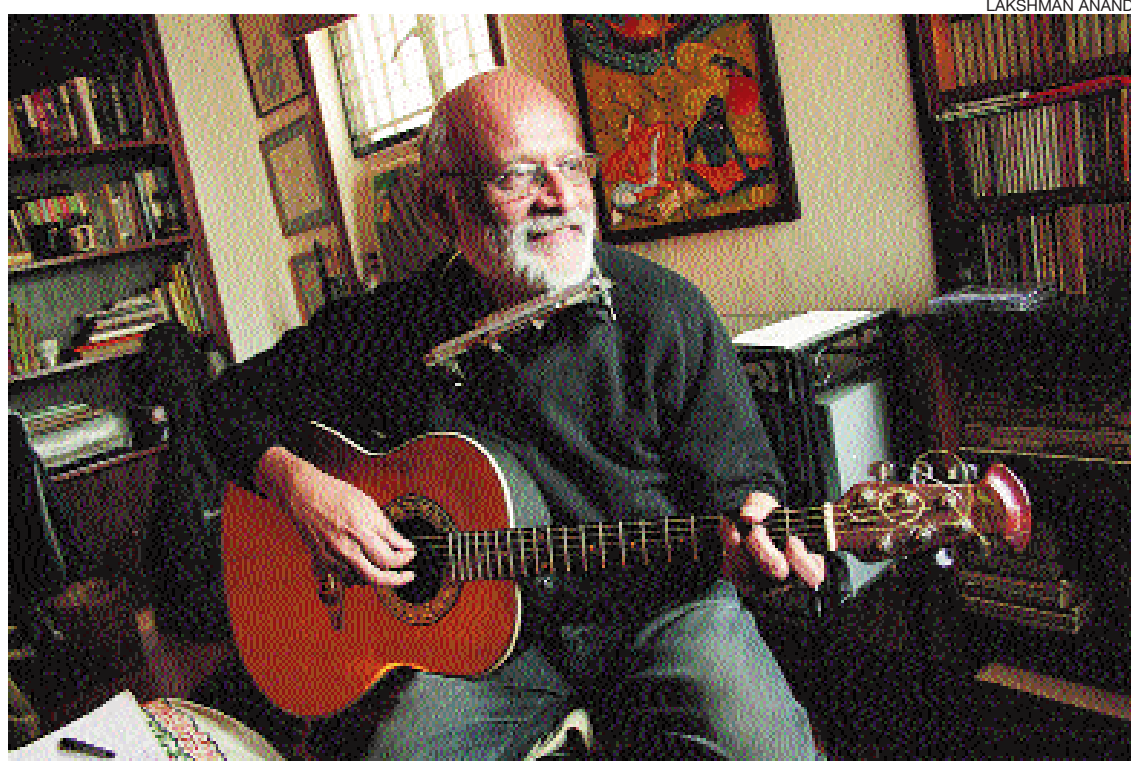


# Reviewer

## THE FINE PRINT

Get behind the scenes. Books, films, theatre, street plays, posters, music, art shows. The one place to track creative people across the country.

## In Susmit's world



LAKSHMAN ANAND

**Umesh Anand**  
New Delhi

SUSMIT Bose is a simple man. He is what he has: A small flat in Munirka opposite Jawaharlal Nehru University, his mother and his guitar. At 54, it doesn't get more basic.

But that is not the full story. Susmit may be down to essentials, but he is also an urban folk singer with a loyal following and in his youth in the 70's he topped the charts in Britain. And he would like a piece of future action as well for which he has just cut a CD called *Be the Change* which captures some of the angst of middle class activism in Indian cities.

Sponsored by Action Aid, Susmit has put together a collection of songs that talk of Jessica Lal, eviction, homelessness, political accountability and a cleaner environment. It is the music of protest in full flow and Susmit's audience are those tens of thousands of English-speaking middle class Indians who have begun turning up at public meetings, lighting candles to ask for justice and joining NGOs to change the quality of their lives.

Susmit's inspiration has all along been the original Bob Dylan. He continues to sing in the old vein of seething rebellion – questioning the system, celebrating seekers, deconstructing the

smug and successful.

