



# Civil Society



## LOW COST HOSPITALS ARE HERE

Glocal has built 5, plans 50



### CAN PRASAR BHARATI RAISE THE BAR?

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Naye AVASAR  
Nayee UMMEED  
Nayee DISHA

नए अवसर  
नई उम्मीद  
नई दिशा

India today, plays a significant role in the global economy opening up a world of new opportunities.

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**COVER STORY**

## LOW COST HOSPITALS ARE HERE

Glocal, a social enterprise, is building low cost hospitals to meet the basic healthcare needs of people in rural areas. Glocal charges low rates, is profitable and will soon be very big.

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# Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

## Diagnosing healthcare

THERE is a growing feeling that privatised healthcare isn't serving most Indians. Hospitals run as corporations with quarterly targets to meet have become too expensive even for the middle class. These hospitals are driven by a strong profit motive. Their promoters talk more about financial valuations than standards of medicine. Complaints abound of patients being put through unnecessary tests and admitted without reason to ICUs. There is a sense that there is no accountability.

On the other hand, State-run healthcare has steadily declined. Government hospitals are poorly managed. The talent pool has dwindled because some of the best physicians and surgeons have run off to the private sector for huge sums of money. A great many have left reluctantly and chiefly because of the depressing atmosphere in government institutions.

Who should we as a society blame for this state of affairs and where should we begin the search for solutions?

The government – at the Centre and in the states – should be primarily held responsible. Elected representatives have let the country down in a matter which is of prime national importance. You can't have a prosperous economy if the healthcare needs of people aren't met.

It is a failure of policy that private sector healthcare has been allowed to take a dominant position at the cost of the State-run system.

There is talk of inadequate expenditure on public health. It is perhaps time we looked at spending current budgets more efficiently. What we need therefore most of all is to restore mission and purpose in the public healthcare system so that it is put back on its feet, is adequate and affordable, respects expertise and offers equal access.

To make a good beginning, we would say, choose the Union health minister with care and reform the functioning of the ministry. It is important to set an example at the top. Across regimes health ministers have shown no real aptitude for this important portfolio. But apex leadership is crucial for providing vision and exploring innovative solutions.

A second important step would be to encourage public spirited private initiatives. Create a framework in which such initiatives can augment the State system and quickly deliver results because we have huge backlogs to meet.

It is necessary to show that enterprises in healthcare need not be driven by greed. In as much as doctors take an oath to serve humanity, so also such enterprises should primarily have a public purpose.

Glocal is an example. It has set up five low cost hospitals in eastern India and will soon roll out another 50. It is for this reason that we have devoted this month's cover story to Glocal and its founder Dr Sabahat Azim. We in this magazine look forward to the day when social businesses like Glocal and entrepreneurs like Azim become the benchmark India aspires to.

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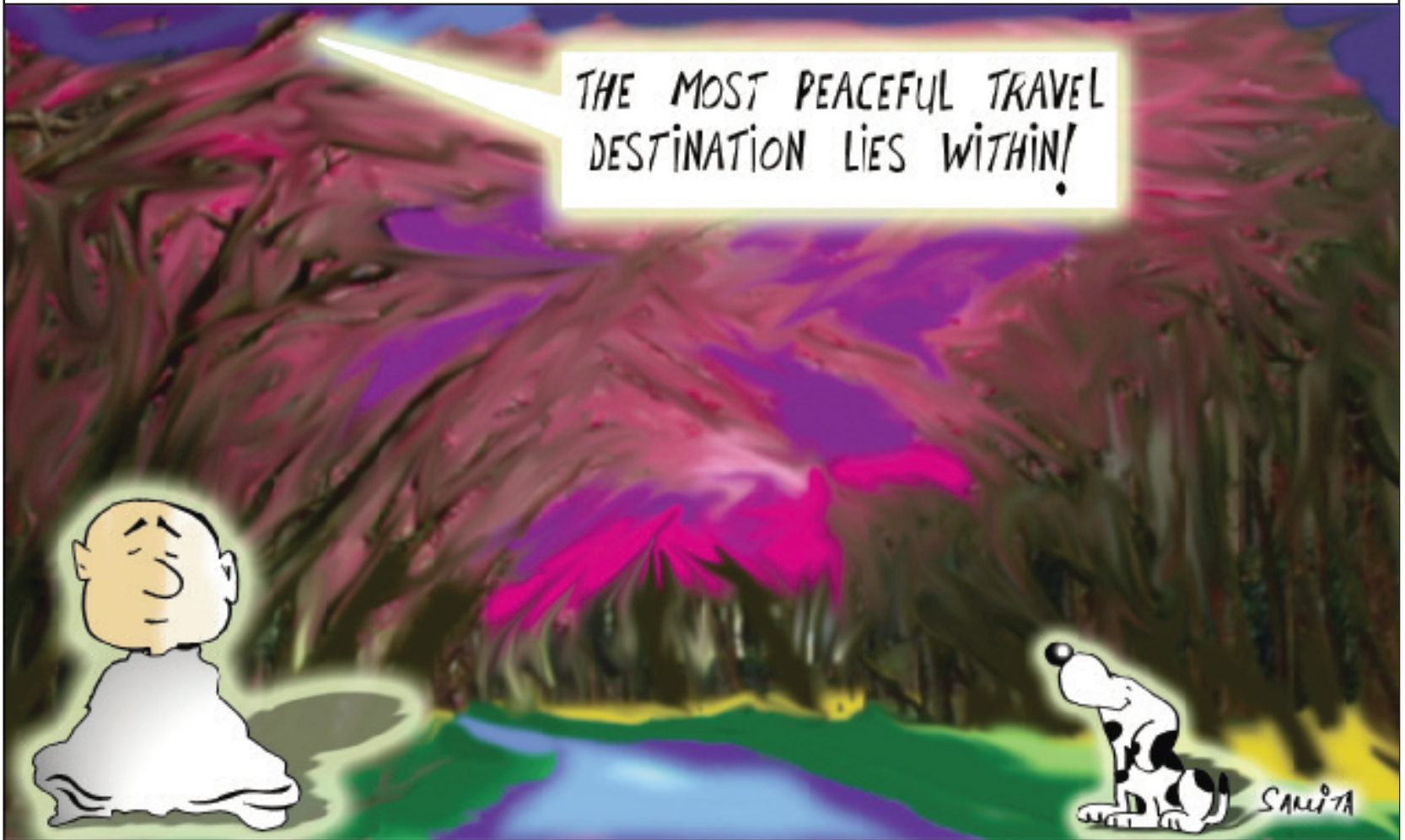
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## VOICES

## IN THE LIGHT

by SAMITA RATHOR



## LETTERS



## Safe cities

Thanks for your cover story, 'Making Cities Safer.' It gives us insights into the latest thinking on designing the urban built environment in a manner that it discourages crime. A public space should be well-lit with wide pavements and kiosks with homes looking onto the street. Unfortunately most Indian cities and towns are in shambles. We have to start with basic infrastructure.

**Ashish Dadlani**

Too much density is not a good idea. Look at crowded buses and our broken pavements packed with people. Such environments encourage men to grope women and hurriedly get away.

**Amita Nath**

Safe transport is the single biggest issue facing women in our cities. Reform has to start with the corrupt transport department which gives licences to dubious people who pay bribes. Every person in charge of public transport needs to be thoroughly checked out by the police.

**Ajay Singh**

## Nizamuddin

I was so excited to see your beautifully done story on Nizamuddin, 'Going wow in Nizamuddin'. Thank you for giving us such precious insights into the city we live in.

**Geeta Dharmarajan**

## Female slavery

I refer to your story, 'Life at stake, Shafiq fights female slavery.' No words are enough to praise the work that Shafiq is doing. I salute him. He is the real son of Mother India.

**JR Sharan**

Shafiq, hats off to you for your perseverance and dedication.

I also would like to convey my appreciation to the writer, Saibal Chatterjee, for bringing this story into the public domain. I am witness to Shafiq's determination and commitment to the cause he believes in.

I am sure he has the talent and zeal to really contribute something significant in fighting female slavery. May God give strength to Shafiq and his volunteers to carry on their work.

