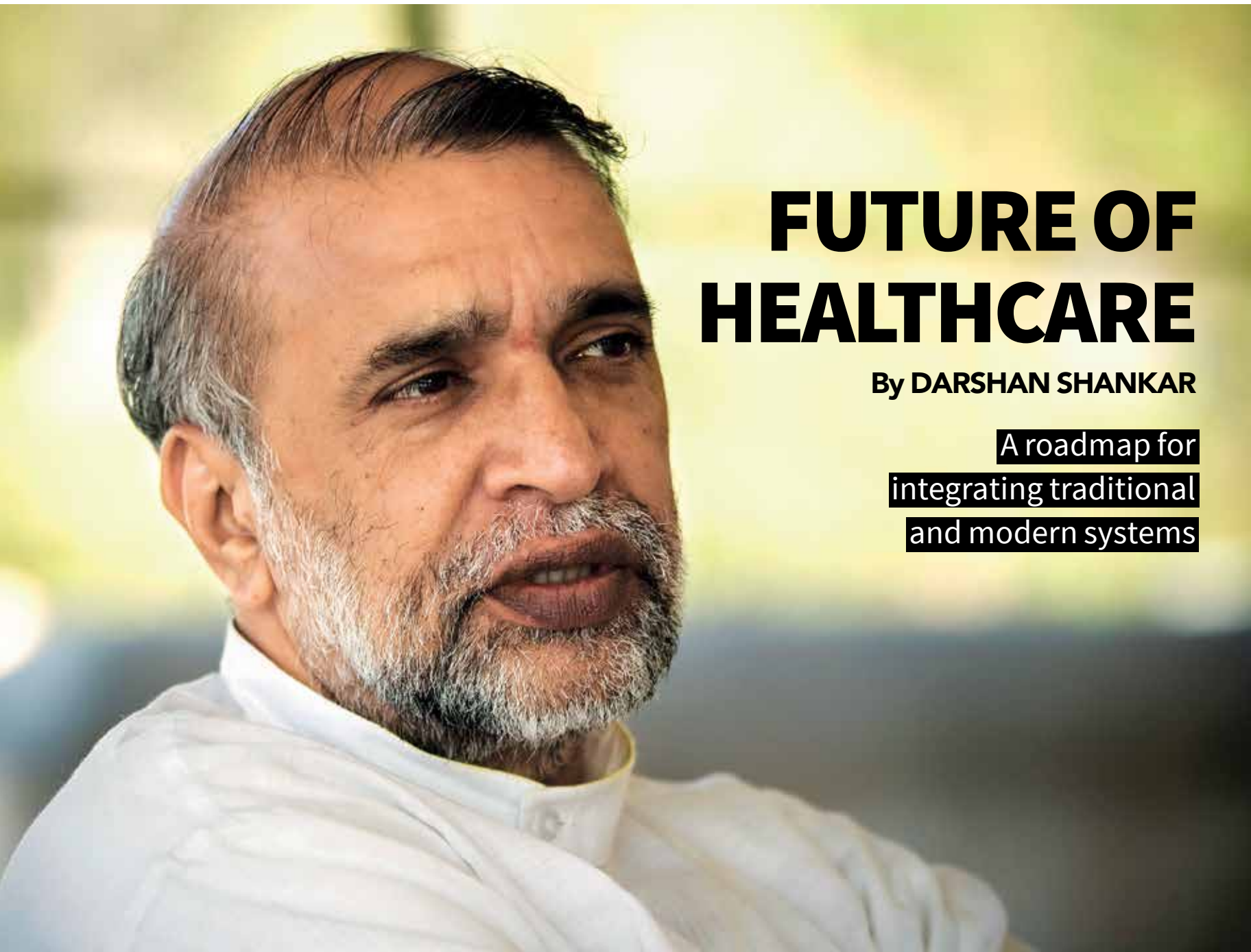


Civil Society



FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

By DARSHAN SHANKAR

A roadmap for integrating traditional and modern systems



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WATER ON MY PLATE

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Dravyavati River Project

47.5 kilometres of Beauty, Cleanliness & Joy!



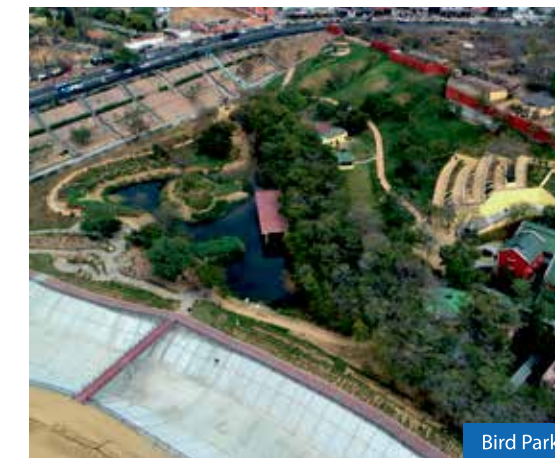
DRAVYAVATI RIVER PROJECT

DRAVYAVATI RIVER REJUVENATION PROJECT IMPROVES LIVES OF JAIPUR'S CITIZENS

Dravyavati River Rejuvenation Project - Jaipur, executed by Tata Projects Ltd has transformed a 47.5 km long cesspool into a beautiful river through treatment of 170 MLD of polluted water. This project encompasses a green belt which includes about 17000 trees on the river banks and 100000 plants in three different parks. As a matter of fact, the citizens of Jaipur have started using the facilities & space for various activities such as yoga, walking and jogging.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROJECT

- River Length - 47.5 Kms
- Capacity of STPs - 170 MLD
- No of Check Dams - 103 Nos
- Three Major Gardens - 10 Hectares
- Walkway / Cycle Track - 30 Kms
- Plantation - 17000 Nos



Bird Park



Botanical Garden



Pump house Museum & café



STP - Capacity of 170 MLD

THE SCOPE OF WORK

- Course correction /Strengthening
- Sewerage Interception, Treatment and Disposal
- Improving Water Quality Standards in the River
- Improving Water Availability in the areas surrounding the River
- Master Development Plan along the River
- Develop Open Green Areas where feasible



The Experience Centre



Tree Plantation Under Green Thumb Initiative



IN THE LIGHT

SAMITA RATHOR



LETTERS



College turmoil

Thanks for your cover story, 'The big campus upsurge.' In a developing country like ours the government has to subsidize higher education. As it is, privatisation and liberalization have hiked the cost of healthcare and school education. Let's at least leave higher education alone. Rich and poor learn together and fraternize, making education a great leveller. It is also the best method of skilling.

Pankaj Bhaduria

Some of the courses taught in colleges are really arcane. We need to weed out old and useless syllabi and make higher education more job-oriented. Instead of having disparate skilling programmes, subsidized by the government, it would be better to bring all such courses together under one university.

Mathew Thomas

Even kindergarten schools charge a

hundred times more than what is being charged in JNU after the fee hike. Why protest against this minimal fee? After all, the college is located in Delhi and not some mofussil town.

Rupak Kumar Giri

I see a substantial shift in *Civil Society's* coverage. You had all along stayed away from politics and sensitive issues like religion. I have been an ardent fan of *Civil Society* from day one. I hope you have not fallen into the trap of other publications.

Shiban Kaul

Green map

Thanks for the story, 'Can Bengaluru get back its lost green heritage?' Many

citizen groups are working to restore the city's ecology. The Landscape Foundation's map could be useful. The problem is urban sprawl. No planning has gone into city expansion. We should have replicated the original city with its lakes and gardens instead of opting for ugly apartment blocks.

Rajaram Gowda

NRC dilemma

Your interview with Nandita Haksar, 'The Northeast's fears of being swamped are genuine,' provided a different perspective of the issues facing those states. It's possible to sympathize with the indigenous people of a state inundated with outsiders as well as the hapless

migrant who comes in search of work. How does one reconcile the interests of both in a humane manner is the question.

Sailesh Panja

Master plan

I read Sidika Sehgal's report, 'Getting everyone into a master plan.' It's a nice topic. But it only talks about demands. Nothing is said about responsibilities. Delhi's main problems are migration, parking, encroachment and unauthorized settlements. No master plan can be effective without tackling these issues. The agenda should also have included the middle class and tried to understand their problems, rights and responsibilities. For example, we lose so many hours in traffic jams on Delhi's roads.

Tapas Chatterjee

Dirty drain

With reference to Raj Machhan's story on the Buddha Nullah which passes through Ludhiana, the effluents generated by citizens and industry should not be discharged into river systems at any cost. The Ludhiana Municipal Corporation must close all sewage lines opening into the Buddha Nullah which is part of the Sutlej river. I have read that villages are disposing of their sewage by dumping it into bore wells.

V. Singh

Correction

In the story, 'In search of Kastoori,' Vinod Kamble was wrongly referred to as Anil Kamble in one sentence. The error is regretted.

Editor

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Rethinking healthcare



COVER STORY

FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

We could build a much more innovative health system by integrating allopathy and alternative systems in medical education, research and services, writes Darshan Shankar.

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Vidhu Vinod Chopra: 'I also realize that the trauma of displacement never really goes out of your system'

'I was recreating those times through the prism of love'

Vidhu Vinod Chopra on the making of *Shikara*

Saibal Chatterjee
New Delhi

THE plight of the Kashmiri Pandit community, uprooted from its homeland three decades ago due to the rise of militancy in the Valley, has rarely, if ever, been delved into by Hindi cinema.

Shikara, veteran writer-director-producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra's first Hindi film in well over a decade, fills the breach. It sees the intractable Kashmir situation and its long-term fallout through the eyes of a Pandit couple who have spent a large part of their life in a refugee camp.

The film has two newcomers, Sadia and Aadil Khan, both Kashmir-born, playing the protagonists, a literature professor and his wife, who lose their home in the Kashmir Valley when militants strike in early 1990, forcing large numbers of Pandits to flee. The couple long to return but they do not let the pain of displacement push them over the edge into bitterness and rage.

Shikara is a marked departure from the films that Chopra has produced in the past decade or so — *Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.*, *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, 3

Idiots, *PK* and *Sanju*, all helmed by Rajkumar Hirani. The film is his first foray into a drama that plays out against a political backdrop. But he takes care to locate a fractious contemporary event entirely in the context of a love story that transcends hate and seeks reconciliation in a time of strife.

That makes the film a minor marvel. It stands apart from the rash of Bollywood epics that go all out to demonize a particular community in keeping with the dominant political narrative of the day. Certain quarters have accused the filmmaker of watering down the trauma that the Kashmiri Pandit refugees suffered, quite forgetting that the genesis of *Shikara* lies in Chopra's own life. His mother was visiting her son in Mumbai for a week when trouble erupted in Kashmir. She was stranded in Mumbai and was never able to return to the Valley. She passed away in 2007. *Shikara* is Chopra's tribute to her.

The filmmaker talks about *Shikara*, the reaction it has elicited and why it is important to him:

How did the *Shikara* idea germinate and why did it take so long for you to bring it to the screen? Was the love story at the centre of *Shikara* always

as integral a part of the plot as it is now?

Shikara was always a love story. Right from the very beginning. Kashmir was always seen through the eyes of this young couple who spent their entire adult life in a refugee camp. It took time because with me unless the script is 100 percent final, I don't actually start the shoot. The *Shikara* script took me a very long time because it was a difficult subject to come to terms with and I had to work hard to capture some dreadful reality without spreading more hate and without inciting my viewers to be vengeful.

How much of *Shikara* is based on Rahul Pandita's book, *My Moon Has Blood Clots*, and how much of it is derived from the trauma that your own family faced?

The idea of *Shikara* existed much before Rahul Pandita's book was published. We were struggling with the script when his book was published. That's when many things became clearer and then my extensive discussions with him brought out many other aspects that I had not experienced but he had. So, the book provided a base which was interwoven

with the events that were experienced by my family. The two combined to make the story of *Shikara*. It is hard to quantify how much of each went into the film. It's the old milk and sugar story. Once you put sugar in the milk, it becomes part of that milk and is no longer something that can be separately quantified by taking it out.

When you depict events that are drawn from living memory and narrate a contemporary historical tale that is crying out to be told, how difficult is it to negotiate the risk of reopening wounds that are still unhealed, even raw?

This risk is always there especially when you're dealing with painful times. But I was recreating those times through the prism of love and through the life of two young people. Their characters, as I perceived them, were not negative characters. They were humane and positive. I dealt with the ugliness that necessitated the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley but only as something factual which happened and not as the main theme or central point of the film.

The militants and their fundamentalism leading to this mass exodus was the ugly atmosphere in which my main characters were trapped. This atmosphere brought out the worst in some people but equally brought out the opposite in others. Our script stayed with the positivity of people and not with their negativity. A lot of this came through my mother who suffered immensely but never turned negative.

***Shikara* has come at a time when Kashmir is under a prolonged lockdown. Did this fact in any way influence the overall guarded tone and stance of the film? Would it have been any different in terms of approach and substance had it been made a decade ago?**

Shikara was ready well before the lockdown of Kashmir started. So that had nothing to do with the content or the tone or the stance of the film. Please know that I started this film in 2008, after my mother passed away the year before. It took me 11 years to make this film.

Despite addressing a highly emotive theme and dealing with a cataclysmic event, *Shikara* is essentially a pacifist film in which love trumps hate. How has the Kashmiri Pandit community at large responded to the film?

Pacifist is not the word I would use to describe the film. Humane is the right word. Pacifist tends to suggest a compromise, which the film is not. It simply depicts a humane environment in which love trumps hate. As for the reactions to the film, I and my co-writers, Rahul Pandita and Abhijat Joshi, have been getting lots of messages and calls every day appreciating the film and telling us how they felt that this movie was so important and that it was

a story that needed to be told. And how this film has finally taken their story to the whole world, a narrative that had been missing for three decades now. They tell us they are grateful. So, I feel that 11 years of my life have not gone waste.