Susmit's strength is his identity, his persona, his ability to make his songs and his music an extension of his vision of the world. He belongs to the sixties and the seventies when the tumult the world was going through gave protest its own status and the limitations of technology allowed individual performers to stay in focus long enough to become legends and make money.

You will listen to *Be the Change* because it is well done and Susmit has a message that is contemporary. He can sing, he can write and he can pluck.

*Be the Change* in style and spirit comes from a world in which Susmit belongs. There is nothing wrong with that because there are many people who are happy to be in that world and can relate to his style. Others may like to visit it occasionally, as a retro adventure perhaps.

"I became a singer in modern India inspired by my icons of social change in the West. Thirty years later, a new pain pierces my song every day as I watch a neo-liberal globalised contemporary India sprout gory horns of fascism and communalism, displace its rural poor with massive development projects," says Susmit.

"Whither the safety of a sane society?" he asks. "I must sing as I sang in my youth to let my song out there, out of the cage."

For a long time Susmit gave up being a performer, perhaps because he had nothing to offer, nothing to say. He worked as a communications consultant or something else. His return as a performer to send home his message in his own chosen style is itself part of an urban trend that sees doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers trying to make a difference. Like everyone else, Susmit is

**Susmit has put together a collection of songs that talk of Jessica Lal, eviction, homelessness, political accountability and a cleaner environment.**





doing it his own way.

Interestingly, Susmit has Indian classical music in the family. His father, Sunil Bose, was a Thumri singer and so Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan and the rest of the greats were family friends.

Susmit says that his father, however, never wanted him to learn Indian classical music. He sent him to school for a western education. It was in school that he began playing the guitar. He taught himself, grew better at it and like so many long-haired jeans-clad young men immersed himself in the tumult of the times.

Susmit's song *Winter Baby* topped the charts in England in 1971 and with that began his foray into the international music scene. Bob Dylan was his hero and inspiration. But he never knew him personally. Pete Seeger, however, is a friend.

There is an honesty about Susmit that is a part of his charisma. It is an honesty that hasn't changed

## Susmit's song *Winter Baby* topped the charts in England in 1971 and with that began his foray into the international music scene. Bob Dylan was his hero and inspiration.

in all these years despite the risk of getting outdated: the singing style, the guitar, the emotional commitment to fairness and equality. He could have tweaked his image a bit here or there. He could have fiddled with his music. Or perhaps he could have turned it on its head and redefined himself altogether. He didn't and with *Be the Change* the word should go out that Susmit is in his world and everyone's welcome.

Outside that world, however, lots is changing. It is not so much about Susmit being out of sync with the really popular stuff that fills MTV and V and Vh1 and so on. It also has nothing to do with him not making the filmy grade. It is about the pulse of protest (and the music that celebrates it) having changed.

In an essentially poor India, problems of equity and justice are what they were 30 years ago. The need to find solutions is as important if not more urgent than ever before. But the aspirations are very different.

Susmit speaks out with the ease with which he wears his jeans and human concerns. But that is not where the music scene is any more. He is pitted against younger stuff from scores of groups belting out their anger and distrust of the system from the northeast to the deep south.

Take Bengal alone. Bhoomi, Fossils, Chandra Bindu and Rikter Scale, the Heavy Metal Bangla Band are drawing big crowds with original stuff and much of it is a high voltage attack on the CPI(M)-led state government and other faces of the establishment. There is a contemporary irreverence here and it comes from the gut. It is making connections of a kind that have everything and nothing to do with the sixties' brand of insolence. It is as genuine as music can get and it does not matter so much if it is rough and lacks durability.

So, protest music is changing and acquiring Indian roots. Napster's children will have their own interpretations of urban folk music. But it is good to have Susmit around.