**Abhishek Kr Singh**

## Goonj

With reference to your story, 'What a few old clothes can do,' I would like to tell Anshu Gupta that I agree with him completely. It is right thinking and the right approach that keeps NGOs going while companies die. I am at present based in Chennai but will be shifting to Delhi next year. I would love to work with Goonj as a volunteer.

**Sudhir Oberoi**  
[oberoi\\_sudhir@yahoo.com](mailto:oberoi_sudhir@yahoo.com)

What a fabulous article. Loved reading it and wish Goonj every success. Commendable work. Very inspiring

and would love to find out more. Waste Warriors collect clothes as part of our waste collection and we sell them to the *kabbadi wallahs*. We would love to learn more about what Goonj does with them. Pray do tell us.

**Jodie Underhill**

## Gurgaon's voice

Keep up the good work, 'Gurgaon ki Awaaz.' What matters is that you touch the lives of your listeners. While they listen to your programmes, you listen to them very carefully and understand their needs and pain. Extend a helping hand continuously. You are already doing it.

**Brij Vaish**

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VisionSpring is doing a commendable job for rural areas. We have an organisation named AASHA (Association for Advancement of Society through Humanitarian Action). We are interested in partnering you to implement this project in Odisha. Do contact us.

**Surajit Praharaj**  
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## INDIA

# INTERVIEW / Jawhar Sircar Can Prasar Bharati be 'Getting an elephant to dance

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

FOR someone who has clocked 60 and spent most of those years in the Government of India's bureaucracy, Jawhar Sircar packs surprisingly high levels of energy and purpose. It is a little before eight in the evening when we start talking and he remains in full flow till well past nine. People say he likes to talk. That is no doubt true, but our sense is he is seriously hooked to the idea of being an effective CEO and turning Prasar Bharati into a credible public broadcaster.

Prasar Bharati's offices are every bit *sarkari* and gloomy, tacky too, but Jawhar Sircar is not. He is witty, perceptive and intelligently outlandish. A liberal orientation and an understanding of India's diversity are wonderful attributes for the head of a public interest broadcaster to have – and he has both in good measure.

Sircar's mission as CEO is to make Prasar Bharati – which means Doordarshan and AIR – an independent public broadcaster of repute capable of raising the bar for other TV channels and radio stations. It is a tough job because though Prasar Bharati is independent under an Act of Parliament the truth is that it is known as the voice of the government.

In the brief time that he has been CEO, Sircar has brought in new talent and made Doordarshan news snappier and better looking. He slogs till 10 at night each day to make such things possible and there is lots more action to come, he tells *Civil Society* in an honest and freewheeling interview.

**There have been several committees and reports by wise people recommending changes in Prasar Bharati. What is your vision? What do you want to do?**

Much of my vision is already outlined in the Prasar Bharati Act. The fact that it was not done is a sad story. The reason why the Government of India (GoI) created a body at arm's length is very clear. You have to understand why this did not happen. I can give you three reasons as logic but not as justifications.

The only body that I know of in India that has not undergone recruitment in the past 16 or 17 years is Prasar Bharati – Doordarshan and Akash Vani. You show me an organisation that hasn't recruited, that is operating live every single day of the week and still not shutting down for a single day....

But now things are changing. It has taken some 17 years for us to advertise. The youngest 'kid' here is 42 or 44. Assuming your recruits are 25, he and the next person would be divided by some 18 years.

Secondly, we have had only two full-time CEOs. For a large part, Prasar Bharati has been manned



Jawhar Sircar: "The voice of India is not the voice of the government. The two are not coterminous"

by part-timers. An Additional Secretary has a lot of responsibilities. And then if he or she is told to go do this work or a Director-General of Doordarshan, is asked to handle this organization and run his own show, he or she can only give part-time attention.

The third reason has been zigzags in policy. There has always been a lurking feeling among staff here that this is supposed to be either a government channel or a 'safe' channel.

**How do you see it?**

I have taken this assignment on the sole criterion that Prasar Bharati is a public service broadcaster. One of the models to look up to is the BBC. You

also have the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and NHK in Japan. Now bringing up an elephant to dance is difficult. It can't happen overnight, but if your ideas are clear it is possible to make a difference.

**A public service broadcaster must have a soul. What do you see as the soul of Prasar Bharati?**

We have to make up our minds on where and what we expect Prasar Bharati to do. If you want to make it a commercial channel, earn its keep, then one set of activities has to be undertaken. Or do you want it to run like the BBC on a television tax, licence fee and a separate dispensation altogether? Do you want it to be super competent like the NHK?

## INDIA

# a credible public service broadcaster? is difficult. It takes time'

Well laid out plans cost money. And when something costs money, the government tends to spread it over a period of years – may be 10 to 15 years. As a highly technical broadcasting organization that has to compete in a very fickle atmosphere where even newspapers don't know if they will last tomorrow in paper form, a provision made 12 years ago is like a child marriage you have walked into without realizing its consequences. At the same time if you operate within the government system you have to follow some fiscal discipline.

#### So what is the mechanism you are proposing?

It would largely depend on the magnanimity of a liberal government to work out a mechanism and on Parliament to take a renewed call on what we want. In my case, the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the ministry, and other committees of Parliament have been more than kind – they have been generous. Give us a note, they have said, I am on the backfoot working till late at night. How do I work out a note? I need a break to do that.

#### What is foremost on your mind? What will you tell the Sam Pitroda committee for instance?

Sam Pitroda knows technology very well. In the first meeting he made it clear he would like to have the best hands possible from a domain outside the government to bring in what he calls a breath of fresh air. Fair enough. The entire media depends on fresh air.

Till 2000 Doordarshan was smug about being the only operator. In 2004 they thought, *Bachche log aise kheltey hain*. And then they got licked.

Having the largest infrastructure doesn't mean much if you can't send the best message. Now we have gone in for a remould, especially on eight or 10 issues, but, as I said, what pulls us back is the lack of young people.

#### So you need talent.

I need talent and my board has been good enough to agree to a Special Assignments Committee. They have said, explain to us the people you need and we will give you the leeway to go in for a transparent system of engaging people – we call them assignments. We are hiring people the way the market does. Why do you need to create posts all the time?

So, now we have people who have come in from the best channels. We pay them at par, sometimes five or ten per cent more than the others because many did not want to come since they thought they were joining a sleepy channel.

#### Won't your search for talent be determined by

#### how much independence you have?

Listen, credibility is something the other guy thinks of you, not what you say about yourself. Identity is something towards which you move. It is not thrust upon you. Identity is the conscious movement of a person to an image he or she has predetermined. So even if I scream from the rooftops that I am independent, if my actions are not showing independence, they will not change perceptions. Credibility has to be established step by step.

#### But doesn't the government need to define the autonomy of the public broadcaster?

I have been here for 11 months and I have not had any problems with operational issues. Yes, in one case, somebody screamed because our cameraman covered something. My answer was: do

**'I have taken this assignment on the sole criterion that Prasar Bharati is a public service broadcaster. One of the models to look up to is the BBC.'**

you expect me to go put a cap on the camera? Then why didn't the editor clip it, I was asked. I answered, should I peer over the editor's shoulder?

#### But you do have a serious credibility problem.

I have on my board people who have established themselves in their careers and are not dependent on a board assignment. The present secretary, myself, and the juniors down the line have an excellent relationship. We have cracked the coconut, so to speak. There are 1,500 people who are being notified. Even now my people don't believe it. The guy handling the transmitter in some way out station in Ladakh doesn't believe he is going to get a hand to help him. He thinks he will have to call the *chai* boy and ask him to run the generator when he is away.

Finance is another issue. Our minister, Manish Tewari, said why don't I ask Parliament to give you funds directly. We discussed this and how to work it out.

#### You would need to place people in key creative jobs?

We opened up a set of creative jobs. How do you

think all the glitz came? (Points to the news on air at that time.) Against four or five posts for anchors we received nearly 200 applications. We made a shortlist of 40 or 50. The Special Assignments Committee, consisting of eminent persons from the media, patiently interviewed them and ultimately five persons were selected in front of the camera, another half a dozen for behind the camera and the process is going on. We are taking 20 more persons from concept editor to visualiser to graphic designer.