From what you've gathered during the research that you did for the film, would you say that significant sections of the displaced Pandit community have come to terms with what happened and moved on, or is the anguish of displacement still as intense as it was in the first two decades?

That is what we found out. The Pandit community has moved on and built their new lives away from Kashmir. I have received messages and emails from a large number of Kashmiri Pandits thanking me for bringing their story to the big screen. Having said that, I also realize that the trauma of



Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits participated in the film

'Our script stayed with the positivity of people and not their negativity. A lot of this came through my mother who suffered immensely but never turned negative.'

displacement never really goes out of your system. For a certain generation it just stays. A small percentage is never able to come to terms with it and becomes permanently negative. But the larger number has put it behind them and thrown out the negative baggage. That is the strength of the Kashmiri Pandit culture which has been inherently non-violent.

Some people have questioned you for casting Muslim actors as Kashmiri Pandits. Can you believe that?

What is your answer to them?

I just have to say... please refer to *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, where Munna tells Lucky Singh: "Get well soon, *mamuu!*" What else can you say? We are now in a time when these questions are being thrown at you. You do not know what to do with them. We have never faced such a question before. Like that

woman who screamed at me at a Delhi screening. Why did you cast Muslim actors? I could have screamed back at her...but that would have been terrible.

The point is, what they have done on IMDB (Internet Movie Database) is they have gone there and given low ratings to *Shikara* without seeing the film, affecting our international ranking. It is so ridiculous. It isn't just about social media. This is a new trend because of the state of affairs in our country. In the rest of the world, say, in New Zealand, people don't do this.

You have used thousands of Kashmiri Pandits and made them play themselves. Was it difficult to put them in front of the camera? Was it traumatic for them to re-enact for the screen what they have been through in real life?

For them, it was traumatic but at the same time cathartic because they were very excited that finally their story was being told. Please remember that our home minister has now gone on a news channel and talked about the Pandits. He said the Pandits have to go back and that the media has ignored their plight.

So you think *Shikara* has started a conversation?

Yes, in a big way. The finance minister, in her Budget speech, quoted a Pandit poet (Dina Nath Kaul's poem "*Myon Watan*") to say *panun watan tanun watan* (my country, your country). She pronounced it wrong but she managed. So, there is a conversation. Another Union minister, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, went to Lal Chowk (in Srinagar) and said, *Samvad hona chahiye* (there is need for dialogue), which is what I have been saying. The latest is the home minister telling the Shaheen Bagh protesters, Come and talk to me. I am happy to say that all this has started in the last 10 days with this film.

What do you make of the vituperation on social media over *Shikara*?

The social media cacophony has really upset me. I am upset that with a film as good as this one they have managed to tarnish the film's image, damage it, and stop people from going and watching it. The good thing, however, is that *Shikara* will do much better on digital platforms due to all the chatter but it is very sad that people out there can harm the film.

You did not give them what they were expecting — the demonization of a community. I would never do that.

But hasn't there been a spate of recent Bollywood films that do that?

Listen, those guys are not filmmakers. They are businessmen. They want to make money. They will sell poison for money. They will do anything. They have no social conscience at all. ■

IMPORTANCE OF BEING AAP AND EARNEST

Rita and Umesh Anand
New Delhi

IT was clear to anyone moving around a bit in Delhi before the elections that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) would be coming back to office. Much before voting day, people had pretty much decided to give the young party another chance because of better government schools, water and sewage connections, free rides for women in safe buses, cheap electricity and ready availability of healthcare.

The Congress under Sheila Dikshit had also done a lot. But the five years under AAP were seen as being transformational. The changes it had brought had been exciting and palpable. It had promoted equality and access on a scale that didn't seem to exist earlier.

So it is that in the popular perception government schools have become not just better, but as good as private ones. Surgeries are now possible for the poor at the best hospitals at no cost. Mohalla Clinics offer the reassurance that medical help is at hand. Consumers also no longer feel squeezed by power companies and water supply has improved.

The hallmark of AAP has been its earnestness. It has displayed levels of energy and responsiveness not usually found among Indian politicians in power. This has, of course, primarily served to keep its voters on the hook. But it has also brought into its fold an array of professionals in search of an opportunity to reform public life and make a contribution to better development.

AAP's big successes have been in Delhi. It has failed to make significant inroads in other states. But its image as a clean and forward-looking party has also come to increasingly resonate with people elsewhere in the country. In the Delhi election AAP was seen as an antidote to the BJP's communal agenda, hate speeches and muscular governance, which sought to stifle any form of dissent. The AAP victory that followed was closely watched and widely celebrated by growing numbers of people fearful of democracy being in danger.

AAP went to the electorate in Delhi asking to be judged on the basis of its performance over the past five years. It could do so because of a reputation assiduously built to win popular support. At the party level it had determinedly remained in touch with its voters. In government it unleashed a host of freebies and policy innovations to make itself irresistible.

The owner of a cyber café near our office at South Extension in south Delhi tells us the local MLA is always on hand, just a call away. Go to him with a problem and he will solve it.

Similarly, in Greater Kailash, a constituency in which you would expect the BJP to be popular among the upper classes, the MLA from AAP has a serious fan following because he at least listens and is approachable even if he can't get every problem resolved.

Next door, in Malaviya Nagar, the MLA was dogged by controversies in the early part of his term, but when it came to re-election he was once again the popular choice because he had made himself available to residents right through his term.

In areas like Burari, an extremely poor part of the city in the northwest, it is a big thing when piped water turns up and sewer lines get laid. In slum after slum it is much the same story. Where improvements have not come people believe that they will with AAP around.

Both the middle class and the poor have voted for AAP. But AAP's appeal is strongest among the poor, who constitute a third of the city. Long denied basic amenities and at the mercy of local mafias, the poor believe AAP is their ticket to empowerment and better standards of living.

As a party, AAP's great strength has been in being able to combine higher skills and expertise with grassroots politics in ways that make people feel their lives are changing for the better.

An entrepreneurship programme in schools, to reinvent the way the young see employment, has been devised and implemented by professionals who work with AAP in the spirit of serving a larger good.

At Rajokri, in the southwest on the border with Gurugram, a pond, which had become a receptacle for sewage and garbage from nearby homes, has been transformed into a water body and a natural sewage treatment plant. Residents can now sit out at the spot when earlier they would stay away from it.

In east Delhi, a similar initiative is underway. A start-up has been commissioned to innovatively use technology to process sewage flowing from homes into open drains to rid it of heavy metals and other contaminants before putting it back into the ground to recharge aquifers.

Much of AAP's work in the five years that it has been in power has been imbued with the spirit of activism. Its ideas have been new and refreshing, compelling people to see the difference between the young party and established ones like the BJP.

While the bigger initiatives like free bus rides for women, cheaper power and Mohalla Clinics have made headlines, several other measures which benefit people and show them that the government is working for them have been below the radar of the media and observers. They have paid dividends during the elections.



Citizens of Delhi turned up in large numbers



Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia wave to enthusiastic crowds at the swearing-in at the Ramliya Ground



AAP's iconic symbol, the broom



Children came dressed up as Arvind Kejriwal



People who had served the city were specially invited

A CULTURE SHIFT: Parties in power tend to yield to the enticements of office. By all accounts, it hasn't happened in AAP. Its strength continues to come from its volunteers and their enthusiasm. But certainly its top leaders have become shrewder in their political moves as can be seen in how they tied the BJP up in knots during the recent elections.

When we meet Manish Sisodia in his office, he is in jeans and sneakers. He has none of the accoutrements of being the deputy chief minister. The same is true of Arvind Kejriwal despite the power he wields as chief minister and the enormous celebrity status that is bestowed on him.

Their simple personal styles are a powerful statement of what the party stands for. Both Sisodia and Kejriwal share a past in social activism. Most famously they were part of a much larger campaign for a right to information law. Then came the anti-corruption movement with Anna Hazare at the helm, which finally launched them in politics.

But much earlier, Kejriwal, through Parivartan, an NGO he headed, campaigned to get people their rations in Delhi, holding public hearing after public hearing to expose corruption at ration shops. He

once set up a table outside the passport office to counter the sway touts had over passport applications.

LOCAL ISSUES: Street-level experience as activists has held Kejriwal and Sisodia in good stead. Their understanding of local issues runs deep and dates back to the years when they struggled against daunting odds to take on entrenched local interests.

As Kejriwal's NGO became part of the right to information campaign, public hearings were held to make contractors accountable for municipal works and assets.

We, at *Civil Society*, covered several of these public hearings, mostly in remote corners of the city. By encouraging people to speak up about the quality of road repairs or the replacement of hand-pumps or why rations hadn't been distributed, damning locality-level information became available on development and services in Delhi.

For instance, a public hearing in Sundernagari in December 2002 revealed: "In eight cases of road construction analysed, against the two layers of stone aggregate that was reportedly put (and paid for) before the bitumen mix was laid, according to

the residents, only one layer of stone aggregate was put in six cases and not even one layer was put in the remaining two cases."

This experience is the foundation on which AAP's policies and programmes are shaped. They also define AAP in a way that attracts people of all ages and classes who are fed up with the established parties and politicians who lack the vision and determination to bring meaningful change.

A ONE-MAN SHOW?: Critics of Kejriwal accuse him of overvaulting ambition. It is said he used fellow travellers in groups like the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) to build a political career for himself. To many his grip on AAP is a matter of concern. He is seen as building a personality cult as opposed to a democratic party. It hasn't been forgotten that co-founders of AAP like Yogendra Yadav, Prashant Bhushan and Shanti Bhushan were summarily thrown out of the party.

Kejriwal's strategic references to himself as being a good Hindu and saying that the party's victory had the blessings of Hanuman have been criticized.

Nevertheless, Muslims and other minorities voted overwhelmingly for AAP and there seems little doubt about the party's secular credentials.

AAP's freebies for water and power are also criticized. They are seen as mere ploys for retaining power. In the long term they would almost certainly be unsustainable. Where would the money come from? While good for bringing in votes, they shouldn't be confused with long-term development strategies.

The critics say that the AAP government is confusing populism with governance. For instance, its record in complex tasks like curbing pollution and augmenting bus fleets has fallen far short of expectations.

Nevertheless, building a new party hasn't been easy. Electoral politics is a minefield. Kejriwal has shown that he has the ability to negotiate the minefield and survive on his own terms. AAP has had to use every stratagem available to it to survive. But it has stuck to decency. Going forward it will have to review many of its populist initiatives. But for now, AAP has the luxury of basking in the success of its electoral triumph. ■

Delhi's David vs Goliath fight



VEGETABLE vendors are a good dipstick for gauging the pre-election political mood in a metropolis like New Delhi. Their roots are semi-rural and the family links to a village close by remain. They deal on a daily basis with the semi-urban occupants of the wholesale market situated on the edges of the city. Their clientele is very urban, very middle class and metropolitan, especially in South Delhi. I have always questioned the cart-pushing vegetable vendors in our locality to get a feel of the political mood in the city. Last week my vendor surprised me.

"Last time I voted for *jhaadu*," he confessed, "but this time I think I will vote for *kamal*." I asked him why he had changed his preference. He paused for a while and, avoiding eye contact, replied: "Only Bhajpa can stand up to those Muslims at Shaheen Bagh."

For once that dipstick failed to provide an accurate measure of the electoral mood. In the event, the elections to the Delhi State assembly became a David vs Goliath battle. Despite the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) touching a new low in its campaign of communalized nationalism, calling the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader a 'terrorist', Arvind Kejriwal once again came out on top, walking a fine line focusing on delivery and development without yielding space on nationalism.

The AAP has remained a grouping of do-gooders led by an ambitious activist, while the BJP in Delhi has emerged as the richest political corporation led by domineering leaders with an enormous appetite for power and virtually no agenda to speak of and no record to show off. That the AAP defeated the BJP in February 2015 months after Narendra Modi's historic victory did raise eyebrows. But the fact is that it was the BJP that rode to power in May 2014 on an anti-corruption wave created by AAP. While the BJP lost its way, not delivering enough on development and resorting to sectarian nationalism to retain support, AAP remained focused on its work.

While AAP kept the focus of its campaign on performance, the BJP sought to keep the focus on sectarian and communal insecurities and grievances of the majority and minority communities. This is a worrying turn in national politics. In Delhi it also pointed to the fact that the state BJP has little to commend itself to Delhi's voters. Even today the "development CM" of Delhi remains Sheila Dikshit.

Arvind Kejriwal has emerged as the face of a more caring local government. The BJP is neither seen as pro-development nor pro-welfare in Delhi. It has come to be viewed merely as pro-Hindu.

It is interesting to note that middle class Delhi has largely voted for AAP. Localities like New Delhi and South Delhi voted overwhelmingly for AAP, while West Delhi voted largely for BJP. This, in itself, is an interesting pattern since New Delhi and South Delhi are more cosmopolitan in their demographic composition and so would better reflect a more national mood.

The importance of AAP politics lies in the empowerment of civil society. I have been witness to the manner in which some AAP activists have tried to engage Delhi's civil society by focusing attention on government schools, *Mohalla* Clinics, civic services and the like. While there is, without doubt, an element of populism in Kejriwal's politics and policies, using subsidies to win favour, the bottomline in AAP politics is civic engagement and public decency.



Picture by Shrey Gupta

NEW NATIONAL TREND: Interestingly, the voters of Delhi had made a distinction as early as in 2015 that many other states have since come to imitate and this has begun to define national politics. They voted a national alternative to the Congress party to power in the Lok Sabha elections, but voted for a credible local alternative in provincial elections. That outcome of Delhi 2014-15 was repeated in several state assembly elections in the last two years. As a consequence, the BJP secured an overwhelming verdict in its favour in the Lok Sabha elections of May 2019, but in most elections to state legislatures in 2018-20 it yielded ground to regional parties or regional leaders of the Congress party.