**DEAN CHAPMAN:**

The misery of the Karen community living on Burma's eastern border

# BOUNDARIES

Shahidul Alam  
Dhaka

*Drik International's Chhobi Mela IV explored boundaries-physical, political, social and psychological- that touch our lives, through the work of 49 photographers from 23 countries.*

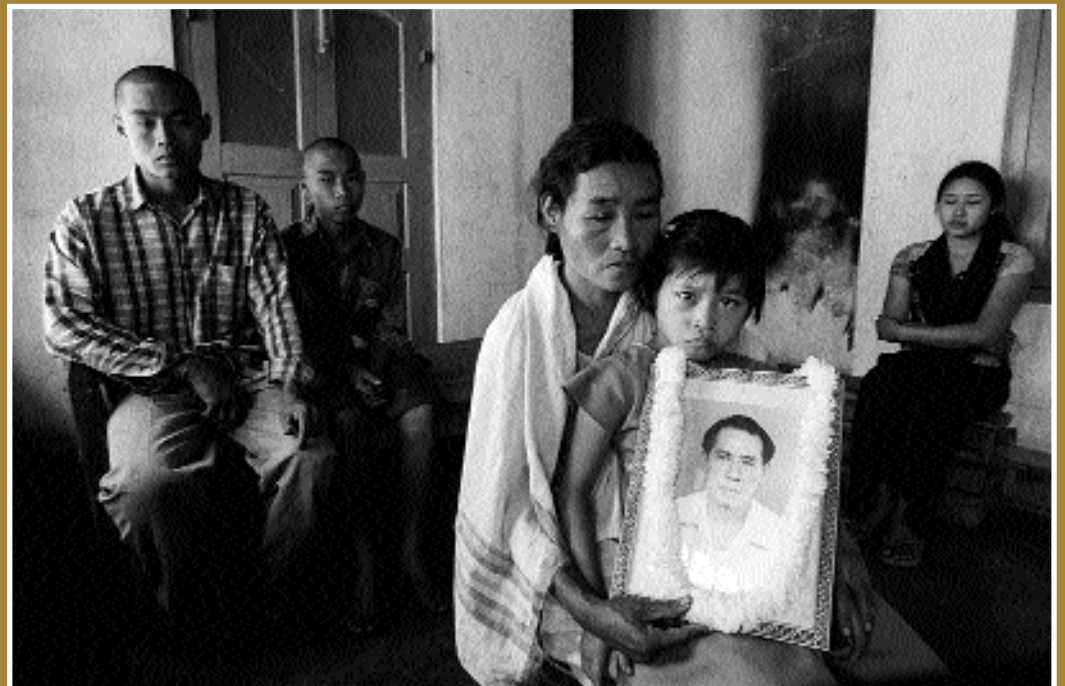
**SHEHAB UDDIN:**  
How the aged, shunned by their families, form bonds with one another.



**SWAPAN NAYAK:**  
Victims of ethnic violence in the north-east

She packed her load of firewood onto the crowded train in Pangsha. The morning sun peered through the lazy winter haze. The vendors called '*chai garam, boildeem*' and the train slowly chugged out of the station, people still clambering on board, or finishing last minute transactions. Some saying farewell.

The scene had probably not been very different a hundred years ago. Maybe then they carried *pan* instead of firewood, or some other commodity that people at the other end needed. She would come back the same day, bringing back what was needed here. Only today she was a smuggler. The artificial and







**PATRICK SUTHERLAND:**  
The isolation of Tibetans in Spiti, the last vestige of their way of life.

somewhat random lines drawn by a British lawyer had made her an outlaw. She was crossing boundaries.

There were other boundaries to cross. The job a woman was allowed to do, the class signs on the coaches that she could not read but was constantly made aware of. The changing light and the smells as winter went into spring. The *Ashar* clouds that the photographers waited for, which seemed to wait until the light was right.