There were professions, assignments and jobs not even known to the studios of Doordarshan. For example, FM Gold and FM Rainbow are two popular channels under Akash Vani. Can you imagine there is no post of radio jockey? So, modernization is now taking place.

#### Why are you going to Africa?

Africa should be one of our logical targets. We have a satellite operation that stretches from the northern part of Africa, West Asia, to China. Downlinking is poor. We can't control that from Mandi House. We are in touch with our ambassadors and correspondents over this. A telecasting organization has to be faster. Three deals are about to be inked with three countries. If we can get one satellite position, English can be a common language. It's a national cultural mission.

#### But you can't be the voice of the Indian government.

No, no, the voice of India is not the voice of the government. The two are not coterminous. When Indians cheer an IPL team or the Indian cricket team it has got nothing to do with the government. India emerges as an international entity, for instance, when a lady goes up in a spacecraft and empathizing with her is the whole nation. Representing the nation is an essential part of the national public service broadcaster.

#### What is the kind of content you would like to change?

Content is expensive. More importantly, it has to be imaginative and planned out.

Content I find to my horror has been dealt with in a rather ad hoc manner. If a serial becomes patronage, you are inviting disaster. A serial is a signature of your quality and that comes when everything is above board. We are making a system of putting everything up on the website every few months – who applies, what are the criteria, why someone is chosen.

I have a family audience. We thought why don't we have a programme by which people can phone in and talk to their MPs? Let the MP have his say,

**Continued on page 8**

## INDIA

*Continued from page 7*

let somebody give an opposite view, give clips from the field and phone-ins.

We have pointed out where the public service broadcaster differs from the commercial channel. A commercial channel takes the liberty of interviewing a traumatized woman because it is 'good' news. But a public service broadcaster will never do that.

Manipur is a small disturbed state. Every day we broadcast in six major dialects and 23 minor dialects in Manipur. So one station is broadcasting in 29 languages.

India is an evolving story. It isn't a final product that you market.

We were born when India was wracked with troubles. Certain sign boards would be tarred because they were in certain languages. Or there would be signage saying Indians get out. We have gone through it all. We go through it even now.

Akash Vani has a big role to play in the emergence of many an artiste. Vividh Bharati played a large role in bonding India. That subtext of pride is very much there in our voice. You won't find it in a commercial outfit.

You don't have to send a person to Manipur, where you don't get a single paisa worth of advertising, and then broadcast in 29 languages to maintain the best of relations with all communities. It is not for the sake of the government but for the sake of the people of India.

#### **Is size your strength?**

Our huge size is because we have to serve underserved areas. I am proud of it. Somebody has to go there. The world has gone on satellite in so far as TV is concerned. We are on terrestrial cum satellite. If you take away the 1,900 terrestrial transmitters and their manpower, Doordarshan has for 67 kendras, 67 stations. It has 37 channels. For 37 channels, per channel per station, we have the least number of people. All India Radio has 350 stations. Some stations are single-transmitter stations. Some have multiple transmitters.

We have set up a huge terrestrial network over the years. What we are planning is to connect with local populations around the transmitter. Each high-powered and low-powered transmitter has a radius of coverage or a catchment. In each catchment area India differs.

This diversity of India is being affected by a lot of standardization. And you can't stop history. The fact is there are many people who can understand only their dialect. And do you know how much a dialect differs? In Madhya Pradesh, for instance, from Morena to 200 km it is Bundeli that covers the most backward regions of UP and Bundelkhand, Gwalior, right up to Jabalpur. The language of Morena is a strange Bundeli. As you come to Gwalior you get a more refined version of Bundeli. Now if you use the Jhansi transmitter or the Gwalior or Morena transmitter for two hours to talk to the people about their rights, obligations and duties, think of what you have done for the people.

#### **So this is your great strength?**

It's a huge strength we are trying to work on and that means working late. ■

# Police chase hawkers

## *Cities yet to implement zoning plans*

**Subir Roy**  
Kolkata

**I**N January, Mumbai was witness to one of those periodic actions which major Indian cities have become familiar with – large scale eviction of around 4,500 hawkers from selected areas like Bandra, Andheri, Vile Parle, Juhu, Dadar and Chembur. In the course of this police action a hawker died.

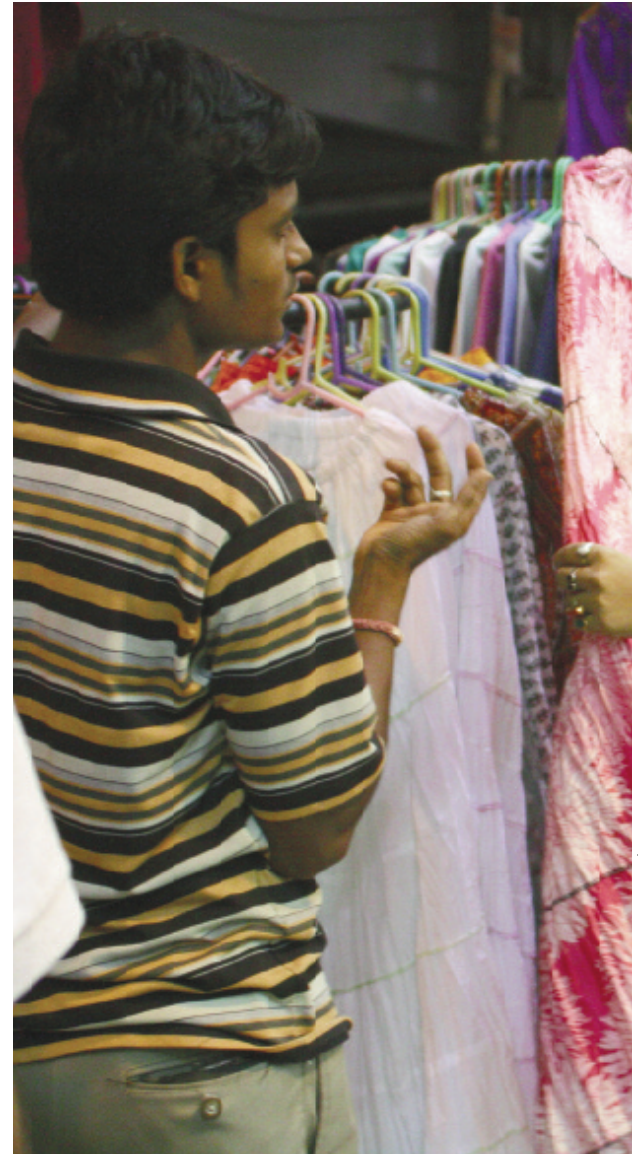
The fact that the clean-up effort was particularly vigorous in some of the better off areas in the west of the city, notably Hill Road in Bandra, and the approaches to the residences of government and police officials, gave the drive a particular colour. On the other hand, the fact that the foot overbridge at Dadar station was made free of hawkers, making it easier for hundreds of commuters, produced positive comments.

A senior Mumbai police official said, "It will be a continuous effort to keep hawkers away permanently and a special squad has been formed to formulate encroachment removal programmes." But such action is not new (there is a permanent encroachment removal and maintenance department in the municipal corporation). Hawkers keep going in and out of sight via a revolving door syndrome. True enough, within a fortnight of the police action, hawkers were trickling back into some of the recently cleaned-up areas.

In every Indian city there is a league of local politicians, goons and petty officials which allow hawkers to ply their trade virtually everywhere and in particular in areas with the highest footfalls. Once an eviction drive takes place and hawkers' wares are confiscated, they can and do return by paying a price. Because of the periodic nature of this cycle, the hawkers end up paying 'hafta'.

A national approach to the hawkers issue seemed in sight when in October 2010 the Supreme Court asked the Delhi administration to bring suitable legislation by June next year to reconcile two conflicting claims – that of hawkers to a livelihood, and of commuters to use roads and pavements freely.

In February 2012, the Kolkata High Court, taking its cue from the Supreme Court, instructed the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) to ask the state government to formulate its own hawk-



ers policy, in light of the national policy.

The municipal affairs minister, Firhad Hakim, said a draft policy was being fine-tuned. Then in May he further revealed that a high-powered committee, including eminent citizens, would formulate a policy for hawkers. They will be issued permits, there will be no-hawking zones but no permanent hawking zones. Hawkers will not be allowed near hospitals, nursing homes, heritage buildings and offices. But the policy never came.