AAP's leader, Arvind Kejriwal, campaigned as "Delhi *ka ladka*", remaining equivocal on the citizenship issue. It is the 'local' credentials of regional parties and of regional leaders of national parties, like a Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh, that has created a distinct new political pattern that could have implications for the next Lok Sabha elections.

This new pattern has facilitated BJP dominance at the Centre at the expense of the Congress party, while opening space for regional parties in states. Even when a national party like the BJP won in Uttar Pradesh it was forced to acknowledge the contribution of its 'regional' leader, Yogi Adityanath. If the UP victory of 2017 was in part a contribution of Yogi Adityanath to the BJP, the credit for BJP victories in Assam and a clutch of other smaller states should also go to local leaders.

The biggest national loser in this pattern would be the Congress party because at the state level it empowers local leaders, like a Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh and a Bhupesh Baghel in Chhattisgarh, but at the national level these regional victories mean little if the Congress's national leaders remain incapable of countering Narendra Modi. Going forward, the Congress party will have to find ways in which it can help regional leaders opposing the BJP, like Mamata Banerjee, to become the fulcrum around whom a national alternative to the BJP can emerge. It is now clear that the Nehru-Gandhi family can no longer lead a non-BJP alliance back to power. The field is wide open for a new leader of a non-BJP front.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY: The last Lok Sabha result followed by recent state assembly verdicts have an important message for policymaking at the national level. The electorate is willing to continue offering support to Narendra Modi at the Centre, but would want him to learn to function in a cooperative manner with state-level leaders across the country. Modi has spoken eloquently about 'cooperative federalism' but he has weakened the institutions of federal governance including the Planning Commission, the central bank, the National Development Council (NDC) and the Finance Commission, and so on. The Planning Commission performed an important role in federal governance that its weaker substitute, the NITI Aayog, cannot play. The NDC hardly ever meets. The Reserve Bank of India and the Finance Commission have taken decisions that have hurt states.

This phase of non-cooperative federalism will have to end. The electorate certainly would want that. Which is why, after voting Modi back to power in Delhi, they have been voting Modi-baiters to power in the states. For the next four years Modi will remain prime minister while a majority of chief ministers will be from non-BJP parties. AAP's impressive victory in Delhi will certainly shape the manner in which both Prime Minister Modi and several powerful state chief ministers will deal with each other as they strategize for 2024. If the Delhi result weakens the hardliners in the BJP, discourages the pursuit of the politics of hate and encourages Modi to focus on development, it would have had a positive outcome for the country as a whole. ■

Sanjaya Baru is a writer and Distinguished Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis in New Delhi.



WATER CAN HELP FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

Sukhna lake is now a wetland

Pictures by Raj Machhan



Sukhna is an artificial rain-fed lake of three square kilometres

Raj Machhan
Chandigarh

THE idyllic Sukhna lake in Chandigarh was created by Le Corbusier, architect of the city, as a spot which residents could turn to for quietude and solace in body, mind and spirit. The lake is dear to people's hearts and numerous 'Save Sukhna' drives have been carried out from time to time by ordinary people.

"I have never missed my morning walk at the lake, apart from rainy days or when I am out of town. It is an integral part of people's lives in the city," says Amandeep Singh, a businessman and resident of Chandigarh.

The lake is now being declared a wetland in accordance with the Government of India's (GoI) Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 under the Environment (Protection) Act.

"The wetland status will majorly boost conservation of the Sukhna lake ecosystem as it puts in place specific rules formulated by the GoI," says Debendra Dalai, chief conservator of forests and director, environment. The 2017 rules empower the states and Union Territories to identify, notify and monitor wetlands within their jurisdiction.

However, people living in villages near the lake are uneasy about its newly acquired status. They point out that the administration is not heeding any of their concerns over sewage inflow, construction activities and the size of the wetland.

The decision to declare Sukhna a wetland was taken in July 2019 by the Chandigarh Wetlands Authority. A notification was issued by the law department in October. After inviting suggestions from citizens, relevant regulations will be implemented.

Sukhna is an artificial rain-fed lake of three square kilometres with a catchment area of 42 sq. km. The lake was constructed in 1958 as a recreational water body for the newly created city of Chandigarh, which lies at the foot of the Shivalik hills. It was formed by creating bunds 12 feet high



Debendra Dalai

across the Sukhna choe, a seasonal stream flowing from the hills.

Due to the loose soil strata of the Shivaliks, heavy siltation during the rainy season has threatened the existence of the lake from the very beginning. Water levels in the lake have at times plunged very low, with large swathes going totally dry during years of low rainfall. For instance, in 2016, the area under water reduced to a mere 1.3 sq. km owing to lack of rain. The maximum water level in Sukhna is maintained at 1,163 feet. Excess water beyond this limit is drained into the Ghaggar river.

In the early 1980s, the UT (Union Territory) administration took steps to arrest soil erosion by acquiring the catchment area of the lake. "Soil conservation was taken up and plantation was done on a massive scale. The administration constructed bunds, check dams, and other structures to check siltation," Dalai says. In 1998, 26 sq. km of the catchment area were notified and declared the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary.

In 1988 too, the lake was deemed a wetland. "But at that time we did not have the rules. Those were listed only in 2017 and are much more effective. The lake's new status will help promote biodiversity, recharge groundwater levels and strengthen local ecology," he adds.

Apart from siltation, the Sukhna catchment area has also been plagued by human infringement, especially illegal construction, encroachment and pollution caused by untreated sewage flowing into the Sukhna choe through seasonal rivulets. The matter gets complicated further as part of the catchment area falls in Punjab (10.2 sq. km) and part in Haryana (2.7 sq. km).

The wetland status will address these issues to some extent. It will lead to a ban on any permanent construction within a specified distance of the lake. Encroachments will be strictly prohibited, and so will setting up of industries or expansion of existing industries. The rules ban manufacturing, handling, storage, or disposal of construction waste as notified under the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016.

It will also become mandatory for the authorities to monitor and prohibit solid waste dumping, electronic ware and effluents from towns, cities, villages and other human settlements as well as effluents from industries. Hazardous substances, as listed under various government rules, are also prohibited from being dumped.

Dalai is particularly impressed with the involvement of citizens in the preservation of the lake over the years. "We are doing our work, but it is the involvement of citizens that has helped in maintaining the lake," he said. Friends of Sukhna, a citizens' initiative promoted by the government, keeps a keen watch over activities around the lake. It is a sterling example of public involvement.

"We want to protect the lake, but the government is not responsive to our needs. The officials came here once and gave us a lecture about the importance of protecting Sukhna lake, but did not really address our issues," says Ramkaran, a resident of Kaimbwala, a village near the lake.

The village *lambardar* (headman), Suresh Kumar, sounded equally pessimistic. "We do not know for sure how giving the lake the status of a wetland is going to affect our lives. But our houses and all new construction that we undertake will be under threat after this," he says. The villagers are also unsure about the area which will be covered under the wetland. "As per the UT administration, we have been given to understand that 1.5 km around the lake comes under wetland protection rules. But the Punjab government cited only 100 metres," says Kumar.

Kaimbwala villagers say that sewage has been flowing into the lake for a long time. "It comes mainly from Kansal village in Punjab, and Suketri in Haryana. The UT administration is not recognizing this fact," says Sher Singh.

"We are farmers. We own land here. We do not earn much. Sukhna lake is like our mother. We want to save it but the administration is not listening to us," says Suresh Kumar. ■

Govt tightens rules for NGOs, again

Kavita Charanji
New Delhi

NON-profits will now have to undergo the process of registration every five years under changes proposed in the Finance Bill 2020. If they fail, for some reason, to register, they stand to lose tax exemptions that they have been so far entitled to.

Representatives of 100 non-profits met on February 13 at the Indian Social Institute in Delhi to discuss the implications of such changes in the Finance Bill 2020 and to Sections 12A, 12AA, 10(23C) and 80G of the Income Tax (IT) Act.

They were deeply upset. "The intent is clearly to stifle dissent and control the sector. Such regulations will enable those who conform to stay in business while those who don't can close up and go home," said Dr Amita Joseph, director of Business & Community Foundation who was one of the organizers of the meeting.

As it is, the Union government has been repeatedly changing the rules under which non-profits raise funds. The FCRA (Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act) licences of 4,872 NGOs, including Greenpeace, were cancelled some years ago after they did not file their returns.

The immediate concern of non-profits is the question of registration. Under the new rules that come into effect on June 1, the registration of NGOs under various sections of the IT Act will be valid for a mere five years. They will then have to reapply for fresh registration. Not just that, they have to apply for re-registration within three months from June 1 when the Bill comes into effect.

This spells big trouble for NGOs that are already registered under Section 12A or 12AA of the IT Act under which they get tax exemptions. Under Section 80G, a tax-paying donor can claim tax



Representatives of non-profits at the meeting

Three million NGOs will have to apply for re-registration within three months from June 1 when the Bill comes into effect.

deductions for donations to a registered non-profit. Section 12A and Section 80G were clearly meant to encourage the growth of the development sector. But successive governments have viewed them with suspicion.

People at the meeting wondered whether a slow-moving bureaucracy would be able to handle the convoluted exercise of registration and re-registration efficiently and correctly. Or whether short-staffed smaller NGOs would be able to cope with the complex procedures involved.

"This year's Budget is proposing very infeasible approaches. All three million NGOs are supposed to get re-registered within three months. Now there is no way the government can do that in three years, let alone three months. So basically what it means is that if you haven't renewed your registration within that period the applicable validity of Sections 12A and 80G is gone," says Dr Ashok Khosla, founder and chairman of Development Alternatives.

Should, for some reason, an NGO lose this validity, its assets become taxable at the rate of 30

percent of the market value. "I clearly see it as an attempt to muzzle the sector, to bring it into line," says Khosla.

It is time for the NGO sector to shed its reactive mentality and take a more proactive approach to deal with such burning issues, said many of the participants.

Among the subjects that came up was the importance of collective work on building a positive narrative for NGOs, taking their concerns on the recent regulations to the finance minister, MPs and other stakeholders. This could be in the form of signed petitions which would be used individually and through NGO networks.

The importance of collecting data and evidence, and doing thorough research was also among the strategies discussed. "We will have to counter legal issues with evidence. It is not just a question of the survival of the sector is at stake," says Anshu Gupta, founder-director of Goonj.

Ultimately, said Amitabh Behar, CEO of Oxfam India, the discussion proved productive. The question of framing a well thought-out response to the changes proposed, the presentation of the response, the need for advocacy and the need to rationalize the regulatory framework of the NGO sector elicited good responses from participants.

They also stressed the need to reach out to the media to get visibility for the sector and, finally, build a strong narrative that civil society is critical for India and Indian democracy and needs to be valued and nurtured. ■

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With dream dam farmers show what is possible

Shree Padre
Vittal (Karnataka)

A check dam built by farmers across the Kodungai river has caught the attention of government officials and farmers living nearby. The dam is five kilometres from Vittal town in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka. Drive 75 minutes from Mangaluru and you will arrive at the site.

Why is this check dam in the spotlight? Here's the reason: the government built two check dams on the Kodungai and spent around ₹1 to 1.25 crore on each. A group of farmers, further down the river, built this check dam for just ₹18 lakh.

The government's check dams are only about 120 feet wide. The farmers' one is 165 feet in width.

None of the farmers had any theoretical or practical knowledge of constructing such a check dam, though two members of their core team, Pidamale Govindaprasad and Rajaram Balipaguli, are also qualified mechanical engineers.

"We didn't have a ready model to follow for this huge check dam," admits Govindaprasad. "A cousin supported me morally. Shrikantha Padaru, a fellow farmer who wasn't even a beneficiary, gave us ₹20,000 and wished us luck. My mother gave me full moral support. She said constructing such a check dam is equal to constructing a temple."

After word spread of the check dam built by farmers, a team of government officers from neighbouring Kasaragod arrived to see it.

"This is proof that cost-effective models can be very practical. The difference in government estimates and the cost incurred by locals for the same structure is amazing. Unfortunately, such people's initiatives don't come to the notice of the government," remarked E.P. Rajmohan, special officer, Kasaragod Development Package (KDP), who headed the team which included engineers from the minor irrigation department and soil experts.

KDP is a state government agency. Its mandate is to speed up the development of Kasaragod district.

The farmers' check dam is an innovative one. It has been positioned just under an old, abandoned bridge. Big galvanized iron sheets are used as shutters to close the vents in this vented dam. It was commissioned in December. Farmers designed it themselves and completed construction in just eight months.

INITIAL ATTEMPTS: Why did farmers do the government's job? Actually, they had constructed a temporary check dam across the Kodungai every year for the past five years. This too was an innovative check dam, locally called a *katta*.

At the end of summer, the farmers would dig a trench across the riverbed. A long plastic sheet would be attached to this trench and kept rolled up. During the monsoon, floodwater would flow above this roll. After the flow receded, using a polkline (hydraulic excavator), a huge bund made of sand would be raised slightly behind the roll. The plastic roll would cover this bund from the inner side to check water seepage.

This temporary check dam would stock an extremely large quantity of water. But the problem was its stability. With water rising in the adjoining government check dam, the farmers found their sand bund would begin to loosen.

"We had been constructing this sand and plastic sheet check dam for the past five years. Except for one year, it was breached every year," says Govindaprasad.