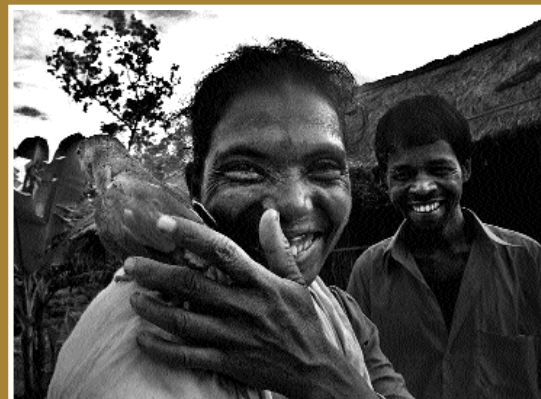
Rickshaw wallahs find circuitous routes to take passengers across the VIP road. Their tenuous existence made more difficult by the fact that permits are more difficult to get, and the bribes now higher. Hip hop music in trendy discos in Gulshan and Banani with unwritten but clearly defined dress codes make space for the yuppie elite of Dhaka. The Baul Mela in Kushtia draws a somewhat different crowd. Ecstasy and Ganja break down some barriers while music creates the bonding. Lalon talks of other boundaries, of body and soul, the bird and the cage.

Photography creates its own compartments. The photojournalist, the fine artist, the well paid celebrity, the bohemian dreamer, the purist, the pragmatist, the classical, the hyper-modern, the uncropped image, the setup shot, the Gettys and the Driks. The majority world. The South. The North. The West. The developing world. Red filters, green filters, high pass filters, layers, masks, feathered edges. No photoshop, yes photoshop. Canonites, Nikonites, Leicaphytes, digital, analogue.

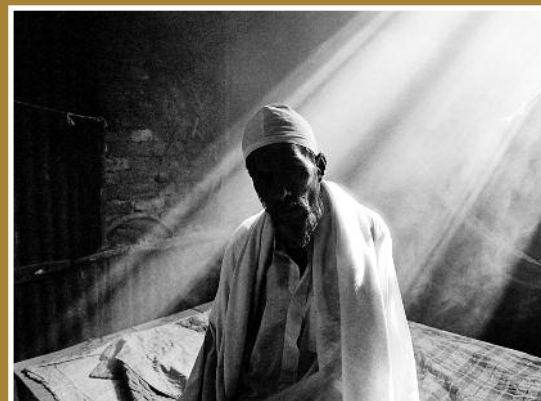
The digital divide. The haves, the have nots. Vegetarians, vegans, carnivores. Hetero-sexuals, metrosexuals, transsexuals, homosexuals. The straight, the kinky. The visionaries, the mercenaries, the crude, the erudite, the pensive, the flamboyant. Oil, gas, bombs, immigration officials, WTO, subsidies, sperm banks, kings, tyrants, presidents, prime ministers, revolutionaries, terrorists, anarchists, activists, pacifists, the weak, the meek, the strong, the bully. The good, the evil. The hawks, the doves. The evolutionists, the creationists. The raised fist, the clasped palm. The defiant, the oppressive, the green, the red. The virgin.

Whether cattle are well fed, or children go hungry, whether bombs are valid for defence or tools of aggression, boundaries-seen or unseen- define our modes of conduct, our freedoms, our values, our very ability to recognise the presence of the boundaries that bind us.

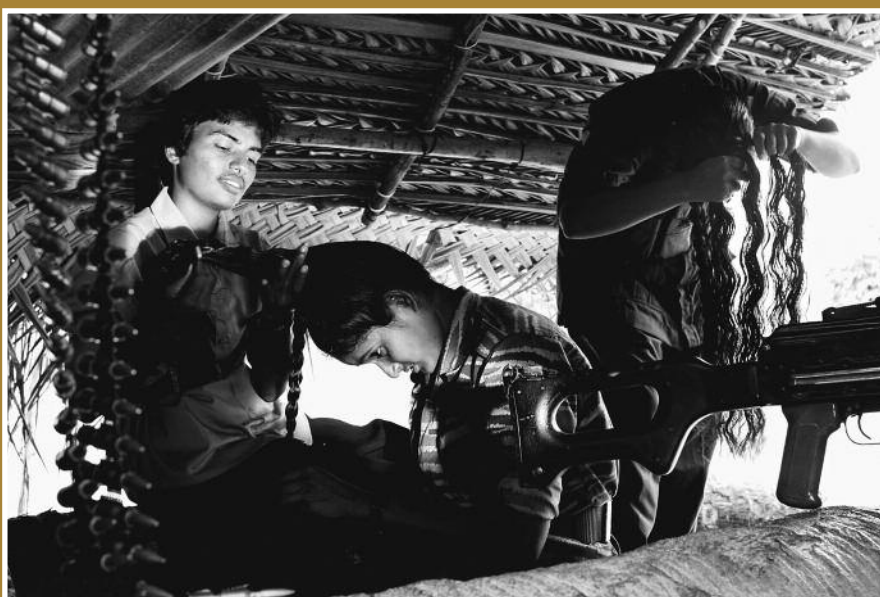
*Shahidul Alam is founder and director of Drik International*