This, despite the fact that even before the high court order, in January last year, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had personally intervened to end a traffic blockage by hawkers who had been evicted from in front of SSKM Hospital, the largest government hospital in the city. She said, "How can encroachment happen? There is a school and a hospital here. If fire tenders are to reach in case of an emergency, they can barely move." A few people were making money in the name of the Hawker Sangram Committee, she alleged.

Hawkers overrunning the entrance to and part of state hospitals in the city are not confined to SSKM. Shaktiman Ghosh, general secretary of the Hawker Sangram Committee, said after the SSKM



## INDIA

## in battle over pavements

LAKSHMAN ANAND



incident that till 2009 there were no more than 50 hawkers on the pavement before the NRS Hospital, compared to the situation now.

"They (hawkers) have been allowed to proliferate. We would never let food hawkers squat on hospital pavements. Had the police and the KMC played their roles, this could have been prevented."

City government hospitals in Kolkata are a particular victim of hawkers – they have narrowed the entrance to hospitals, blocked pavements along the hospital's boundary walls and littered hospital premises. Some have set up stalls within hospitals. With pavements virtually unavailable, those entering hospitals have to use the main carriageway, thus slowing down the movement of cars and ambulances. There has been a particular mushrooming of hawkers' stalls in the last few years.

Kolkata's run-in with hawkers goes back to 1996 when the previous Left Front government, fresh after a state assembly election victory, conducted "Operation Sunshine" under which it rid city streets of hawkers. But the backlash was such that it had to relent and the hawkers came back with renewed vigour onto the pavements and roads of the city.

**Today, not to speak of the new generation carts, there is till now no hawker policy, no bill and no hawker identity cards.**

Then in the run-up to the municipal elections in early 2011, sensing defeat, the Left Front outlined a sensible hawkers policy. Among other things, it proposed to divide urban areas into three parts – restriction free, restricted and no vending zones. Not more than a third of a pavement could be occupied by hawkers and that too only one side of the pavement. Each hawker would get 15 to 40 sq ft of space. The policy would be implemented by a hierarchy of three committees – advisory, steering and vending committees – in which vendors would have 40 per cent repre-

sentation. But the Left Front lost the subsequent KMC elections and thereafter power in the state and the hawkers' policy remained on paper.

An obvious approach to an intractable problem is: if it cannot be abolished, try to humanize it. In late 2011, news reports in Kolkata spoke of a vending cart designed by a Danish firm. These would be smart, compact, hygienic, with provision for inbuilt discharge so as to avoid littering. The Hawker Sangram Committee was looking for financial support to roll out at least 60 by January.

Each cart would have provision for an LPG cylinder, oven, shelf top and colourful umbrella. The carts would be made of steel and take up 20 per cent less space than now. "They are easy to maintain and more important, will be mobile and can be wheeled away," said Ghosh. A pilot project would be launched on a stretch of the Jawaharlal Nehru Road (Chowringhee) where there were 200 food stalls and once the change took place the new carts would be introduced in other areas.

Each cart would cost around ₹60,000 and the committee was looking for private sector sponsorship. It had submitted a proposal to the urban development minister and KMC. "We gave the proposal but there has been no initiative by them," said Ghosh.

Today, not to speak of the new generation carts, there is till now no hawker policy, no bill and no hawker identity cards. In the absence of the town vending committees which were to be set up, neither registration of hawkers nor the demarcation of hawking and no-hawking zones can be done.

Meanwhile the KMC is implementing a solution which is in a way as bad as the disease. Wherever there are large pavements left still unoccupied by hawkers, it is constructing flowerbeds with brick and mortar linings so that there is no space left for hawkers to set up their trade. In the process pavements for pedestrians are disappearing, courtesy KMC.

The basis of a manageable approach to hawkers is already there with wide agreement blessed by the Supreme Court. In essence, the need for hawkers to earn a livelihood and the need for pedestrians to be able to use roads and pavements have to be balanced. Unregulated proliferation for hawkers is bad for hawkers themselves.

If all pavements or road spaces are taken up by hawkers how will customers get to them? For regulation to work the ground rules have to be made part of a state law which has to lay down the mechanism to make it work.

An essential part of the whole management is that the civic authorities and the police have to be strict in not allowing hawkers to proliferate beyond demarcated points. The civic authorities will have to work with measuring tape and paint or draw lines which will have to be sacrosanct. But in the absence of legal provisions and with a corrupt municipal administration and police, all that happens is periodic raids to remove hawkers and their eventual return after paying their customary *hafta*. ■

## INDIA

# The highs and lows of Aadhaar in

*There is enthusiasm but scepticism about its gains*

**T S Sudhir**  
Hyderabad

THE excitement was palpable. Colourfully dressed women came to Gollaprolu, a habitation in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh (AP), in thousands for the rollout of the cash transfer scheme based on the Aadhaar card. They believed the Aadhaar card in their hands was going to change their destiny, their lives. To see so much hope riding on one card was almost touching.

Aadhaar is a 12-digit number that will be used to map India's demographics to enable better delivery of government services.

What was also impressive was the enthusiasm of local officials in getting the project implemented. They were eager to explain how Aadhaar would work and its benefits. The venue was lined with bank stalls and other service providers who have been co-opted to make the Aadhaar way of delivering entitlements and benefits to people a success.

A man with a microphone asked how many of those who had gathered had got an Aadhaar card. At least 70 per cent of hands went up. Some said they had enrolled and were waiting for their card to arrive and after 'seeding' they would be able to draw benefits.

'Seeding' is the process by which the unique identity (UID) number issued through Aadhaar to an individual is linked to the list of beneficiaries for welfare schemes and to the bank account number of the beneficiary.

Two crucial elements are critical for the success of the Aadhaar-enabled delivery of welfare schemes. One is the micro ATM and second is the BC or banking correspondent. The BC could be a village administrative officer or an SHG group member. He or she will receive a micro ATM and make payments at the doorstep of the beneficiary after Aadhaar-enabled biometric authentication.

Representatives of the banking agency went to the homes of pregnant women and new mothers to give them their monetary entitlement under the Janani Suraksha Yojana. "We go to their doorstep and hand over the money they are entitled to get," they said. How will they ensure 100 per cent coverage? The official explained that since there is incentivisation on payment, one could expect maximum coverage.

Narasimha, a third year engineering student was being handed over part of the cash that had got credited into his account. "Earlier I had to run around to find out when and where my scholarship amount would be given. There would be huge delays. May be that will change now," he said.

Andhra Pradesh has had a headstart over other states because its rural development department was already using biometrics for paying money under NREGS and pensions through a multi-pur-



Citizens crowd an Aadhaar counter in Hyderabad

pose household card. As part of the AP Smart Card Project, the state had become a pioneer in electronic benefit transfer in 2007. Through some 15.3 million smart cards, around ₹11,320 crores has already been disbursed.

So how does Aadhaar-based payment make it any better than the earlier system? Critics have pointed out that when no additional benefit accrues to the beneficiary, why is it necessary to go through so much procedure, formality and expenditure to the exchequer to get an Aadhaar card and be linked up through it.

Officials explained that though biometric authentication existed even before the advent of Aadhaar in AP, the reliability of authentication was 65 per cent, but now it is 95 per cent. Besides, the Aadhaar system is portable and online authentication happens in a matter of seconds. The thumbprint or the best fingerprint is transmitted quickly to the centre in Mysore, from where it goes to Delhi and then clearance is given for payment. There is a record both in Mysore and Delhi of the transaction and payment made.

The numbers are boggling. Of AP's 8.5 crore population, 6.5 crore people have been enrolled. About 5.3 crore Aadhaar numbers have been generated with 4.3 crore receiving their numbers. This means 81 per cent of the population is covered with 60 per cent holding a UID number and

80 per cent of card-holders having UID seeding.

Andhra was considered ready for Aadhaar-enabled services because it has a robust online authentication system, a central repository of biometrics, interoperability across banks and BCs and the service charges for all this is paid by the Centre. The roadmap drawn up was that enrolment and seeding would be completed by March 2013.