This temporary check dam used to cost the farmers around ₹50,000 to 60,000. When it ruptured they would spend an equal amount to repair it. Since the dam



A crane on the bridge placing the shutters on the dam



The Kodungai river



The abandoned bridge was creatively used



Palligedde Narayana Bhat, Rajaram Balipaguli, Pidamale Govindaprasad and Dr Rameshchandra

The farmers' check dam is an innovative one. It has been positioned just under an old, abandoned bridge. Farmers designed it and completed construction in 8 months.

collapsed almost every year, most recently in April, their loss was considerable.

"We realized our only solution was to construct a semi-permanent or a permanent check dam," say the farmers. But they didn't know how to go about it. The river is about 165 feet wide here. The farmers estimated that a vented dam in their area would cost around ₹1.5 crore.

Getting the government to construct one would be a slow and tough task, they mused. Could they build it on their own, they wondered. Impossible, said some. But the 'crazy idea' persisted.

Initially, they decided to construct an improved check dam using areca nut wood and a plastic sheet. But they soon realized that this too wouldn't be able to withstand the river's hydraulic pressure for long.

"Since the very beginning, Govindaprasad put in a lot of effort. It is his determination that took our dream forward," recalls Palligedde Narayana Bhat, another farmer who was in the forefront of the effort. A core team of five farmers was formed when Balipaguli's brothers, Ravishankar and Dr Rameshchandra, joined.

The team wanted a strong check dam but one that it could afford. They had no models that they could refer to. The team visited a few innovative check dams built by farmers nearby. Among them were Nitile Mahabaleshwara Bhat's concrete ring dam-cum-iron sheet check dam and an iron sheet check dam constructed by Aishwarya Earth Movers at Balnadu. Then they consulted a few local engineers.

But the farmers did not have the luxury of time. The monsoon was round the corner so they had to expedite matters. If the foundation of the check dam wasn't constructed before June, they would end up incurring losses and it wouldn't be possible for them to build their dam. So, in a week they readied their blueprint.

The design they finally opted for was this concrete vented dam with shutters made of galvanized iron (GI) sheets. The foundation and framework would be of concrete. The work was not given on contract. Labour was employed and supervised by the farmers themselves.

The old, unused bridge came as a blessing for the farmers. They built the dam so that its height almost touched the bottom of the bridge. Twenty-four pillars were constructed. GI sheets, nine feet in height and six feet in breadth, were bought. Grooves were made in the pillar to accommodate these shutters which had to be lowered from the top.

Each sheet weighed around half a tonne. It was not humanly possible to lift such heavy shutters and insert them into the grooves. The farmers' team found a solution. They hired a crane from Vittal and parked it on the bridge. It required just a few hours for the crane to carry out the shuttering.

"We have inserted rubber beadings in between the sheets and the grooves. Initially, they didn't get set and caused leakages. But once pressure from the water mounted, the beadings opened fully and checked the outflow," points out Balipaguli. A 120 gsm (grams per square metre) ultraviolet stabilized plastic sheet covered the inner side of the check dam, in the same way they had used a roll of plastic to cover the earlier *katta*.

voluntarily. Balipaguli and his brothers gave money for the GI sheets and related expenses. Govindaprasad, Narayana Bhat, Chanila Venkappayya and Kana Udaya also contributed. The final accounts have not been completely tallied but the ultimate figure is around ₹18 lakh, says Balipaguli.

Before the monsoon, the shutters have to be removed, painted and stored under a roof. The shutters should last for a decade, say the farmers. "Out of 24 sheets, there is no leakage in 15. Nine are leaking a bit. We have to address that next year," says Govindaprasad.

GOVERNMENT PRAISE: The media failed to take note of the check dam built by the farmers. But officials of the KDP did and they appreciated the effort. It could serve as a model, they felt.

"The self-help attitude of these farmers who did not wait for the government to make the dam, is really laudable," says Rajan D., executive engineer, minor irrigation, Kasaragod. "Although they don't have technical expertise, they constructed it at a low cost. But if they had consulted experienced engineers, they could have made the check dam still stronger. Now, if there is a flash flood, the crane has to be rolled out to take out the shutters. It would have been more convenient if the shutters could have been lifted manually. I liked their idea of using the abandoned bridge."

The check dam has also roused the interest of fellow farmers. "Word is slowly spreading that if the beneficiaries join hands they can construct small check dams themselves, if not bigger ones like this one," the farmers say with pride.

"We might not need to use our bore wells after a few more summer showers," says Balipaguli. "About 52 bore wells in the area are being irrigated by this check dam. Dependence on them has come down drastically, though. This check dam is truly like a temple." ■

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In JNU, a return to studies

Sidika Sehgal
New Delhi

THE road leading to Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is no longer lined with CRPF and police trucks. Only the university's security team stands guard at its north gate. Students who had left campus after the violence on January 5 are back and are studying. So it seems that JNU has somewhat returned to normal.

A contested hostel fee hike had led to a confrontation between students and the JNU administration. Students of both the Left and Right were united in opposing the hike. But then other differences between student unions led to clashes and reduced the campus to a conflict zone.

But students have also felt the need to move on and get back to academic life, putting the period of upheaval and violence behind them.

Classes for the previous semester have been held. By October 28, more than 75 percent of the semester's syllabus had been covered. With a few extra classes in January, professors have been able to cover 85 to 90 percent, a senior professor at the Centre of Social Medicine said. The remaining 10 percent will be covered in the coming semester.

"We set ourselves an easy schedule. Our professors reassured us that classes will be held so that we don't miss out on the previous semester," said Meghna Goel, a second-year master's student at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning (CESP).

At most centres, professors and students took decisions after talking to each other. Things were different at the Centre for Historical Studies (CHS). Students wanted a two-week buffer to hold classes and then prepare for exams. Classes and exams were wrapped up in a matter of five days instead.

The last term's exams, which were to be held in December, were conducted in the last week of January and the first week of February. "The teachers and students have enough experience and responsibility to conduct exams at short notice. We are willing to do everything that is required as long as we do it the proper way. We want to maintain standards. We don't want to conduct WhatsApp exams which the university was trying to do," said Professor Jayati Ghosh, chairperson of the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning.

But there have been aberrations. In December, at the School of International Studies (SIS), some professors conducted exams over WhatsApp and email. There were doubts about the validity of this exercise. A professor at SIS said, "In this internet world, how do you assess how genuinely a student has written an online exam? As a mode of examination WhatsApp and email is an absolute farce."



Students have felt the need to move on

By the first week of February, most centres had begun classes for the new semester. Having lost a month of teaching time in this semester, students and teachers cannot afford any more delays. Extra classes will be the way forward. There is also talk of extending this semester by two weeks to make up for lost time.

Professors are willing to give up their weekends to make sure their students don't lose out. They will be giving up time for their own research. "Teaching is our primary duty, although research is also important. We have to first do justice to our students. I don't see taking classes on Saturdays as something that will take away from my research time. Teaching and research are not compartmentalized for me," said a professor at the Centre of Social Medicine.

Despite these positive developments, the issue of the violence on January 5 remains unresolved. "We are still irked by the fact that nobody has been held accountable for the violence on January 5. Instead, Aishe (Ghosh) who was brutally attacked, has been targeted in the FIRs," said Ambika Subhash, a first-year master's student at CESP.

There is still fear and insecurity. "If I hear a loud sound at night, I still wake up with a start," said a student. Professors said that normalcy will not return to campus till the culprits of the violence are brought to book. They stress that the vice-chancellor needs to go.

Shreya Ghosh, a PhD student at the Centre for Political Studies, pointed out that while the court order has brought relief, the student community

feels that it is not fighting a single policy, like the fee hike, or a single person, like the vice-chancellor. "It is a system we are fighting."

Students at the university had been protesting against a hostel fee hike after the Inter Hall Administration passed a new hostel manual on October 28. Nearly 40 percent of JNU's students come from low-income homes and they feared the fee hike would force them to drop out. On January 24, the Delhi High Court passed an interim order instructing the administration to register students for the winter semester starting in January at the old hostel rates.

Students in JNU have welcomed the order. "It has brought some sort of relief. The negotiations were at a stalemate with both the administration and the Ministry of Human Resource Development," said Ashank Chandapillai, a postgraduate student at the Centre for Historical Studies.

But by January 24, around 90 percent of the students had already paid the higher fee rates and the court order covered only the 10 percent who hadn't registered. A student at the Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies said, "Although 90 percent of students registered with the hiked fee rates, it's not necessary that they paid it willingly. Many students borrowed money from their friends or relatives back home to pay the hiked fees. It was a very volatile and uncertain situation, so people thought they should register."

The order also didn't say anything on the removal of caste-based reservation in hostel allotment in the new hostel manual. These issues are to be heard on February 28. ■



Professor Jayati Ghosh

'We are willing to do everything that's required as long as we do it the proper way.'

Pictures by Shrey Gupta

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Picture by Lakshman Anand

A modern laboratory validates traditional Ayurveda drugs at I-AIM



Picture by Lakshman Anand

A Sanskrit scholar who catalogues and translates ancient medical manuscripts

FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE

A roadmap for integrating traditional and modern systems

BY DARSHAN SHANKAR



A FORMER FOREIGN minister of Singapore in search of a cure for his Parkinson's disease admitted himself to the hospital at the Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine (I-AIM) in Bengaluru. He had the typical Parkinson's symptoms of tremors, imbalance and problems with gait.

Of course, he had access to the world's best allopathic medical facilities. But he had turned to Ayurveda on the advice of friends when he had not found lasting relief in conventional treatment.

Two weeks later, he left Bengaluru significantly better. The tremors were less and his gait had improved. He also had an overall sense of wellbeing, which he had for a long time been missing.

What did the Ayurveda physicians do differently? Was it just the herbal medicines? Or was it Ayurveda's holistic approach that had worked by treating the body as a complex whole instead of narrowly focusing on symptoms?

In western medicine Parkinsonism is classified into two basic categories. Ayurveda, on the other hand, recognizes multiple sub-types, making it possible to treat each patient uniquely.

Ayurveda's approach is guided by a sophisticated scheme of classification that can interpret specific patterns of symptoms. Simple algorithms are used to design variable treatments employing standardized herbal drugs. Clinical results

from Ayurveda and yoga demonstrate much safer outcomes.

Ayurveda physicians have shown that through safe treatment and lifestyle changes they can slow down the progression of Parkinson's disease. But they cannot cure it because it is a neuro-degenerative disease.

In allopathy, treatment of Parkinson's relies on standard uniform medicines in increasing dosage. It is observed that when the treatment begins, the tremors reduce, but for further improvements higher dosages are administered and patients develop intense side-effects like involuntary movements.

Ayurveda, like other traditional systems of medicine, provides incremental but sustained results leading to a better quality of life. It is successful in dealing with non-communicable diseases — to Parkinson's can be added arthritis, strokes, muscular-skeletal disorders, asthma and even non-surgical cancer conditions.

Progressive Ayurveda hospitals like the one at I-AIM have been playing a useful role in building bridges between western and traditional medicine. They visualize a future integrative health science combining the best theories and practices from different health knowledge systems.

In order to communicate outcomes of treatments, I-AIM documents patients under both systems. This approach makes it possible to see where they vary and how they can complement each other.

Ayurveda's scheme of classification is more refined and makes it possible to distinguish between patients who are at different stages of a disease. Focused research can uncover objective biomarkers to demonstrate patient variability and thus refine management of a complex metabolic disease like Parkinson's.

The time for integrative public healthcare is undoubtedly now. The National Health Policy (NHP) of 2017 takes a big step forward by emphasizing the need for combining different systems though much more needs to be done to translate this policy into legislation, regulation and operational programmes.

There is a democratic need in public interest to give formal status to integrative healthcare. It is already common health-seeking behaviour for people to use more than one system of medicine, depending on the nature of the ailment. For surgery, emergencies and acute conditions, the first choice is western biomedicine but for chronic and common ailments, for wellness and prevention citizens choose from traditional systems of healthcare that are available in different cultures. The current barrier to integration is not from citizens but from professionals who are determined to protect their own turfs.

A big scientific reason for an integrated approach is the limitations of both the traditional and western systems. One needs the other. Under the molecular approach of modern science not enough is understood about the patient as a whole and the fact that one patient could be different from another. Traditional systems, on the other hand, could do with greater molecular validation of their complex and apparently intuitive methods of diagnosis and understanding of the human body.

Since Independence, India has created one of the world's largest structures for primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare. Even so, it is inadequate and far from universal in its reach. More than 70 percent of the population spends from its pocket on primary health and goes to a variety of practitioners. Second, there is a huge gap in the access and quality between rural and urban areas. Third, there is a rising incidence of non-communicable lifestyle diseases among the rich and poor alike for which conventional allopathic medicine does not have adequate answers.

It is in recognizing these realities, both scientific and social, that the NHP 2017 stipulates integrated healthcare. But before it can be implemented, legal and regulatory reforms are needed. The systems that govern medical education, research and services have to change.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK REFORM

India legally recognizes six systems of medicine — allopathy, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Swa-Rigpa, and homoeopathy with adjunct status to yoga and naturopathy. But in the absence of a unifying legal framework, the six systems function in silos with three different legal and regulatory bodies, two ministries at the centre and two different implementation machineries in the Union government and across states.

In Europe and the US, legally recognized health practitioners are encouraged to learn new medical skills from advancements in biomedicine or from any cultural source such as acupuncture, yoga and chiropractic services. With training and certification they are free to practise the new skill, on the strength of their original medical licence. Consumer laws ensure that the health practitioners are fully responsible and accountable and hence the new skills are applied with responsibility. It is necessary for Indian laws to move beyond narrow insecurity and at times public safety-inspired objections of cross-medical practice and in fact encourage health practitioners to learn new knowledge and skills and apply them with the fullest responsibility and accountability.