**MUNEM WASIF:**  
The exploitation of tea plantation workers



**GREG CONSTANTINE:**  
Bangladesh's nowhere people, the Biharis



**GAJJANI:**  
Boundaries between Tamils and Sinhalese in strife torn Sri Lanka.

**ABIR ABDULLAH:**  
Rivers and people





# Moringa comes with many wonders

Dr G G GANGADHARAN



**A**CCORDING to Ayurveda every geographical area is blessed in such a way that things needed locally are made available by nature. For instance Moringa is a weak stemmed tree with lots of leaves. It grows abundantly all over India. The tree's flowers, fruits and leaves are highly nutritious and very tasty. Its root, root bark and stem are endowed with medicinal qualities.

There are around 14 species of trees belonging to the genus Moringaceae. Moringa Oleifera is the one that is most widely seen all over the country. It is a fast growing sub-Himalayan tree now found all over the tropics and sub-tropics.

Moringa has several uses. Moringa is known as *Shobhanjanam* in Sanskrit, which means to decorate the eyes. Ancient Romans used an oil squeezed from the Moringa seeds to make perfumes. In Europe it is used as a lubricant for fine machines. In India we cultivate Moringa for its edible fruit. But the edible leaves of the tree are more nutritious and are consumed for its various medicinal and dietetic properties.

#### Vegetable oil from Moringa seeds:

Moringa seeds contain oil that can be used for cooking. The oil is quite acceptable in taste and does not become rancid.

**Instructions:** Brown the seeds in a skillet. Then mash seeds thoroughly. Place the seed mash in boiling water. The oil will rise to the surface where you can skim it. The seed cake left over, after extracting the oil, can be used for water purification. It can also be used as a fertiliser.

**Water purifier:** Moringa seeds are extensively used to purify water. About 50 to 150 mg of ground Moringa seeds treat one litre of water, depending on how clear the water is.

#### The method of purification is as follows:

Allow the Moringa seed pods to dry naturally on the tree before harvesting them. Remove the seed husks, leaving a whitish kernel. Crush the seed kernels to a powder with a stone or mortar. Mix the powder with a small quantity of clean water in a small cup. Pour the mixture through a tea strainer or sieve into a cup. It's best to cover the strainer with a piece of clean cloth. Add the resultant milky fluid to the water you wish to purify. Stir quickly for 30 seconds, then slowly and regularly for five minutes. Cover the water and do not disturb it for at least an hour. The clean water may be siphoned or poured off the top of the container.

The Moringa fruit is an excellent aphrodisiac for men. The leaf is an exciting side dish. It is also rich in Vitamin A and extremely good for night blindness.

In Ayurveda formulations there are many preparations which use stem, bark and root. However, these are all to be used in consultation with experienced physicians. Moringa should be grown in every house and this single tree can prevent malnutrition in its various manifestations.

*Dr G G Gangadharan is a Joint Director at FRLHT. E-mail: vaidya.ganga@frlht.org*



NUTRIENT and medicinal uses	MORINGA LEAVES	OTHER FOODS
<b>Vitamin A</b> Acts against eye diseases, skin diseases, heart ailments and diarrhoea	<b>6780mcg</b>	<b>CARROTS</b> <b>1890mcg</b>
<b>Vitamin C</b> Fights a host of illnesses including cold and flu.	<b>220mg</b>	<b>ORANGES</b> <b>30mg</b>
<b>Calcium</b> Builds strong bones and teeth and helps prevent osteoporosis	<b>440mg</b>	<b>COWS MILK</b> <b>120mg</b>
<b>Potassium</b> Essential for the functioning of the brain and nerves	<b>259mg</b>	<b>BANANAS</b> <b>88mg</b>
<b>Protein</b> The basic building blocks of all our body cells	<b>6.7gm</b>	<b>COWS MILK</b> <b>3.2gm</b>