Aadhaar-enabled Payment Service (AEPS) will be first implemented in East Godavari, Anantapur, Chittoor, Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts by March. The plan was to cover the entire state by April 2013 with AEPS. Now that deadline has been pushed to August 2013.

For the first time, scholarships, pension, NREGA, welfare payments for labour are happening through micro ATMs in the East Godavari district of AP. And central government benefits are not the only ones to be rolled out through Aadhaar. For example, the central government gives ₹424 crore per year as pension to 1.6 million beneficiaries whereas the state government gives ₹1,400 crore to 7.2 million beneficiaries.

Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Rural Development, says he is realistic. Asked if he can do away with problems like fake muster rolls, he says, "Aadhaar is not a 'jadoo ki chhadi', a magic wand to wipe away all ills and problems. It is a sys-

## INDIA

## Andhra Pradesh

tem of reforming a completely broken down delivery system. It is the world's largest experiment in administrative reforms. We will have problems on the ground because of connectivity issues, banks and post offices. We have embarked on it and if we are successful, we would have completely reworked the welfare delivery system."

The ministry is bullish. It points out that the benefits of Aadhaar in backward states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh will be bigger than in Andhra Pradesh.

Witness how East Godavari district, that received the National Aadhaar Governance Award from the Prime Minister in October 2012, gained. It was the first to do authentication. It found seven per cent of all ration cards were fake or duplicated. The saving for the district would amount to ₹120 crores because of PDS authentication through Aadhaar, the minister explained.

- Today out of the district's 5.2 million population, 5 million have Aadhaar.
- Eight hundred thousand beneficiaries have been seeded in welfare schemes like pension, NREGS, Janani Suraksha Yojana and scholarships.
- Four million six hundred thousand people are entitled to the PDS in East Godavari and 3.6 million people have been seeded.
- A pilot project was started in

September 2012, in 100 ration shops using the Aadhaar-authenticated identification system. People receive an SMS when stock comes. So the person gets all commodities at the same time and, more importantly, the real beneficiary gets it.

"Since September, there has been a 20 per cent saving in rice, 30 to 40 per cent in kerosene and up to 15 per cent for pulses," says A Babu, Joint Collector, East Godavari district.

How does it work? Durga has come to the ration shop after she received a text message about the stocks that have arrived. The shopkeeper enters her UID number in what is called POS, or a Point of Sale device, with network connectivity, and authenticates her identity with a fingerprint. The shopkeeper enters the items she wants to purchase after which an automated voice tells her how much she needs to pay.

Has this system made her life simpler? Durga didn't seem too convinced. "The SMS gives information. But all this is complicated. If the machine doesn't work or doesn't accept my fingerprint, I can't take my ration that day. I will have to make another round to the shop, isn't it?" she asks.

Sattu Ramaiah also has his doubts. He says NREGA payments used to be made in a public place in everyone's presence, so everyone knew who was being paid what. Besides, there was a passbook in which there would be a record of how many days he has worked, how much is due and so on.

"Now if there is a problem in the machine, I won't be paid even though everyone knows that I have worked or they know that I am in the pensioners list. Who should we then complain to and how soon will that be addressed," he asks sceptically.

People wonder if the business correspondent will be above board. The new system has left question marks in their minds. Besides, in a country like India, connectivity and proper functioning of devices can never be taken for granted. And that could prove to be a huge new hindrance in the smooth delivery of welfare scheme benefits.

Officials however insist that benefits will become more visible once the Aadhaar-based pay-



Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy handing over an Aadhaar card

ments become fully operational. They point out that it is also an effective monitoring tool. "It will become possible to detect apathy, delays and default," insists Babu, who is extremely optimistic about how Aadhaar can change delivery systems.

Besides, he says, in the PDS, illiteracy is not a barrier as there are active self-help groups to ensure that even those who cannot read the text message are told about the movement of food grains. A mobile penetration of 83 per cent in the district is a huge plus.

Despite its apparent benefits in East Godavari, there is no plan currently to link PDS authentication to Aadhaar in the rest of the country, says P V Ramesh, principal secretary in Andhra Pradesh's finance ministry.

The promise is that the business correspondent will bring the bank to your doorstep. He or she will also transact with many banks and there will be incentives for the amount of money transacted. Since anyone can become a BC, competition will bring down corruption. Online authentication will ensure no BC can cheat an illiterate beneficiary, assures the administration.

Locals are also concerned that instead of separate booklets for their ration card, NREGA, bank accounts and so on that give them information in their hands about their transactions and balance, Aadhaar now becomes a single point of reference.

Officials however claim that Aadhaar will enable enquiry about balance, transfer of funds and so on, making a physical passbook redundant.

But it is not a smooth ride as the AP government discovered to its shock in Hyderabad and the adjacent Ranga Reddy district when it announced that the LPG subsidy will be linked to the Aadhaar card.

In the state capital with a population of four million in the Hyderabad administrative district, more than four million eight hundred thousand Aadhaar registrations took place. Officials blamed the excess numbers on migration and double enrolment.

There was also panic in Hyderabad because the government, emboldened by these numbers, decided that 15 February would be the deadline for everyone to receive their Aadhaar card. If they didn't, they would have to pay the full amount of ₹1,030 for a domestic gas cylinder refill, foregoing the subsidy.

The government's plan was to give the subsidy of some ₹600 to those who had an Aadhaar card. The consumer would pay ₹1,030 for the gas cylinder and subsequently the subsidy would flow into his bank account.

People panicked. They flocked to the Aadhaar centres calling the government's bluff. It was obvious that citizens had either not enrolled or they had not received their Aadhaar cards. The government was forced to do away with its ambitious deadline.

Srinadh was one of those who registered for Aadhaar in March 2010. Three years later he is still awaiting his Aadhaar card. He has been told his card has been dispatched. The post office says it has not got any card in his name.

V. R. Rao and his family spent half a day in 2011 to complete all the formalities for the Aadhaar card only to be told some months ago that an error in the software on that particular day had erased all the entries and he will have to undergo the exercise all over again.

Tempers were therefore flying at Hyderabad's 83 Aadhaar centres. The government was forced to announce that another 300 new enrolment centres would be opened in Hyderabad and in the Ranga Reddy district. But the meagre staff – just four persons to handle a crowd of over 200 at any given point of time – made it look like a very unprofessional exercise.

In February, at Hayathnagar on the outskirts of Hyderabad, queues stretching a few kilometres forced traffic to shut down on the main road. Ultimately, the Aadhaar centre had to be closed for the day.

People fear that linking Aadhaar to LPG cylinders will eventually enable the government to remove or reduce the subsidy for a class of people. Government officials deny any such move.

"It is a hidden subsidy at the moment," says Ramesh. "By paying upfront and getting a refund, it becomes more visible. There is no effort to target. It is basically to eliminate duplicates and stop blackmarketing."

The question on people's minds is whether Aadhaar is meant to benefit the *aam aadmi* or the government. The jury is still out. ■

# INDIA

## Disha rescues troubled women

**Bharat Dogra**  
Saharanpur

A boy in Neena's neighbourhood kept trying to flirt with her. She was just 13 years old and very innocent. Somehow he succeeded in luring her to a place near Haridwar. Here he sold her to a group of gangsters. They subjected her to mass rape. Neena gave birth to a child after some time. The gangsters then sold her to another person. In this way she was sold several times. Finally, she reached Panchkula.

Here one day in the market Neena spotted a truck driver from her village. She managed to hurriedly whisper a message to him to please tell her parents and Disha, a voluntary organisation that helps victims of sexual violence rebuild their lives. As soon as Disha's activists got this news from the truck driver, they went to Panchkula and rescued Neena with the help of the police.

But Neena's problems did not end there. Her family refused to accept her. Disha had to persuade them repeatedly to keep her for a few days. Meanwhile they searched desperately for a decent groom who would accept Neena and her child. This was difficult but fortunately they found Neena a good match. She got married to him and started a new life although all hope appeared to be lost at one stage.

In the villages of Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh especially the Sarasawa and Sadhauri Kadim blocks, women who suffer violence and injustice are frequently advised to go to Disha. In recent years, Disha has emerged as a big source of hope for women at the receiving end of violence. It has built an impeccable reputation due to the hard work and sincerity of its activists who try to help as many distressed women as possible with their modest means.