SYNERGY IS NEEDED

Two major medical councils regulate six recognized systems of healthcare with separate regulatory arrangements for each system and no mechanism for an interface across the councils.

How can integrative healthcare be achieved unless interfaces are developed between medical councils? A committee, appointed by the Union government and chaired by the late Prof Ranjit Roy Chaudhury, did initially recommend a single National Health Commission with sections for different systems of medicine. This recommendation was rejected.

Under the NHP 2017, the need today is for an Inter-Medical Systems Council, which can in phases usher in medical pluralism. NITI Aayog needs to take the initiative in making this happen.

MEDICAL EDUCATION

Integrative healthcare demands that bridges be built in medical education across different systems. How can this be done? The draft 2019 education policy by the Kasturirangan Committee has recommended that medical professionals redesign professional undergraduate and postgraduate medical education to include:

- Common foundational courses on medical pluralism at the undergraduate



Picture by Shrey Gupta

An Ayurveda clinic inside a government primary health centre in Delhi and (below) boards advertising Ayurveda and homeopathy facilities outside. Different systems are officially in use but lack the coordination that would make them more impactful



Picture by Shrey Gupta

There is a democratic need in public interest to give formal status to integrative healthcare. It is already common health-seeking behaviour for people to use more than one system of medicine depending on the nature of the ailment.

level for all the six streams of medical education.

- Core courses focused on specific systems (corresponding to the existing content of MBBS, BAMS and four other streams).
- Elective courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, which allow students to explore the bridging of systems.

This scheme can actually be implemented rightaway under the existing medical education system. All that it requires is a common foundation course and elective courses. The core programmes and medical degrees would, however, remain the same.

STATE-SPONSORED RESEARCH

India needs a national health research agenda. This agenda needs to be pursued by all medical streams. Outside the core agenda there ought to be scope for system-specific research priorities.

Today health research is conducted in silos. We have a Department for Health Research (DHR), the ICMR, and five research councils under the Ministry of



A dispensary for Ayurveda medicines



A comfortable and modern room at the I-AIM hospital

Today health research is conducted in silos with no collaborative ventures or synergy. Can this be changed to cut across medical systems and become the nodal point for developing a national research agenda?

AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) All these entities have different research goals with no mechanism for synergy and collaborative ventures.

Can the mandate of DHR be so expanded as to cut across the medical systems and become the nodal point for developing a national health research agenda? This agenda could be implemented by different systems of medicine based on their strengths.

MEDICAL SERVICES

The current design, structure and functioning of medical services are antithetical to a pluralistic paradigm. Medical services even under the NHM, which has a very progressive integrative healthcare delivery mandate, are delivered in silos.

Allopathic services have a separate ministry, relatively large budget (1.4 percent of GDP) and administrative machinery at the centre and in the states and up to district and sub-district levels.

Similarly, AYUSH health services have an independent ministry, a minuscule budget (less than three percent of the allopathic outlay) and much smaller administrative machinery at the centre and in the states.

For political reasons today the two ministries can perhaps not be merged but at the administrative level, common objectives and a formal interface can be developed.

While the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in 2005 initiated a programme framework for integrated healthcare, it has not succeeded in achieving integration for reasons primarily related to an inappropriate implementation framework.

Can a new implementation framework for NHM be crafted which will bring about administrative, functional and structural coordination of health services across different systems of medicine at both the centre and in the states? Each medical system has its own needs of competent human resources, drugs, therapeutic infrastructure and so on. The NHM will need to fulfil the needs of each system. Integrative health services are therefore a complex task. It can be executed in phases with agreed short-, medium- and long-term goals.

The mainstreaming of integrative healthcare will certainly enhance quality of health services available to the public. The first step in this direction is to objectively identify through expert consultation the medical and public health conditions that can competently and independently be served by different systems of medicine. For example, AYUSH systems are reportedly strong in the management of non-communicable diseases. An assessment of strengths and limitations has to be done carefully by genuine experts.

In this scheme of integrative healthcare, "clinical documentation" should be mandatory and designed to be robust. One need not, however, attempt at the very outset to compare which system has the better ability. The relative strengths and limitations will automatically be generated by clinical outcome data analysis over a period of time. Citizens can be allowed to choose the system they would like to be served by. Human resources, drugs and infrastructure need to be adequately provided to each system for optimal performance. Over a period of time complementary modalities and a mature system of cross-referrals will develop.

The idea of integrative health services based on co-location and co-posting was already initiated in 2005. It has not delivered because of a poor implementation framework. The problem is that the management of mainstream health services rests with the modern medicine administration. The present NHM and mainstream healthcare system are managed by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry. Integrative practice in this system will remain flawed because the ministry has no provision to provide adequate budgetary and human resources, or infrastructure support to AYUSH systems.

The management design of a system that wants to deliver integrative health services needs to be radically transformed and implies a merger of the administrative machinery and financial outlays of two ministries so that it provides for optimal support to all participating systems. This redesign of a management system that provides a level playing field to all systems is a complex task. It can, however, be resolved in phases.

A strange anomaly exists in the field of surgery. Modern medicine has a huge shortage of surgeons in India. At the same time there are several thousand postgraduate Ayurvedic surgeons trained each year. But these Ayurvedic surgeons are ignored as a surgical recourse even though the curriculum for MS

USEFUL PLANTS



Mucuna pruriens



Sida cordifolia



Alpinia galanga



Vasa



A herbal garden

(Ayurveda) is almost 90 percent common to that for MS (Allopathy).

Ayurveda surgeons with a three-year master's degree in surgery should in national interest be trained with the same rigour as allopathic surgeons. They should be deployed as surgeons in both the public and private sector. They should also be given the opportunity to specialize after their master's degree in various branches of surgery like cardiology, ophthalmology and oncology. It is narrow, competitive politics and a huge waste of national human knowledge resources, to restrict Ayurveda surgeons to performing surgical practice limited to the anal region only.

The genesis of global surgery is Ayurveda and even as early as 1500 BCE caesarians were performed by Ayurveda surgeons. British archival records document that as late as the 18th century, plastic surgery techniques spread from India to the west. If only for the reason of repayment of the historical debt to Ayurveda, surgery in Ayurveda deserves to be strengthened and brought on a par with modern surgery.

The NHP 2017 has articulated a futuristic and progressive idea of creating wellness services in the primary healthcare centres of the country. The task of creating functional wellness modules for the health system should be entrusted



Ayurvedic medicines have become over-the-counter formulations and are popular

The task of creating functional wellness modules for the health system should be entrusted to the AYUSH ministry. Dozens of reliable practices for prevention and wellness can be generated by AYUSH systems.

to the AYUSH ministry. Dozens of reliable practices for prevention and wellness can be generated by AYUSH systems. The simple AYUSH solution of storing drinking water in copper vessels can completely eradicate microbial contamination in drinking water in India and prevent water-borne diseases, particularly in children. This preventive practice for safe drinking water should be widely promoted.

Modules in therapeutic diet and lifestyle advice for non-communicable diseases should also be entrusted to AYUSH systems. Integration of yoga into all the three tiers of health services can enhance the health security of citizens.

A FOURTH TIER

Health sector reform in India has the opportunity to innovate by creating a fourth tier in the health system. In India non-institutional healthcare is a centuries-old tradition. We have around 200 million informed households with knowledge of local ecosystem-specific food resources and herbal remedies. Local communities have incredible knowledge of hundreds of local fruits, vegetables and animal foods and over 6,500 species of medicinal plants.

Furthermore, every cluster of villages from the trans-Himalayas to Kanyakumari has community-based healers with special skills in areas like bone-setting, birthing, treatment of jaundice and dealing with poisons. There are believed to be about one million such healers and they could be better employed through formal recognition.

NHP 2017 advises documentation, validation, certification of prior knowledge of these healers especially in tribal areas. This indeed is a revolutionary recommendation and can result in the creation of a fourth non-institutionalized, low-cost and self-sustaining tier in the health system in which the providers will be homes and community-based traditional health workers. This tier will require a fraction of the investment that goes into institutional healthcare and can cover 40 to 50 percent of primary health centre needs.

INSURANCE

Today the insurance sector, while providing adequate and cashless coverage to allopathic services both in the government and private sector, provides nil or marginal coverage for integrative and indigenous systems. This is a lacuna that needs to be urgently removed to promote a national regime on medical pluralism as part of the health sector reform agenda. ■

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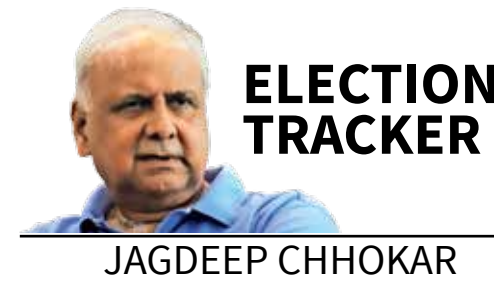


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Are you a citizen?



JAGDEEP CHHOKAR

CITIZENSHIP has been in the news for some time now and not necessarily for good reasons. The past month and a half seem to have made the focus on citizenship even sharper. The first place to look for what citizenship means should be the Constitution of India. And citizenship does find mention in Part II of the Constitution. This part begins with Article 5 which says:

“At the commencement of this Constitution, every person who has his domicile in the territory of India and—

- who was born in the territory of India; or
- either of whose parents was born in the territory of India; or
- who has been ordinarily resident in the territory of India for not less than five years immediately preceding such commencement, shall be a citizen of India.”

The next most important source is the Citizenship Act, 1955, which is described as “An Act to provide for the acquisition and determination of Indian citizenship”.

As can be seen, both the Constitution and the Citizenship Act describe how and who can become a citizen of India but none of them describes what a citizen is. The definition of a citizen from the Merriam-Webster dictionary is:

- an inhabitant of a city or town especially: one entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman
- a member of a state
- a native or naturalized person who owes allegiance to a government and is entitled to protection from it. “She was an American citizen but lived most of her life abroad.”
- a civilian as distinguished from a specialized servant of the state. “Soldiers were sent to protect the citizens.”

Wikipedia, on the other hand, says:

“Citizen is the status of a person recognized under the custom or law as being a legal member of a sovereign state or belonging to a nation. The idea of citizenship has been defined as the capacity of

individuals to defend their rights in front of the governmental authority.”

THE MISSING PIECE: All documents focus on how and who can become a citizen of India but are silent not only on what a citizen is but also on how one becomes a socially conscious “citizen”.

The documents listed above can and do make a person a “citizen of India” legally. But it is important to reflect on whether everyone granted the legal status of citizenship of India, is a “citizen” in the true spirit of what being a citizen implies. Again, a legal description of this can be found in the Constitution in Article 51-A which was added in 1976, 26 years after the Constitution was adopted. However, unlike

effective, we would not be apathetic and fatalistic. In addition, what if parents are themselves not aware, active and engaged citizens? Then we have a situation of “the blind leading the blind”. And what is taught in civics and social studies has been critiqued often and found inadequate, if not downright irrelevant.

Here is one critical assessment:

“In the various articulations on civics in the previous NCERT curriculums and textbooks, we can find the role of civics as one of ‘informing’ and developing ‘responsible citizens’, who will assist the state in its ‘efforts’ and will have ‘desirable attitudes and social behaviour’. This vocabulary is based on the belief that Indian citizens lack the qualities of being good citizens. It perceives people as irresponsible towards self and society and unable to fulfil their duties.”

EDUCATION GOALPOST: This leads to a re-evaluation of the purpose of education. There can be no disagreement that the basic purpose of education is to mould every child into a good human being. But what the current education system actually focuses on is preparing children for getting “good” jobs with the exclusion of almost everything else.

It may be useful to think of the purpose of education in three stages. The first stage should continue to be focused on making every child a “good” human being. Once that has been done, then, at the second stage the purpose should be to make these good human beings into aware, active and engaged citizens. These citizens would be capable of taking responsibility for the state of the



Our education system does not teach children to be good citizens

nation, and actually engage in purposeful activities that would make the country an inclusive, equitable, humane and powerful state.

Once there are good human beings and good citizens, then the third stage is the time to make them capable of being effective economic contributors to society, either by taking up jobs or becoming entrepreneurs, or becoming job-creators rather than job-seekers.

All three levels of education are, of course, a lifelong process. Different stages are mentioned as a framework to clarify the concept.

This is why there is a dire need to revamp the school curriculum to accord appropriate space to education for citizenship. ■

It is expected that we learn all this as we grow up, at home and in school. But then, if this learning was

education for citizenship. ■

This is why there is a dire need to revamp the school curriculum to accord appropriate space to education for citizenship. ■

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The end of anonymity



TECH TALES

KIRAN KARNIK

THE rhetorical 'don't-you-know-who-I-am' question, part of the armoury of the sons and daughters of Delhi VIPs when accosted for an infringement of rules, may soon be redundant. A quick photo clicked on his cell-phone will immediately tell the policeman who the offender is and whether a *challan* or a grovelling apology should follow.

Imagine another scenario. You walk into a large store and are greeted through a call on your mobile: "Good evening, Rahul. Welcome to Newage Superstore. We missed you in the last three weeks. You did spend 20 minutes with us on February 7, looking at shirts, and I am disappointed that we were not able to provide something that you liked. We are now stocked with a whole new range and I am sure you will find items of your choice. Incidentally, your ICICI Bank credit card will get you a 10 percent discount. Do let me know if I can help you with anything. Happy shopping!" After picking up two shirts, you lay them on the unmanned check-out counter. They are automatically packed in a minute; you pick up the bag and walk out.

In both cases, the secret is facial recognition technology. In the first, the photo from the policeman's mobile is, in a few short moments, matched with photos in a database (like Aadhaar). Other databases too can be accessed and, in a few minutes, the policeman would receive on his mobile the name, gender, age, previous offences, validity of driving licence, address and possibly even more details.