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# CanSupport finds bread in cake

**Madhu Gurung**  
New Delhi

**D**ESPITE its good work and impeccable reputation, CanSupport, an NGO that provides palliative care to cancer patients, was finding it tough to raise money for its burgeoning day care centre.

Then Hanife, 52, an oncology nurse, who practices palliative cancer care in Santa Cruz, California, turned up with baking lessons. Thanks to her, CanSupport has earned Rs 73,000 by baking and selling cakes.

For two days Hanife taught 56 ladies to make cakes. Market Café, in a secluded corner of Delhi's Khan Market, was the chosen venue. Twenty-eight of her students stood around in a half circle.

"Do you run a restaurant where you bake?" asked one. Hanife grinned and explained why she was bakery teacher for the day.

"I love to bake and have cooked for my patients all over the world," she explained. "I heard of CanSupport and its efforts towards palliative care, so I offered my services as a baker. These classes are to raise awareness and funds, to support day care services offered to cancer patients."

In candy striped apron, Hanife doled out cheese and coffee cake. "Pass it around and eat it because this is how it should taste when you make it. My e-mail is there along with all the recipes so mail me if you are in some difficulty." The cake is cold, frothy and perfectly sugared. It melts in your mouth.

"Can we use a sweetener instead of sugar?" a hesitant voice asked between spoonfuls. "Yes, if you want to die," smiles Hanife. As a certified dietary supervisor, Hanife explains the chemical composition of sweeteners and her reservations.

Hanife is a diminutive woman with eyes that look into your soul. It's easy to see that her capable hands, busy straightening a tablecloth, sifting flour, slicing pies and cakes, have provided solace to thousands of patients.

Hanife was 16 when she first visited India. Born in Istanbul she belongs to a French-Turkish family with Russian Muslim roots. After schooling she went to France to study psychology and Tibetan and finally trained to become a certified hospice and palliative care nurse, with a Masters in traditional Chinese medicine.

"When I first came to India, it was for the Tibetan people. They are my people, my life. I have been coming back ever since. I realised that India is like a mother, either you love her or you don't."

Year after year Hanife returns to India leaving her husband of 30 years and a grown up son for her 'pilgrimage'. "I work in the US and then divide

my life to go to Bodh Gaya for Karguy prayers and live in the monastery of Jamgonkongtrul Rimpoché in Kalimpong." Once there she works at the home of destitute. "The home has an eye hospital. I work at the clinic. If someone is seriously ill I refer them to a hospital in Lava."

"I have learnt my life's lessons of *dharma* in India. It teaches you that everything in life is impermanent, that there is illness and death so in the eternal cycle of life and death I want to do something for others. More than anything I want to bring joy to others."

Says Harmala Gupta, president of CanSupport: "Besides holding classes, Hanife baked tirelessly over two days. All the goodies were then sold by Lina



Hanife at her bakery class

Malas, a volunteer at CanSupport, in the American Embassy school. The children were also shown a five-minute film made by her on the day care centre, so that they know where their money is going."

Working alongside Harmala, Lina Malas garnered the support of her friend Madhushree Birla, who owns the Market Café. Madhushree has been keeping her café open to young budding artists and photographers to exhibit their work.

"We have called our fundraising the Great Bake Off," says Lina. "It is an attempt to raise much needed awareness and funds for CanSupport, but it also shows that community service can be business oriented and need not be just donation."

Hanife nods in agreement and tells her class, "Except for bread, baking is such a decadent thing. You can survive without it. But it's good for your soul. The great joy is when you eat it and it's all gone. When you share it with others you bring joy in their lives. The more you share the more you will get."