Rama, a little five-year-old girl, was asked by her mother to carry her father's lunch to him. He used to sell snacks at a stall near their home. When Rama was walking towards his stall, two outsiders who had come to their village, abducted

and raped her. Her condition deteriorated so fast that her parents were beginning to give up hope of their child's life being saved.

When Disha's activists heard about this incident they rushed to the victim's home. They immediately filed an FIR with the police and then took the child to a hospital. The child's life was saved just in time.

However, once the culprits were traced by the police there was a real danger that they might kidnap or murder the child to destroy evidence. To circumvent this, Disha made arrangements to send Rama to a childcare home in a different state where she could also study. The accused were

**In the villages of Saharanpur district of UP especially the Sarasawa and Sadhauri Kadim blocks, women who suffer violence and injustice are advised to go to Disha.**

eventually sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

Tina, a young lady, faced a lot of misfortune and had to move from place to place with her daughter. Raman, a man of dubious character, proposed to her. Lonely and without any family support, Tina agreed to marry him. But when her daughter started growing up, Raman, now her stepfather started making sexual advances to her.

When news of the danger this girl faced reached Disha's activists, they rushed to rescue her and kept her in their protection for some days. Then they searched for a suitable husband for her and got her married.

Garima faced several problems in the home of

her in-laws. She felt that if she lived separately with her husband in another city, her life would improve. But after shifting to Haridwar she realised that her husband was doing illegal work and that he kept the company of suspicious characters.

When he started bringing his friends home, Garima ran away to her parents' home. But the criminals followed her and tried to intimidate her. Disha activists reached just in time to intervene on Garima's behalf. Eventually an arrangement was worked out that provided Garima safety from her husband and his friends.

Rachna is a 16-year-old Dalit girl. Her parents were working in a field. She was carrying tea for them when two boys dragged her to a sugarcane field and raped her. Her mother found her bleeding badly and carried her straight to Disha's office. Disha's activists took her to a hospital in Saharanpur where the lady doctor harassed and humiliated her further.

Still Disha tried to help her as much as possible. Influential people now started approaching Disha to save the two culprits. But Disha remained firm resisting all such overtures and working hard to ensure the cruel culprits were punished.

Disha's activists and legal aid team have often been approached to intervene in very difficult and complex cases. For fact-finding they travel to remote villages. They also attend cases in the courts frequently. And they face threats by criminals and gangsters.

Rape victims are rejected sometimes even by their family members and relatives. To cope, Disha needs the help of lawyers, doctors and socially committed citizens. Also, since several women in distress keep coming to Disha for help and shelter, Disha badly needs the government's help to start a shelter and training centre where distressed women can stay for sometime, receive training and become economically self-reliant. ■

*(Names of the women have been changed to protect their identity)*

### SAMITA'S WORLD

by SAMITA RATHOR



## INDIA

# WISE spots Pratham in innovation hunt

Arjun Sen  
New Delhi

THE World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) is a major initiative of the Qatar Foundation, an independent non-profit that works to provide quality education to children across the world.

Since 2011, the Qatar Foundation has been honouring people who have contributed immensely to education globally. In February, the WISE Prize 2012 was awarded to Dr Madhav Chavan, founder of Pratham, a non-profit in India well known for its innovative approaches to education for the underprivileged.

The Qatar Foundation was established in 1995 by the Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. His wife, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, is the chairperson and driving force of the organization. The Qatar Foundation's key areas of interest are education, science and community development.

The first WISE Prize in 2011 went to Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairman of BRAC, a non-profit in Bangladesh that has improved the lives of millions through education.

Stavros N. Yiannouka, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of WISE was in Delhi to hand over the award to Dr Chavan for "devising an innovative formula to bring education and literacy to millions at a minimum cost."

Until August 2012, Yiannouka was the Executive Vice-Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

Stavros Yiannouka spoke to *Civil Society* on the work of WISE.



Stavros Yiannouka

## What is the mission of WISE?

Our primary focus is to promote education for underprivileged people especially children from low-income households or those in conflict zones who do not have access to education. We were initially conceived as a forum for bringing together stakeholders – entrepreneurs, policy makers, academics, and teachers – to address global challenges in education. Right now we are reorienting our work to primarily achieve three objectives – Access to Quality Education, Learning for Life and Lifelong Learning, and Education Anytime, Anywhere.

## How are you trying to achieve these objectives?

We have a three-pronged approach. The first is to organise a summit every year where all stake-

holders can come together to exchange views and models to address our objectives.

The second is to encourage research and development (R&D) in education, especially work that tackles our Learning for Life and Lifelong Learning objective.

We disseminate this information through an annual publication. For example, in 2012 we published a book 'Learning a Living' authored by independent researchers on radical innovations in education for work.

The third is our Awards and Prizes programme where we recognise and encourage innovative business models that enhance access to education globally through our annual WISE Award.

## In which countries are you based?

We believe we are the first institution in the world trying to advance the cause of education on a truly global scale. We do not believe in doing everything ourselves. We are a small Doha-based organisation with just five full time staff and another 25 or so freelance workers and sub-contractors. But we are working through a 9,000-strong network of partners across 150 countries from Chile in the West to Vladivostok in the East and everything in-between. This network helps us to bring together entrepreneurs, policy makers, academics and teachers who are members of WISE.

Our focus on Learning for Life and Lifelong Learning tries to address skill gaps in all countries including the US, UK, India and China where

we are trying to focus on education for industry so that people can get jobs. For example, in China there are excellent factory jobs available but not enough skilled people to take up these jobs. Most educated persons go for white collar jobs.

## What are your plans in India?

We see India as a source of demand for innovative solutions to the challenges in education and as a source of inspiration or supply of such solutions. For example, by recognising and supporting the work of Dr Chavan we are promoting innovative solutions that meet the education needs of India but at the same time we are trying to encourage a scaling up of his operations so that Pratham can introduce some of their innovative approaches to other countries such as those in Africa.

We are also in the process of identifying similar



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser with Indian schoolchildren

outstanding individuals and organisations that are working on and offering innovative solutions to the educational challenges in India.

## How do you plan to take forward the work of WISE?

During the next five years we want to scale up our role as a broker in innovations and partnerships. For example, I would like to help Pratham extend its work to countries such as in Africa.

Secondly, we would like to extend our activity in dissemination of knowledge and information about all kinds of initiatives in education.

I would like to see WISE emerge as a knowledge portal in education. If you are working in education and you want to know anything that is happening in this field then you should be able to get the information you are seeking by visiting our website. It may not be able to provide you all the answers that you want but we should be able to connect you to people who do have the answers.

Thirdly, in five years time we want to be all over the globe when it comes to any major discussion, seminar or conference in education. This, of course, is easier to achieve.

## What are the changes we will see in WISE in the next five years?

There will be a change in our approach to our Awards and Prizes programme. Right now we have a passive approach – we invite nominations, then process them and our jury evaluates the entries, selecting the organisations and individuals to be given the Award or Prize.

This is going to change. We are going to be more proactive in identifying organisations and individuals in education. We will seek out more actively, people and organisations who can be brought into the WISE network and try to connect them to bring about a more cooperative ecosystem.

Secondly, we will be providing a tool kit to help people working in education and those who want to contribute to find each other. We want to leverage technology to build a crowd-funding platform that can connect innovators and entrepreneurs with those who are willing to invest, like Kickstarter, for instance. We want to create a similar platform.

Finally, we want to scale up our role in promoting R&D and knowledge in education more as an aggregator. ■

## INDIA

# New dam rouses fresh fears



Women protest the building of dams in Uttarakhand

**Rakesh Agrawal**  
Dehradun

THE Supreme Court recently cleared the Vishnugad Pipalkoti Hydroelectricity Project (VNP), giving the green signal for its construction to the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) in Uttarakhand. Pro-dam lobbyists are celebrating.

"There cannot be a better Republic Day gift to the people of Uttarakhand than this judgment. It will take Uttarakhand from darkness to light," exulted Avdhesh Kaushal, a supporter of big dams and head of the Rural Entitlement and Litigation Kendra (RLEK), an NGO based in Dehradun.