In the second, an image of the shopper taken as he enters the store can be used to access the same information and greet him by name. In addition, the store's own database will provide details of his last visit, what — if anything — was bought, and the time he spent in the store. All this data can be converted, through artificial intelligence, into an appropriate message and then conveyed through a robot using a synthesized voice, indistinguishable from a human one and capable of carrying out a simple conversation. As a further step, by profiling a very large number of customers and through AI and machine learning, the store can infer what you are most likely to buy and guide you towards that.

Finally, apart from automation that enables billing and packing, details from the face recognition software will provide information about your credit card and automatically debit it as you just walk out with your purchase.

Such applications and a myriad of other possibilities have been opened up by the rapid advances in facial recognition technology combined with similar progress in areas like machine learning, AI, robotics and data analytics. A person can now be identified, wherever they may be. No longer can you be anonymous, not even when you merge into a crowd. In fact, the concept of a crowd is dead; it is now an agglomeration of identifiable individuals, each of whom can be specifically identified even when amidst dozens of others. Aiding this is the huge proliferation of CCTV cameras, especially in urban areas. Delhi, for example, already has 150,000 and an equal number is additionally being installed.



Picture by Ajit Krishna

No longer can you be anonymous, not even when you merge into a crowd. The concept of a crowd is dead.

This is amongst the steps being taken to make the city safer, especially for women. Every building complex, every gated community too has its own set of CCTV cameras. Practically no space is any longer private. Yet, paradoxically, the clamour about privacy and the consciousness of safeguarding it has increased.

Governments around the world are justifying the creation of databases on the grounds of security, and this charge is being led by the votaries of freedom. London, capital of a country long known as the bastion of democracy, and one in which the

introduction of a national ID card was resisted on grounds of infringing privacy, is reportedly the city with the highest density of CCTV cameras. Snooping on its own citizens and others, it can use facial recognition technology to locate and track any individual. Snowden and others have revealed how the US security agencies have been spying not only on their own citizens, but also foreign leaders. In India, CCTV cameras and facial recognition technology have been used to identify and catch criminals — but we do not know if they are also being used for other purposes. As the technological tools become more sophisticated and more easily available, governments and organizations around the world are quickly adopting them.

Combining databases, each possibly created for a specific and distinct purpose, can reveal practically all details about an individual. The socially beneficial uses of such integrated databases and of data analytics is to detect fraud, catch criminals or track terrorists. However, these same technologies and databases can be used to identify and track dissenters, blackmail people, infringe on their privacy, or even to hack into their bank accounts or otherwise defraud them.

The fears are not merely about Big Brother authoritarian governments; equally, they are about large dominant private sector corporations, with no public accountability. Already, some of the latter have more data about the citizens of a country than the respective government. This, it is argued on their behalf, enables them to provide better services and products to their customers. However, it is clear that in the near future, access to such data will greatly facilitate

persuasion (to buy certain products/services) and may soon progress to behaviour manipulation. Mega corporations that wield more power than governments may no longer be figments of leftist imaginations.

In India, a Bill to protect personal data has been introduced in Parliament. This may, despite some drawbacks, provide individuals some privacy from the prying eyes and ears of companies. However, similar protection is missing vis-à-vis government agencies.

Are we ready to move into a no-privacy world? Do we need to already regulate facial recognition technology as suggested by the CEO of Google? Are security and individual privacy orthogonal and conflicting aspirations? It is, indeed, time for an informed and vigorous debate on these and related questions. ■

Dr Kiran Karnik is an independent strategy and public policy analyst. His recent books include *Evolution: Decoding India's Disruptive Tech Story* (2018) and *Crooked Minds: Creating an Innovative Society* (2016).

On foot in rural India



VILLAGE VOICES

R. BALASUBRAMANIAM

IT was 12 years ago, in 2008, that I set out on a walk across rural Karnataka. Spread over 30 days, the walk covered 420 km and we passed through 120 villages located in five districts of Karnataka. I had worked over 20 years till then in remote tribal and rural locations, and found myself wrestling with the question of what development is and whose development I was engaging in.

Struggling to seek answers, I decided that this walk would help me reconnect and re-engage with India's rural realities and possibly help me find answers. My message, 'information is power', helped me meet and interact with over 200,000 people and spread awareness of using the Right to Information (RTI) Act to fight corruption in public life. I could not resolve all my internal dilemmas, but the walk surely helped me frame the changing context of rural India and how the post-economic liberalization phase was affecting it.

If the 2008 walk was an opportunity to appreciate what rural development meant to people living in villages, the walk I undertook in December 2019 was one of reflection and self-discovery. Walking with like-minded people, sharing a similar personal quest, we covered 160 km over seven days through the villages abutting the city of Mysuru. This walk was an attempt to connect the external context with our own internal aspirations and needs.

This journey of inner reflection and immersive learning that each person experienced was a personal process. But what stood out were the changing realities of rural India. It opened our minds to the current crisis that peri-urban villages are facing and furthered our understanding of the complexity of the challenges ahead. The vulgar evidence of the rural-urban divide was not merely economic. The pressure on social structures, the shifting cultural narratives, the challenge of coping with newer demands on people's value systems and the realistic need to alter one's behaviour driven by urban trends were significantly visible.

Kaliah was close to tears as he narrated how he had sold his land a decade ago to a young techie from Bengaluru at a price that was far higher than what was prevailing then. He explained how he thought he had struck a good bargain only to soon realize that he could never put a value on what the land truly meant to him. Now that the money was long gone and the land was no longer his, he understood how powerful ownership sentiments were and how empty his existence had become. Every morning, waking up and seeing the fallow

land that was once green due to his effort reminded him of the folly of what he had done. From being the master of his own destiny (however unattractive it seemed at the time) to searching for a source of livelihood with skills that were becoming irrelevant each passing day only served to leave him depressed and moody.

As we walked farther away from the city and closer to the villages, one could see the palpable difference in the way people conversed with us. If we were greeted with indifference and suspicion closer to Mysuru, it was compassion, genuine concern for our welfare and an unexplainable warmth that awaited us farther off. From the mothering we received from innumerable women to the several glasses of buttermilk and lemon juice that we were offered, it was evident that people were more concerned about our walking in the hot sun than their own welfare.



The author (right) during his yatra

While I had expected to see a lot of changes in the nearly dozen years between the two walks, I was not prepared for the problems that urbanization and industrialization were throwing up. It is one thing to talk about growing inequities but completely another to see it emerge in front of your eyes. While laws can ensure that fair compensation is given for lands acquired for creating industries, one can never truly appreciate what structured jobs can do to a farmer and his family unused to the demands of an industrial working climate.

Several families could now speak of their sons or daughters being employed in the nearby factory and reaping the benefits of a stable income. What was unspoken were the pressures of balancing social tensions that were emerging within and between families. There were still several households dependent on the vagaries of nature and on income from agriculture that was available only after the annual harvest, and the contrast was stark.

The dance of inequities was not merely financial. A deeper socio-cultural divide was emerging. From the clothes that one wore to the food that one ate to the mobile phone one used, to the topic of conversation at the corner tea shop — everything seemed deeply influenced by the urban context and lifestyle.

What was evident was the consumerist pressures

of urban living and its impact on the entire village. Whether it is the growing mounds of plastic, or the use of processed foods, or the shift in the levels and varieties of alcohol consumption, the emerging trends of urbanization and the shift of outlook from the 'collective' to the 'individual' were very stark.

The paradox was that much-touted urban amenities were never on the horizon. While the villages were dotted with RO filtration units supplying drinking water, we were privy to scenes of open defecation along more than 60 km of the roads we walked on. The claims of India now being open defecation-free are clearly miles away from the reality that we were witness to in villages as close as 20 km to Mysuru.

What greeted us as we set out each morning was the daily movement of people towards Mysuru looking for jobs — whether in the construction or housekeeping sectors. Despite current claims of skilling, we will have to come to terms with the fact that little or no investments were made in India's villages over the past 20 to 30 years in preparing our youth for the jobs that exist today.

The reality of our economy being urban-centric and driven by STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) education leaves only menial and janitorial jobs for India's rural youth. Apart from the visible frustration, what is not spoken about is the growing numbers of people with consequential mental health issues. The powerful signals of aspiration and lifestyle that our urban existence throws up may be dazzling in the short term, but aspiration can lead to enormous frustration once you learn that your skills are inadequate and your dreams have no basis for fulfilment and you have to compete in a world for which you are not fully prepared.

While the experience of sharing and caring that we received still reflects the spirit of '*Atithi devo bhava*' (Guest is God), one needs to be concerned over the gradual erosion of social bonding and social capital in India's villages. While one cannot escape growing urbanization, what one needs to understand is that it is time for us to move away from our traditional views of villages and rural development.

Villages no longer fit the Gandhian dream of self-reliance nor is it any longer pragmatic in a highly networked economy dependent on urban production and consumption. It is also time to move away from the standard stereotype of viewing our villages as mere farmlands and seeing our rural brethren as people dependent on the largesse of the state or NGOs.

Government rural development programmes need to be redefined from a spatial approach and undertaken in the context of a *gram panchayat* as a unit of reference. More important, this walk helped us understand that rural development has to be contextually relevant and culturally appropriate for it to be truly meaningful and sustainable. ■

Dr R. Balasubramaniam, founder of the Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement, Mysuru, is a development activist and author. www.drbalu.com

Water on my plate



GREEN LIFE

SANJAY PRAKASH

I have always found it attractive to look at individualized solutions to global problems. After all, it makes much more sense if one can on oneself, without any coordination with anyone else, change the world! It also gives one a competitive advantage — for being part of the solution.

Indeed, all changes in the end are but individual changes. And before I go further, I must also credit the theory that individual changes or nudges, though necessary, are NOT going to be enough. Financial institutions, governments and businesses need to change the way they operate to change the world. But what better way to do that other than all individuals in governments and businesses changing these institutions from the inside?

When it came to my personal carbon footprint (readers can calculate theirs at www.footprintcalculator.org/), as an affluent resident of India, I had a high footprint. It would require some four Earths to sustain my lifestyle for everyone on Earth. But it wasn't as high as the average US citizen's whose carbon footprint is about five times mine!

However, energy, it can be argued, can be bought with money, and if you are concerned about renewable energy versus fossil fuels, the former too can be installed by increasingly investing in renewable energy so that one can hope to be net energy neutral in their energy footprint at some point in the future. This would still require some limits to the energy consumed by all individuals, but at least it is achievable.

With water it is different. And India is water-short. It is more water-stressed than energy-short. The primary reason is that we are a populous nation. According to research, our fresh water resource use can be factored as: 80 percent agriculture/livestock, 15 percent industrial, and 5 percent domestic (includes offices and schools).

If we take three-quarters of the 5 percent domestic consumption, and save even 25 percent of that by

bathing and washing more frugally, or by recycling, we end up saving just about one percent of our total national endowment. Only!

If, however, we address agriculture/livestock and change our food choices to make even a small dent in our demand for agricultural products, we can easily make an eight percent difference with even a 10 percent downward change in the water consumed for producing food that we eat.

So what would I need to do to make that difference? Turns out, it's not that hard to do.

Professor Arjen Y. Hoekstra, Twente Water Centre, University of Twente, the Netherlands, creator of the water footprint concept, introduced

Food Item	Unit	Global Average Water Footprint (litres)
Fruits and vegetables		
Lettuce	1 kg	130
Tomato	1 kg	180
Cabbage	1 kg	200
Cucumber or pumpkin	1 kg	240
Potato	1 kg	250
Orange	1 kg	460
Apple or pear	1 kg	700
Banana	1 kg	860
Peach or nectarine	1 kg	1,200
Mango	1 kg	1,600
Dates	1 kg	3,000
Grains		
Maize	1 kg	900
Bread (from wheat)	1 kg	1,300
Rice	1 kg	2,400
Beverages		
Tea	250 ml	30
Beer (from barley)	250 ml	75
Wine	125 ml	120
Coffee	125 ml	140
Milk (of cow)	250 ml	250
Non-vegetarian foods		
Chicken	1 kg	3,900
Pork	1 kg	4,800
Beef	1 kg	15,500
Others		
Sugar (from sugar cane)	1 kg	1,500
Groundnut (in shell)	1 kg	3,100
Olive	1 kg	4,400
Cheese	1 kg	5,000
Chocolate	1 kg	24,000

supply-chain thinking in water management. With the development of Water Footprint Assessment he laid the foundation of a new interdisciplinary research field, addressing the relationship between water management, consumption and trade.

And what were his findings? Though the concept is complex, since there are various qualities of water used in agriculture (Hoekstra called these "green, blue and grey water") he was nevertheless able to

arrive at a global average for most foods, and this is tabulated in ascending order of water footprint for various food categories.

WATER FOOTPRINT: You can see that vegetables and fruits (other than mangoes, nectarines and dates) consume less than 1,000 litres of water for putting one kg on your plate. This is unbelievably high, and explains why 80 percent of our national endowment is used in agriculture/livestock.

The next category is grains, where wheat is better than rice, but maize (and millets) are best, though still much higher than fruits and vegetables. As for beverages, tea is better than coffee, especially if un-sugared. Beer and wine are good. Milk has to be had in moderation to qualify as a low water footprint beverage.

Clearly, non-vegetarian foods have a very high water footprint! The redder the meat, the more water it consumes. It takes a whopping 15,500 litres of water to make 1 kg of beef! No wonder Americans are such huge water wasters, and this might also explain why India, an endemically water-short country, seems to have naturally gravitated towards an avoidance of beef, even though it creates unintended consequences.