## Mango cake

### Ingredients

2 cups flour  
2 cups sugar  
1 ½ tsp baking powder  
½ tsp baking soda  
½ tsp ground nutmeg  
½ cup butter or oil or vegetable shortening  
1 cup butter milk or sour milk  
2 eggs beaten  
1 tsp vanilla  
3 cups coarsely chopped mangoes

**Method:** Preheat oven to 160C. Grease a rectangular pan 32m x 22m x 5m. Combine dry ingredients. Cut

Beat for 2 minutes. Stir in boiling water. Pour into greased pans. Bake for 30-35 minutes. Cool completely.

## Chocolate truffles

### Ingredients

½ kilo bitter sweet chocolate  
1 cup heavy cream

**Method:** Chop chocolate into small pieces and place into a heat proof bowl. Heat heavy cream till it bubbles. Pour over chocolate and stir till it melts. Pour mixture into a shallow dish and refrigerate till firm but pliable for about 30 minutes. Scoop out into small nuggets. Roll into balls. Roll in cocoa powder. Keep refrigerated.

## Low-fat scones

### Ingredients

4 tsp sugar  
2 ½ cups flour  
1 tsp baking powder  
¼ cup vegetable oil  
½ cup milk (low fat if available)  
1 egg  
1 tsp grated lemon zest  
¼ cup raisins.

**Method:** Heat oven to 200 degrees. In a big bowl whisk together 2 tsp sugar, flour and baking powder. Quickly stir in vegetable oil, milk, egg and grated lemon zest. Mix with a fork. Stir in raisins. Gather dough into a bowl. Knead for about ½ minute or 30 times. Transfer to an ungreased baking sheet. Pat into a fat circle about ¾ inch thick. Brush this with 1 tsp milk. Sprinkle 2 tsp sugar all over. Cut into eight wedges. Bake 20-25 minutes. Drain well and let cool.

## Banana bread

### Ingredients

½ cup white sugar  
½ cup brown sugar  
½ cup butter (1 cube)  
3 bananas mashed  
2 eggs  
1 ½ cups flour  
1 tsp baking soda  
½ tsp salt  
½ cup chopped nuts

**Method:** Pre-heat oven to 180 degrees. Grease a loaf pan. Mix white and brown sugar, butter and eggs. Add mashed bananas. Combine flour, baking soda and salt. Add to banana mixture. Stir in chopped nuts. Pour into greased loaf pan. Bake for one hour or until toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 15 minutes, remove from pan and continue cooling.

*If you enjoyed making all these recipes please donate generously to CanSupport.  
E-mail: cansup\_india@hotmail.com  
Phone: 011-26102851, 26102859, 26102869*

in butter. Combine buttermilk, eggs and vanilla. Add to flour mixture all at once. Stir until just moistened. Fold in the mangoes. Spread in the prepared pan.

Combine 1/3 cup brown sugar and 3/4 tsp cinnamon. Sprinkle evenly over batter. Bake 40-45 minutes. Cool slightly. Serve warm.

## Chocolate cake

### Ingredients

1 ½ cups sugar  
1 ¾ cups flour  
¾ cup cocoa  
1 ½ tsp baking powder  
1 ½ tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
2 eggs  
1 cup milk  
½ cup vegetable oil  
2 tsp vanilla  
1 cup boiling water

**Method:** Heat oven to 160 degrees. Combine dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add eggs, milk, oil and vanilla.



## WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

### CanSupport India

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

### Rahi

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

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

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

### Youthreach

A volunteer team at Youthreach helps to match your skills and interests with the needs of their partner organisations. This exchange is monitored and facilitated from beginning to end by the volunteer team. The team also partners other non-profit organisations that are working with children, women and the environment. Contact: Anubha or Ria 11 Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi - 110 017  
Phone/Fax: (011) 2653 3520/25/30  
Email : yrd@youthreachindia.org