In reality, Uttarakhand has a long history of people's movements against mega dams and hydro electricity projects. It also has a poor record of rehabilitating project-affected people, argue activists opposed to the construction of more dams. The Tehri Dam, they say, is one example. The government should first complete all aspects of this dam before embarking on building new ones, they argue.

"The key question is that when a huge amount of money has already been spent on the Tehri Dam and displaced people are yet to be resettled, forget rehabilitated, why not complete that first and generate all the promised 2,400 MW? Then you can go for new projects," reasons Dr. Ravi Chopra, Director, People's Science Institute, Dehradun, and a member of the National Ganga River Basin Authority.

The current VNP envisages the construction of a 65-meter high diversion dam across the Alaknanda River near Helang village in Chamoli

district. The village is on National Highway 58 that connects Delhi to Mana, the last village on the Indo-China border. The road passes through Badrinath, a famous Hindu pilgrimage centre.

Just a few km away is Joshimath, another pilgrimage spot with a population of 5,000. The town has been built on old mountain debris and is considered geologically unstable. In fact, an earlier dam project in the 1970s was abandoned due to a people's movement led by Chandni Prasad Bhatt, the well-known environmentalist. The dam, it was argued, would have crushed the town.

The new VNP is not very different. First, there is zero distance of free flowing river between the upstream Tapovan Vishnugad that is under construction and the proposed Vishnugad Pipalkoti Project. Secondly, a credible Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is yet to be carried out. "The EIA done before was so shoddy that even the World Bank got a fresh one done," says Himanshu Thakkar of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP). But the fresh EIA has no statutory status. The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) will be monitoring compliance to the older one. A proper public consultation process and a full Social Impact Assessment have not been carried out as yet.

The Tehri Dam is still at construction stage. Not many know that this massive dam was supposed to be constructed in three stages. Its total installed capacity was supposed to be 2,400 MW. So far only the first stage, aimed at generating hydropower and drinking water to Delhi, has been completed. The irrigation component is yet to be developed. Resettlement of displaced people lags behind. Meanwhile, more people are getting

displaced due to unanticipated impacts like landslides. The installed capacity at this stage is 1,000 MW.

The second stage of construction – of the 400 MW Koteswar project – seems fully operational now. But there is a rider. "Tehri power generation performance is about 14 per cent below what was promised," says Thakkar.

It is the first stage that generates power currently. Work hasn't yet begun on the third. The pump storage system that aims to generate 1,000 MW is under construction.

"We're not against hydropower, nor are we anti-development," clarifies Chopra. "We have nothing against power generation. But we are forced to oppose many hydro projects because of the callous disregard for laws, rules and regulations of the environment and above all of human lives affected by these projects. All we are saying is that if the courts do not wish to examine gross violation of procedures and conditions for construction of dam projects, whom will ordinary people turn to?"

"The Uttarakhand government has earned at least ₹1,000 crores from the electricity generated by the Tehri dam. It gets 12 per cent royalty. But it spent just a little over ₹1 crore on rehabilitation," alleges Vimal Bhai, convener, Matu Jansangthan, a people's group fighting for the rights of those displaced by the Tehri Dam.

Only a few of the displaced have managed to transit to an urban lifestyle. Some are now living in colonies developed by the THDC on the outskirts of Dehradun. Surendra Singh Rawat, a farmer, was ousted from Khola village in Tehri district. He lost about 0.2 ha. He received 500 sq yards in a THDC colony where he rears five cows. He runs a taxi service and his sons and daughters study in an English medium school.

But many hapless hill people found themselves totally alienated in an urban environment with no forest, grazing land and water sources. They sold their land to people, mostly employed with the government, for peanuts.

Rohan Singh Negi, a sub-inspector in the Uttarakhand Police bought 300 sq yards from one Anil Nautiyal who was ousted from Kansali village in Tehri district, for just ₹80,000 in 2001. Aruna Ramola and her husband, teachers in government schools, got 500 sq yards for ₹40,000 some 10 years ago. "Today, our land is worth ₹75 lakhs," admits Ramola.

People who were resettled in semi-urban areas like Pathari, a colony on the fringes of Haridwar, now live in ramshackle one-room tenements. The Van Gujjars who were evicted from the Rajaji National Park have also been 'resettled' here in an environment utterly alien to them.

Relentless blasting and tunnel construction of the upstream Vishnuprayag Hydroelectricity project destroyed 27 houses in Chaieen village of Chamoli district. The villagers were forced to live in temporary shelters including the railway reservation centre at Joshimath! ■

## INDIA



Education is in a shambles in Keerni near the LoC

## CONFLICT ZONE

# School near border waits for teachers

**Chetna Verma and Mudasar Mughal**  
Poonch (J&K)

**B**ENEATH a tranquil sky and a deceptively calm landscape, children squat on the bare ground clutching their colourful textbooks restlessly. This is their 'open air' classroom in the local government primary school. They are waiting patiently for their teacher to turn up.

Keerni is located at the base of a mountain range, making it particularly susceptible to firing from across the border. The worst year, villagers recall, was in 2000 where, in the aftermath of the Kargil War, both sides would reportedly exchange heavy fire on the LoC with frightening regularity as hostilities between India and Pakistan surged.

For security reasons, the entire village was then vacated by the security forces and was referred to as 'Barbaad Keerni' during the decade that it lay abandoned. The Indian forces subsequently reclaimed the village and permitted its habitation only in 2011. The village is now surrounded by a fence – technically called the Anti Infiltration Obstacle System – constructed to check cross border illegal activities after the Kargil War. There are high security checks at the gates that connect the village to the rest of the state and the country.

Since the village lay abandoned for long years, whatever little infrastructure existed was destroyed. "There were two schools in our village,

a primary and a middle school. Both were destroyed during this period, either blasted by militants or damaged in cross border shelling. Neither has been reconstructed yet. Classes in the primary school, seldom held due to poor weather or frequent absence of the teacher, are of no use. Worse, this erratic exposure to education erodes faith in the benefits of education. The children simply drop out," says Nazam Din Mir, one of only two youth in this village who has been able to complete their graduation. Nazam is pursuing a Masters degree, breaking stereotypes about the aspirations of youth in this remote part of the country.

After the village was resettled, the middle school was shifted across the fence to Qasba. Students have to travel long distances and pass

**'There were two schools in our village, a primary and a middle school. Both were destroyed either blasted by militants or damaged in cross border shelling.'**

through stringent security checks to and from school. As there are no female security guards at the fence, parents are reluctant to send their daughters to the middle school. In the devastated state of education in this village, education for girls needs special focus.

Educational institutions facing the brunt of violence are not new. The trend goes back to the early 1990s when militants would often burn village schools and successfully create an atmosphere of fear that kept an entire generation of children out of school. The government has made several efforts to restore faith in the education system among students and parents. Today, ramshackle buildings are being repaired, teacher-student ratios are improving, enrolment is rising and so is the literacy rate. But problems persist.

A visit to a village merely 15km from Poonch town proves to be an eye-opener. "I send my children to the academy because the quality of education offered by the government school is quite poor," says Razia Begum of Chontra Village. According to Mohammad Bashir, a lecturer by profession, "The problem begins from the primary level. Although the schoolteachers are locals, they share no empathy for their fellow villagers. The very sanctity of the education system is violated when teachers aim only for money and not for their pupils' success."

Many villagers have complained that teachers come to school only to collect their salaries. The teachers have divided their work to suit their convenience. One by one, they take turns to come to school to mark their attendance. On an average, a teacher comes to school only once or twice a week.

"The children of these teachers are studying in the most renowned schools of the district. There should be a law that directs the teachers of government schools to admit their children in government schools only. This is the only way to make them work efficiently," suggested Begum.

The sensitivity towards improving the quality of education must come from the people themselves. In the past, thousands of students who were deprived of their basic right to education became potential recruits of militancy. Today, though the situation is not that grim, the lessons of the past must not be forgotten.

Rabia Kouser, a little five-year-old girl of Azam and his wife Parveez Akhter, goes to her neighbour's house everyday to do their daily chores like washing clothes, utensils and cleaning up their house. Her parents, who grew up in the years of militancy, were not able to get an education. Their lack of awareness is pushing their daughter towards a similar fate.