For the record, sheep consumes 10,400 litres, and goat 5,500 litres for each kilo of food. The global average water footprint of a kg of chicken eggs is 3,300 litres, while the water footprint of a kg of cow milk amounts to 1,000 litres. It goes without saying that these non-vegetarian foods are also not great for our health. Nor are they considered essential in any sustainable future diet.

Quite predictably, the "other" foods are neither good for your health nor for water consumption: while sugar is the lowest in this category, it consumes almost as much water to make one kg of sugar as it does to grow one kg of mangoes! And the figures become alarmingly high for other condiments, with chocolate topping the table at 24,000 kg of water or one kg of chocolate!

But this brings me to the power that I had to control my water footprint. All that I needed to do, and it wasn't very difficult, was to become a vegetarian! I turned vegetarian in 2003, and remain largely so. I take it that I have probably reduced my water footprint by a factor of at least six percent (my share) of the national endowment. I didn't really have (much) beef before, but I have now given up mutton, chicken, sugar, and milk but not coffee and — some — chocolate, which I love as my guilty pleasure.

Voila! I have probably saved more fresh water (as a proportion of the national endowment) than any amount of low-flow showers, or dual flushing systems, or turning the tap off could have accomplished. I may be a drop in a larger ocean but then little drops make an ocean. ■

Sanjay Prakash is principal consultant at SHiFT - Studio for Habitat Futures

LIVING

BOOKS | ECO-TOURISM | FILM | THEATRE | AYURVEDA

Pictures by Susheela Nair



Gold-plated statues of the Buddha, Padmasambhava and Amitayus in Namdroling monastery's Golden Temple

Tibetan heaven in Bylekuppe

It has monasteries, handicrafts, carpets and *momos*

SUSHEELA NAIR

WE were zipping down the Bengaluru-Mysore highway (SH-17) which connects Mysore to the coffee heartland of Coorg, when an arch about four kilometres before Kushalnagar town beckoned us to another world. This was a world of *stupas*, fluttering prayer flags and five stunning monasteries.

The arch marked the town's entrance. The place pulsates with the sights and sounds of Tibet. After taking a detour, a left turn and then driving inside for a kilometre we realized that we had reached Bylekuppe, the largest Tibetan settlement in India.

We saw Tibetan schoolchildren cycling on narrow roads and scores of monks in maroon and ochre robes with Buddha-like smiles. Modernity co-exists with tradition here and we sighted westernized Tibetans zooming past swathes of farmland on their motorbikes. The handicrafts and *momos* with chilli paste helped recreate the Tibetan

environment. We came across hundreds of shaven monks of different ages everywhere in their maroon garb walking across the grounds, or sitting in smaller halls praying loudly in their characteristic hum.

One of the largest Tibetan settlements in South India, Bylekuppe is known for its monasteries, handicrafts, carpet factories, and an incense factory. The landscape is dotted with several monasteries, the main ones amongst them being the Great Gompa of Sera Je and Sera Mey.

Busloads of pilgrims, tourists and carloads of families flock to see the spectacular Golden Temple here on every weekend.

The Mahayana Buddhist University is located at Sera Je. It also has an enormous prayer hall. The other important monastery in the neighbouring settlement of Bylekuppe is Tashi Lhumpo monastery, renowned as the seat of the Panchen Lama. The landscape is strewn with monasteries of the Sakya, Kagyur, Nyingmapa and the yellow-hat Gelugpa sects of Vajrayana Buddhism. Easily the most picturesque of the five monasteries, Kagyu or Kagyudpa is located on an elevation and hence commands the best view. To get to Kagyu, first turn left from Bylekuppe's main arterial road through the Tibetan Dickey Larsoe Settlement arc, and then turn right. Head past Camp 4 for a kilometre and then turn left.

As we cruised past a sacred lake, the Namdroling Monastery or Golden Temple glinted in the far distance. Every weekend, busloads of pilgrims, tourists and entire carloads of holidaying families flock to see this spectacular Golden Temple and its

Continued on page 30



The Sera Je Monastic University



Monks in their maroon robes at a prayer session

60-foot-high statues of Padmasambhava, Buddha and Amitayus. It also attracts hordes of visitors including Hollywood stars who stop by this architectural wonder to see its glorious sights.

Namdroling monastery welcomed us with its colourful flags fluttering in the breeze. This was the Golden Temple with its gold leaf exterior glinting brightly in the afternoon sunshine. As we entered the temple, we could sense the thick smell of incense pervading the halls. The place resonated with the sounds of gongs and the synchronized chants of monks. In the expansive halls we saw the 60-foot-high golden statue of Lord Buddha and those of his disciples, Guru Padmasambhava and Buddha Amitayus, which were 58 feet tall. We walked around gaping in admiration at the numerous bright paintings on the vast expanses of gold leaf gracing the space around the three statues. The area in front of the idols is decorated with lamps, festoons and other items. Interestingly, these halls are well-lit and bright in comparison to other monasteries in other parts of the country.

Inside the statues are the holy scriptures, relics, small clay *stupas* and small statues symbolic of the body, speech and mind of the Buddha. The walls have intricate paintings all over them with a wrathful form of a male and female Buddha. The prayer halls are lined with mats in maroon and ochre. Silver urns containing *ghee* are used to light the lamps. One can't miss the huge trumpets and drums used for ceremonial occasions.

There is an air of serenity as an old monk goes

around chanting prayers and lighting the lamps —it's as if you have been transported to a different world. We were told that each family takes a vow to send their eldest child, girl or boy, to be initiated as a monk. The child remains in the confines of the monastery until he or she is 16 years old and then decides if he or she would like to continue or leave.

It was in 1959, during the Chinese invasion of Lhasa, that the Dalai Lama, along with 85,000 Tibetans, was forced to flee. A group of them traversed all the way across the Indian sub-continent to Bylekuppe. In days of yore the area was an uncultivated patch of flatland. That accounts for the name *byla koppa* meaning barren open land.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru allotted this stretch of land to the Tibetans. They have integrated beautifully here, keeping themselves busy with agriculture, coffee plantations and carpet manufacture. Today, the community is more than 20,000-strong and is thriving on 3,000 acres donated by the Indian government. Their self-reliance is amazing. Hard work and the spirit of selflessness have brought economic prosperity to them.

A good time to visit is during festivals especially the Chinese New Year, when the main courtyard becomes an open stage on which masked dancers twirl in colourful costumes to the sound of gongs. The town exudes a carnival-like atmosphere as monks don lively masks and costumes for the Cham dance, swaying to music played on traditional instruments.

Bylekuppe is an excellent place to pick up an assortment of Tibetan goods. A couple of shops at Sera-Je sell *thangkas*, prayer wheels, incense and Tibetan music. Take a trip down to the village to look at the goodies on sale and get drawn into the carpet store. Brightly coloured dragons are the motif common to most and these carpets may be expensive but they last a lifetime. ■

FACT FILE

Getting there: Nearest railhead — Mysore (92 km). Nearest airport — Mangalore (162 km). **Where to stay:** Kushalnagar has several options.



A street in Raghbir Nagar basti



The door of a barbershop was painted by Delhi Street Art

PIRATES, CAMELS, PARROTS

SIDIKA SEHGAL

RAGHUBIR Nagar, a low-income settlement of about 900 *jhuggis* in West Delhi, is an eye-catching sight. The walls and doors of homes in the *basti* have been painted with bright murals of birds, faces and silhouettes. From across the street, the *basti* looks astonishing.

The murals have been done by Delhi Street Art, which was founded by Yogesh Saini in 2013 to promote public art. "It gives a different sense of pride to the people living there. They don't feel like they are living in a slum. It's turned into a destination of sorts for locals," said Saini.

In Raghbir Nagar, the community thrives on barter — they collect old, unused clothes and trade them for utensils. On average, a family makes ₹300 to 400 per day. Their lives are difficult and uncertain, but the wall art makes them feel important because politicians and journalists have been visiting and interacting with them.

The Delhi Street Art team started working a week before Diwali and it took a little over a month to finish. Geeta Vaishnavi, one of the artists who worked on the murals, said, "It was like a Diwali gift. Previously their homes were not painted. They were just made of bricks."

One house has a silhouette of Jack Sparrow from the film, *Pirates of the Caribbean*. It is the favourite character of the young man who lives there, and he



Vishal, a resident of Raghbir Nagar, painted the wall outside his house



Letters and fruits on the walls of an anganwadi



Yogesh Saini



Geeta Vaishnavi

requested the Delhi Street Art team to paint Sparrow. Another family asked for a mural of Ganesh, yet another of Krishna.

"We kept in mind that these are their homes. As artists, we may be drawn to some things or we may get inspired. But we have to keep in mind what they like because they live here," said Vaishnavi.

A young man with a barbershop requested Vaishnavi to paint something related to his profession. She painted a man with a big moustache on the door of his shop. There is also a pair of scissors in the mural. Ajay, a 22-year-old resident, has become a minor celebrity after the artists clicked a picture of him and painted his face on a wall.

"They've done such amazing work, obviously we welcomed it," said Ajay. Lalitha, a 48-year-old resident, also feels the same way. Vaishnavi recalled that a young couple would invite the artists into her home so that they could sit down and eat lunch.

Some residents also helped in painting. Vishal, who is 18 years old, painted a camel and Gujarati women walking across the desert on the wall

outside his house without much help from the artists. It took him two days to finish the mural and his elder sister helped a little.

"We discovered a lot of talent in the *basti*," said Vaishnavi. Twelve-year-old Manisha helped to paint a wall with birds on it. The Delhi Street Art team sketched it for her and she filled in the colours. Many children in the community, including Manisha, don't go to school. Delhi Street Art's project was an opportunity for them to explore their talents and express themselves.

An *anganwadi* in the locality has also been painted. The walls have become a learning aid with letters, numbers and fruits painted on them. There is also an 'aquarium corner' in the *basti*, with dolphins, starfish and octopuses painted on the wall.

Ten to 15 artists worked in Raghbir Nagar and volunteers dropped by for a day or more. In total, 30 to 40 artists were involved, says Saini, who anchored the project.

Saini began Delhi Street Art when he moved back to Delhi after living abroad for many years. Part of

the reason was his desire to connect with his city again.

Saini used to run in the Lodhi Gardens and one day he thought, Why not paint the garbage cans lying around? That was the first painting event he organized. After three months, artists found out about Delhi Street Art through word of mouth or social media posts. They haven't really had to look for artists since then.

Saini is an engineer and an MBA graduate, and he was always artistically inclined. "I was drawing and sketching in school. I turned to photography for many years." He could have turned to canvas painting, but street art was a conscious choice.

"I used to visit galleries and see canvas paintings. But I found those quite repetitive. I didn't find it exciting. On the other hand, there's nothing repetitive about street art. Every place is different and what you create is different. You're not driven by monetary gain because it's not that you must have a show at the end of it. You're not bound by any of those expectations in street art." ■

The *halla bol* world of Safdar Hashmi

SIDIKA SEHGAL

SAFDAR Hashmi was all of 34 years old when he died. He was performing a street play with his theatre troupe, Jana Natya Manch (Janam), in Jhandapur in Ghaziabad on January 1, 1989, when the performance was interrupted by local thugs.

The play was called *Halla Bol*, which is also the title of Sudhanva Deshpande's book on Hashmi's life. In the play, factory workers ask for an increase in their wages, from ₹562 to ₹1,050 per month. Female workers ask for a crèche on the factory premises so that their children can be taken care of. Contract workers talk about the uncertain nature of their employment.

In October 1988, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), affiliated to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), had called for a seven-day strike among the working class in Delhi. Hashmi, who was a member of the CPI (M), decided to write *Halla Bol* then.

When Janam was performing their play for a working class audience in Jhandapur, Mukesh Sharma arrived with his henchmen to disperse the gathering. Sharma was a petty business owner with links to politicians. The attack on Hashmi was an attempt to quash the workers' movement.

When Janam members took shelter in the CITU office in Jhandapur, Hashmi, with two men, decided to hold down the gate of the CITU office while everyone else jumped over the back wall and sought shelter elsewhere. His actions that day confirmed that he was a true leader, prioritizing the safety of others before his own.

Hashmi passed away a day later on January 2. The post-mortem report revealed that he had been hit on the head at least 20 times with iron rods.

He passed on the baton to his wife, Mala, who took the troupe back to Jhandapur on January 4, just 48 hours after his death, to finish the performance they had left mid-way. She was a tower of strength, and photographs from that day show courage on her face though she must have been hurting.

In the days that followed, thousands of people came out in solidarity. Artistes like M.K. Raina and Bhisham Sahni joined the funeral procession on January 3. In late January, when Janam performed *Halla Bol* at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, 25,000 people attended. Others like Shabana Azmi, Dilip Kumar, Satyajit Ray and Adoor Gopalakrishnan also came out in support.

There was shock and anger among artistes partly because he was one of them. But then Hashmi was a kind man who made friends easily and was liked by almost everyone who knew him, whether it was the owner of a printing

shop in Connaught Place or a *dosa-wallah* in Shankar Market.

Hashmi came from a middle-class family in Aligarh, which saw tough times when he was young. Engaging with theatre did not come easy to him because there was no family money to see him through. He took up teaching jobs and freelanced as a scriptwriter, songwriter and copywriter.

In the 1970s, Hashmi was part of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). He formed Janam in 1973. It did stage plays. The switchover to street theatre happened almost by accident. It was really lack of funds that made Janam think about performing small, inexpensive plays.

Janam's first play, *Machine*, was loosely based on a workers' strike in Ghaziabad. With the success of *Machine*, Hashmi knew that they had hit on something explosive.

He made copious notes about street theatre, some of which are reproduced in the book. He saw street theatre not as a descendant of India's traditional forms of theatre but as emerging from the workers' movement against capitalism. He also wanted to develop it as a serious art form. He never compromised on artistic value. Skill and style were important to attract an audience.