### Deepalaya

They work with economically,

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

### Mobile Crèches

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

### The Arpana Trust

Arpana is a charitable, religious and spiritual organisation headquartered in Karnal, Haryana. They work with rural communities in Himachal Pradesh and with slum dwellers in Delhi. Arpana is well known for its work on health. They have helped organise women into self-help groups. These SHGs make beautiful and intricate items which are marketed by Arpana. For more details: Arpana Community Centre, NS-5, Munirka Marg Street F/9, Next to MTNL, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-57.  
Phone: (Office) 26151136 and (Resi) 26154964

### HelpAge India

HelpAge India needs volunteers from doctors to lay people in all

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

### Hazards Centre

Hazards Centre is a support group involved in environment and urban issues. We seek to challenge all such processes (hazards) that undermine the rights of marginalised groups in the city. In alliance with these groups, we advocate for alternate planning frameworks that can counter the forces aiming to create sanitised and commercialised cities, devoid of the poor who build and run them. You can volunteer with us as per your time, interest and skills on issues such as Housing, Livelihoods, Pollution, Waste, Transport, Right to Information, Development Communication etc. Contact: Supriya Chotani 92-H, Third Floor, Pratap Market, Munirka Village, Delhi - 67  
Ph: 26174244, 26184806, 9811503379 Haz\_cen@vsnl.net

### iVolunteer

iVolunteer is a non-profit promoting volunteerism since 2001. We have a presence in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. We welcome individuals who wish to volunteer. We assess organisations that need volunteers. We match the skills of volunteers with the right organisation so that both benefit. Contact: Jamal or Seema, D-134, East of Kailash, New Delhi-65, Phone: 01126217460  
E-mail: delhi@ivolunteer.org.in

## WHERE TO DONATE

### Indian Red Cross Society

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

### Child Relief and You (CRY)

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

### Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP)

CASP enhances the capacities of children, families and communities through participation and advocacy leading to sustainable development and empowerment. You can help by sponsoring underprivileged child/children from any work area where CASP implements its programmes. These include building old-age homes, projects relating to AIDS etc. Website: www.caspindia.org

### ActionAid

ActionAid is an international development organisation which works with poor and marginalised women, men, girls and boys to eradicate poverty, injustice and inequity. You can become a part of their Karma Mitra loyalty program, which is based on the concept 'When you do good things you should get good things in return.' As a member of this program you can avail various tangible benefits. Contact: ActionAid India C-88, South Extension - II, New Delhi-110 049  
Website: www.actionaidindia.org

### CanSupport India

Kanak Durga Basti Vikas Kendra, Sector 12 R.K. Puram, Near DPS School, New Delhi-110022  
Tel: 26102851, 26102859, 26102869  
E-mail: cansup\_india@hotmail.com

### HelpAge India

HelpAge India is involved in the care of the poor and disadvantaged elderly in 55 locations across the country. They organise

primary health care at village and slum level through 53 mobile medical vans, care of the destitute elderly through Adopt a Gran programme with 222 voluntary agencies, Helplines and income generation for the elderly. Their recent programmes are in the tsunami affected regions and in Kashmir for the rehabilitation of the elderly affected by the earthquake disaster. HelpAge serve more than a million elderly in India. If you wish to donate or adopt a granny, please donate online on our site www.helpageindia.org or send an email to helpage@nde.vsnl.net.in  
Address: HelpAge India, C-14 Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi- 110016  
Chief Executive: Mathew Cherian - mathew.cherian@helpageindia.org

### Bharatiya Academy

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

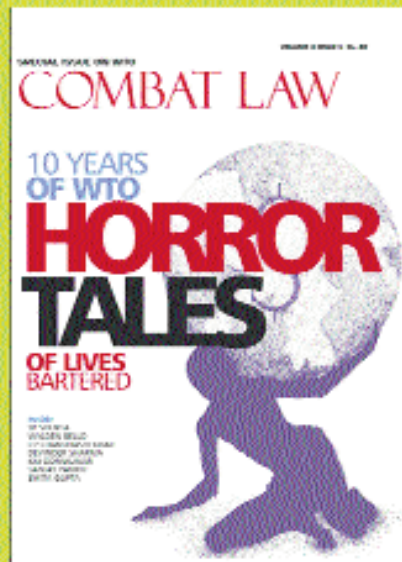
### Smile Foundation

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

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