When an Indore-based theatre group wrote to Hashmi for advice, he wrote: "Like every art, street theatre too demands discipline and practice. To improve, the actors need to train their voice, learn to sing, play instruments, dance, and to rehearse seriously and systematically." Hashmi's contribution to the growth of street theatre is hugely undervalued. The form street theatre has taken today owes a lot to him.

Hashmi had other plans as well. In December 1988, he spoke to Deshpande about setting up a cultural centre in a working class area. The money to buy the land would come from working in television. Today, Studio Safdar in Shadipur in West Delhi is the cultural centre he dreamed of. There are reading sessions and movie screenings for children of the community.

After the Sikh riots in 1984 and the Shah Bano judgment, Hashmi was concerned about communalism and became part of the Committee for Communal Harmony. He organized many *mohalla*-level meetings, and a convention in October 1986 to spread the message of peace. Artistes performing *nukkad nataks* and singing songs at protest sites today would have made him very happy.

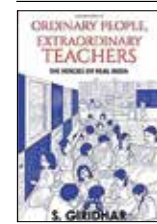
Deshpande's book comes at an opportune time. Street theatre has become a galvanizing force in people's movements and protests. This account of Hashmi's life and death offers valuable lessons to all those who share his values of secularism and harmony. ■



Halla Bol: The Death and Life of Safdar Hashmi Sudhanva Deshpande Leftword Books ₹495

Teachers as heroes and rural schooling

CIVIL SOCIETY REVIEW



Ordinary People, Extraordinary Teachers The Heroes of Real India S. Giridhar Westland Books ₹499

AN unusual *yatra* from March 2017 to November 2018 gave S. Giridhar the material for this heartwarming book. In his search to understand the human aspect of schooling, its daily rhythm, the teachers, children and parents, he went to 110 government schools deep in the villages of Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan.

In nondescript schools, he came across teachers passionate about their work, seriously striving to provide schooling of high quality. Their work went way beyond the call of duty. This isn't a *sarkari* job, they told him.

In rural outposts, teachers are on their own and the ones profiled in this book display outstanding enterprise. They went to homes in the village, marketing the idea of schooling to poor and illiterate parents who paid considerable sums to send their children to private schools. They lobbied to get more teachers, build a library, provide sports facilities, and invent new ways of teaching. They appealed to well-off people for money. In short, they built government schools from scratch, often paying from their own pockets.

The Azim Premji Foundation (APF) works on improving education. Giridhar joined when it started in 2002. The foundation now has field institutes in 46 districts and a team of 1,500 people work with teachers and officials in the education system to strengthen their capabilities.

Instead of talking down to teachers, APF has helped them network and form Teacher Volunteer Forums (TVF). It has also set up Teacher-Learning Centres (TLCs) in districts, where teachers share methods of learning and get introduced to newer ones.

Giridhar went to schools in Uttarkashi and

Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand, to Tonk in Rajasthan and Yadgir in Karnataka. Every one out of four or five schools was identified by APF as being a good one, an interesting statistic. Things are changing in rural government schools.

The first section of his book is appropriately titled 'The Head teacher as CEO'. It has around nine profiles. Most head teachers, he writes, have two priorities: to develop a rapport with the community and outclass private schools. The head teachers do both with aplomb, going door-to-door persuading parents to send their children and ensuring their school has all the hallmarks of their rival, the private school. Read how Krishna Kumar Sharma, head teacher of a government school in Udham Singh Nagar, got children, employed as labour in a seamy locality infested with gang lords, to join his school.

In another school, Sarita, a head teacher, realized private schools were favoured by parents because they offered nursery and KG facilities. So she encouraged children to bring their siblings to school. Head teachers also personally coached children so that they could get admission into prestigious government schools like the Navodaya schools.

Read also about how Harish Singh Rawat won the appreciation of parents by organizing an impressive annual day on the animals of Corbett Park, by taking children on excursions and by providing uniforms, just like private schools.

The second section, 'Reflective Practitioners', profiles teachers who in their quest for self-improvement have introduced or invented new teaching techniques. They take advantage of workshops like the Learning Guarantee



The author at one of the schools he visited

Programme by APF and Keli Kali, an All India Radio programme for primary schoolchildren.

Madhulika, a teacher in Uttarkashi, adapted what she learnt from a Rishi Valley School workshop. She introduced News of the Day where children write about news in their lives. Govind Prajapat, a teacher in Rawta Deoli block of Tonk district, invented small wooden blocks from leftovers in a furniture shop to teach maths.

There is Shoorvir Singh Kharola whose skills at teaching science and maths are legendary in his district. His school has geo boards, a fraction wall, a game board, pictures and mock-ups of mushrooms, frogs, moss, lichen, and more. He connects maths and science with everyday reality. The best rural teachers seamlessly converged language, maths and science.

Section 3 is on 'Equity and Quality'. Rural government schools attract the poorest and most deprived children. Parents tend to send their girls to government schools and the boys to private schools. So how does a teacher ensure all children

get attention, become confident and learn? A few guidelines seem to be followed. Make learning fun. No child should be afraid to ask questions. Set up a library. Insist on a morning assembly. Encourage children to learn in groups. Ensure discipline.

In a later chapter the author also underlines the importance of team work. It works wonders in school. He cites some of the Model Schools in Uttarkashi as an example of team spirit. In one such school, all the teachers opted to wear a uniform. Read also about Shankar, a weaver who became a teacher and with Kamlesh, another teacher, converted a one-room school into a three-classroom school with 44 children.

The chapter titled 'Heroes' is about individual heroism of a high calibre. "These teachers weren't just extraordinary, they were eccentric in their zeal," writes Giridhar. Dharamvir Singh Chauhan understood that sports was transformative and strove to introduce it in his school. Anish, the teacher of Talabpur Primary School, paid umpteen times from his own pocket for infrastructure and facilities. He took no leave even when his mother was grievously ill and is transforming his school into a model school. Achapa Gowder converted two classrooms in his school into a hostel at night so that children whose parents migrate seasonally don't miss school.

This is an important book, engaging and insightful. It brings to light all the ingredients which make a rural government school superior and truly valued by the community. Giridhar's recommendations have implications for the National Education Policy.

India has 100,000 government schools. The author went to 110. Big change often begins with a single step. ■

RANDOM SHELF HELP

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



Selfing the City: Single Women Migrants and Their Lives in Kolkata Ipsita Chanda SAGE Publications ₹995

Thousands migrate to cities in India to leave behind the confines of small towns and villages, especially women who often find the city liberating. What does it mean to be a young woman finding her way through a city as complicated as Kolkata? This book captures the evolving relationship single women have with their city. By

speaking to several women, the author touches upon the subject of finding a private space in the city, building a support system and concerns of safety. ■



A History of Adivasi Women in Post-Independence Eastern India Debasree De SAGE Publications ₹995

The academic world may have a large number of studies on tribal communities but it still has a long way to go in producing quality research on tribal women, writes Debasree De in the introduction to her book. There is a serious lack of baseline data on essential parameters like health and livelihood for tribal women. De writes about the changing livelihood pattern of *Adivasi* women, is-

sues of migration, trafficking, land rights and forceful displacement in the name of development. ■



Off the Shelf Sridhar Balan Speaking Tiger ₹399

The history of English publishing in India is an untold story. The language traces its roots to Macaulay's infamous Minute on Education in 1835 but did anyone imagine English would become an Indian language? Sridhar Balan, a diehard publisher, first with Oxford University Press and then with Ratna Sagar, gives us an insight into the growth of English publishing in India. There are chapters on writers, editors, publishers, booksellers and readers. Who was the first Indian author in

English? A chap called Dean Mahomed. Read about well-known publisher Ravi Dayal, the remarkable bookseller, Ram Advani, and Dhanesh Jain, founder of Ratna Sagar.

There are some fascinating stories of how Jim Corbett's *Man-Eaters of Kumaon* was launched in New York — with two tiger cubs who became celebrities. And how Salim Ali's *Handbook of Indian Birds*, was released at Indira Gandhi's residence in New Delhi. Read also about the evolution of the World Book Fair in Delhi. From being a modest annual event in Connaught Place it actually became an important global happening.

Balan's chatty style makes this book a good read, nostalgic and witty. But there is lots more to the growth of English in India. Another book, perhaps? ■



**AYURVEDA
ADVISORY**
Dr SRIKANTH

For strong bones

By the age of 20, the average human acquires about 98 percent of skeletal mass. This process slows as we age. Between 35 and 40, we begin to lose bone mass and after 50, bone mass starts progressively declining. Though this is a natural ageing process, it may occur a little faster in some individuals, causing their bones to become thinner and brittle, a condition called osteoporosis. Bones then become vulnerable to fractures — a leading cause of disability in the elderly and totally preventable.

We all know that we need sufficient calcium to strengthen our bones and Vitamin D to help the body absorb calcium.

A diet low in calcium contributes to diminished bone density, early bone loss and an increased risk of fractures. The recommended dose is 1000 mg of calcium daily for adults and 1200 mg/day for women after menopause and men after they are 70. Milk, cheese and other dairy products are excellent natural sources of calcium. The above requirement can be met by consuming three servings of dairy products a day. Other good sources include leafy green vegetables, cabbage, drumstick leaves, lady finger, almonds, soy products, broccoli and seafood. Although spinach appears to contain a lot of calcium, it also has oxalic acid which reduces calcium absorption and it is therefore not a good source of calcium.

For adults who are 19 to 70 years old, 600 international units (IUs) a day of Vitamin D are necessary. Older adults require 800 IUs a day. Sunlight contributes to the body's production of

Vitamin D. Sufficient exposure to early morning sunlight is helpful — around 15 minutes in the sun, two to three times a week. Other sources of Vitamin D are oily fish, such as salmon, trout, whitefish and tuna. Additionally, mushrooms, eggs and fortified foods such as milk, cereals and liver are sources.

However, only these two components will not suffice! Research points to the key role of protein, Vitamin B12, magnesium, Vitamin C and other nutrients.

HEALTHY, BALANCED DIET

The first and foremost step is getting all the nutrients we need for proper bone growth. A healthy balanced diet will help build strong bones from an early age and maintain bone health too.

Opt for foods with whole grains. These are far richer in nutrients. Avoid highly processed foods. Processing strips many foods of their natural nutrients.

Include nuts in your diet. They contain protein and nutrients that help build strong bones. Peanuts and almonds contain potassium which protects against calcium loss through urine; walnuts and flaxseed are rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

Sesame seeds and dried fruit such as raisins, prunes, figs and apricots are helpful.

Consuming soy beans, lentils, beans and chickpeas may be helpful for women around menopause as these are rich in isoflavones and phytoestrogens.

Research suggests that fruits and vegetables are just as important as dairy products for bone health.

Stick to a low-salt diet — salt is known to deprive the body of its calcium content.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT BONE HEALTH:

- A family history of osteoporosis.
- **Age:** Bones become thinner and weaker.
- **Sex:** Women have less bone tissue than men.

• **Build:** If you are extremely thin or have a small body frame.

• **Insufficient physical activity:** Do muscle-strengthening activities, weight-bearing exercises, and appropriate yoga *asanas*.

• **Tobacco:** Research suggests tobacco use contributes to weak bones.

• **Alcohol:** More than one drink a day for women or two drinks daily for men increases risk.

• **Hormone levels:** Excessive thyroid hormone can cause bone loss. So can lower oestrogen levels in women during menopause. Early menopause is a risk factor. In men, low testosterone levels can cause loss of bone mass.

• **Medical conditions:** Anorexia, bulimia, stomach surgery (gastrectomy), weight-loss surgery, Crohn's disease, celiac disease and Cushing's disease can affect the body's ability to absorb calcium.

• Long-term use of corticosteroid medications, diuretics, blood pressure medicines, and so on may be risk factors.

RECOMMENDED: For good bone health, Ayurveda advises consumption of sufficient oil and *ghee* and a regular body massage daily/at least twice a week with plain sesame oil/ *Ksheera bala taila/Ashvagandha bala lakshaadi taila*.

Arjuna, Shigru and Hadjod (Himalaya Pure Herbs) are established herbs that can be taken as supplements for those at risk or for vulnerable groups.

Ksheerabala taila 101/Dhanvantaram taila 101 (any reputed pharmacy): 10-12 drops, twice daily with a cup of hot milk, preferably on an empty stomach, will be helpful in those who are over 40.

For individuals requiring calcium supplements, Reosto tablets (Himalaya) or Bonton capsules (Vasu) 2-0-2 for about three to six months will be beneficial. ■

Dr Srikanth is a postgraduate in Ayurveda and has been a consulting physician for the past 19 years. He is currently National Manager, Scientific Services, at The Himalaya Drug Company

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UMK 425T-U2NT

UMK 435T-UENT

UMK 435T-U2NT



HRJ 196

HRJ-216



EP1000

Portable Generators

General Purpose Engines



EX 2400S

EU30is

EU70is



GX25

GX80

GX160

GX200

PRODUCTS

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FIRST Water Solutions offers a range of natural cosmetic products from solid perfumes and face scrubs to body lotions and serums. Their Pure 21 Face Serum is a non-greasy, water-based serum. It is a combination of 21 flowers, fruits and herbs. Also available is Pure 21 Face Oil for those with dry skin. Their solid perfumes come in several unusual fragrances like musk mint, pine and cedar. These formulations are a combination of ancient remedies and modern research.

First Water Solutions' products are plant-based and vegan. No artificial chemicals, parabens, alcohol, synthetic colours, petrochemicals or gluten are used. Their products are not tested on animals either. Their belief is that nature can provide for all personal care needs. ■

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<https://www.facebook.com/fwsbodycare/>



Picture by Shrey Gupta

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