The conflict that led to the decline of the education system in Jammu and Kashmir is now ebbing. Sadly, other social ills have surged forth to replace them: child labour, unemployment, ignorance, depression and distrust of the government.

In this post militancy phase, the reconciliation between the past and present is an imperative. It may take several generations for the wounds to heal, but a sincere effort is necessary for a promising beginning. For a long time it has been considered the task of governments to promote this process, but it is equally important for communities to come forward, not only to demand their rights but also to extend a hand to help themselves. ■

*Charkha Development Communication Network*

## INDIA

# Golden harvest for the landless



Land reforms coupled with watershed development have boosted agriculture

**Bharat Dogra**  
Chitrakut/Banda

**S**ITTING contentedly in his field of green arhar, Dhuliya, a Dalit in Nedwa-Baraicha village says he's really relieved that he doesn't have to spend his nights on a footpath in Delhi. He is now a farmer with his very own piece of land.

"My own field yields enough food for my family and provides me some cash as well," says Dhuliya, with evident satisfaction.

Nedwa-Baraicha is in the Banda district of Uttar Pradesh. For years Dalits like Dhuliya routinely migrated to Delhi. Mostly, they didn't own land and even if they did they couldn't grow anything on it. The barren topography of the region made cultivation impossible. There was also the hostility of the upper castes to contend with. They resented the Dalits becoming farmers.

Watershed projects do help agriculture but they don't generally have any impact on the poorest families in villages because they don't own any land. Conversely, distributing land to the landless has also proved to be of no use since nobody helps them convert their land into an asset. In the absence of support services like irrigation, soil conservation and leveling, the poorest in the village head off to the city, land or no land.

The Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Seva Sansthaan (ABSSS), a voluntary organization bridged this gap with startling results. Supported by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, the voluntary organization combined its watershed projects with land distribution to the poorest Adivasi and Dalit households in two villages. These were Mangavaan vil-

lage in Manikpur block of Chitrakut district and Dhuliya's village, Neduva-Baraicha, in the Naraini block of Banda district.

Their strategy boosted farm productivity and pulled the poorest families in the two villages out of grinding poverty.

It helped that ABSSS has been working devotedly for many years to get bonded labour released and rehabilitated in Bundelkhand. Land rights for the landless are part of their agenda. Because of their dedicated work they are recognized as the leading voluntary organization in this region.

When ABSSS began they found surprisingly that most land distribution work had already been done – on paper. In Neduva-Baraicha the Dalits had got land titles from the government. But the more difficult work of demarcating fields and measuring plots had not been carried out. So Dalits and tribals did not know the size and location of the land allotted to them. Some poor families did not dare to take possession of their land since more powerful people had encroached on it.

The few who daringly took the plunge were made to pay the price. They slogged and slaved to improve their land. Then powerful villagers in cahoots with revenue officials would get this land transferred into their own name. More inferior land was instead allotted to the hapless families. Such unscrupulous behaviour was possible because land demarcation and measurement had not been carried out leaving room for such treachery.

"Pressure had to be exerted again and again by mobilizing the local Kol tribals of Mangavaan to ensure that the administration accorded priority to this task. Finally, special teams of lekhpals (rev-

enue officials) were constituted who measured and demarcated the land within a set timeframe," explains Gopalji, founder of the ABSSS.

Once their legal land rights were assured the Dalits and tribals got the courage to cultivate their land. They also united to ward off any effort to evict them. Alongside, ABSSS carried out the watershed projects.

Of course since watershed development takes a 'ridge to valley' approach it has to cover all farmers, big or small. Ensuring land rights does not remove all inequality as the bigger landowners still own more land.

"Despite land inequality we try our best to ensure more benefits to the weakest households. Development work on their fields is given priority," says Bhagwat Prasad, director of the ABSSS. "We ensure the representation of weaker sections in committees which implement and plan watershed projects."

Watershed development included soil and water conservation works, bunding, levelling, construction of check dams, wells, tanks and ponds, repair of existing wells and tanks, afforestation and regeneration of pastures.

In the ravines of Neduewa making the land productive was hugely arduous. But careful planning and hard work yielded wonders. Today, verdant green fields have replaced the rocky barren landscape. Apart from growing food for their own consumption, farmers here cultivate groundnut and vegetables to earn extra cash.

"Among tribals our family did have a fairly large landholding. So it is not as if I did not own land," says Kodo Kol, now a prosperous farmer of Mangavaan. "But my field was so unproductive that we had to borrow money just to survive. I remember a time when I had to take a loan of Rs. 100 from a big landowner. As I could not return this money I had to work on his field for one whole year for just ₹5 per day." Today, Kodo grows wheat and rice for his family and til and mustard to sell in the market.

Bhailal Kol, another newbie farmer, says he was very impressed with his watershed committee's management skills. "This development work progressed because we were completely involved in it. It was improving our fields. Wages were received on time and there were no suspicions. Everyone was able to give his best without any worries."

This is an area where several irrigation projects have failed. The reason was heavy seepage. So special care was taken. Suitable soil was fetched from elsewhere for core-walls. Everything was done to ensure seepage did not ruin the works.

Villagers were repeatedly consulted on site-selection, catchment and identification of old damaged irrigation sources which could be repaired. All this provided big gains at low cost. The risk of failure was reduced. The structures prepared or repaired in these projects provide a fine example of cost-effectiveness, despite exigent land conditions. ■

*This report has been written under the CSE Media Fellowship.*





## Polio couldn't cripple Ajaya's spirit

Ajaya was afflicted with polio at the age of five. Yet, this disability didn't curb his desire to be self-reliant. His determination led him to Project Jyoti, Microsoft's technology skills program that imparts basic computer literacy to young people, for better employment opportunities. Armed with his newly-acquired skills, he soon found a job in a government-sponsored project, and today helps his fellow villagers in Kandhamal, Odisha secure a livelihood. Ajaya's achievement reflects Microsoft's commitment to empower youth to change their world.

**Project Jyoti:** Run in partnership with 14 NGOs, the program has trained over 450,000 youth, of whom 70% are in jobs or self-employed.



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# Glocal has built 5, plans 50, aims to

# LOW COST HOSPITALS ARE HERE

*Caesarean for ₹7,000, appendectomy for ₹12,000 but yet profitable*

**Arijun Sen**  
Khargram

**H**ARIMATI Das, 60, a destitute widow with no children, lives in Panchtupi, a remote village in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. When she was suffering from piles and fistula, kindly neighbours took her for treatment to the Khargram block, some 10 km away. They had heard that a spanking new hospital, clean as a whistle, had sprung up there. They praised this hospital for its caring staff and good food.

People were aware that it was a private hospital, but money was not an issue for the impoverished Harimati. After all, she owned the magic card – a piece of green plastic containing her biometric data – that the government had given her under the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), which is a health insurance scheme launched in 2008 for Indians living below the poverty line (BPL).

Opened in June 2012, the Khargram hospital is one of five that Glocal Healthcare Systems Pvt. Ltd. (GHSPL), a social enterprise based in Kolkata, has set up in a short span of 20 months. The company was launched in late 2010. Encouraged by RSBY, which gives a family up to ₹30,000 a year for healthcare, Glocal has created a sustainable business model for inexpensive hospitals that have the potential to bridge the huge gaps in India's health delivery system.

The government has failed to provide adequate healthcare infrastructure in rural areas. Most private sector hospitals on the other hand prefer to chase profits. They offer super specialty facilities and charge high fees.

Under RSBY 30 million cards have been issued and some 150 million people are covered by the scheme. Hospitals have been empanelled and insurance companies have been selected. The costs of procedures have been fixed. The scheme is computerised and cashless with money transferred directly to the hospital. But the problem remains that hospitals which people can go to in rural areas don't exist.

Glocal is the first chain of hospitals that has chosen to swim against the

tide. It has shown that it is possible to serve RSBY cardholders and yet be profitable. In Glocal's hospitals, care is being provided at a cost which is 40 to 50 per cent less than industry standards. A caesarean section is performed for ₹7,000 compared to ₹15,000 in other hospitals, an appendectomy for ₹12,000 instead of ₹20,000. Despite being so much cheaper, Glocal hospitals are breaking even in six to eight months compared to the industry standard of two years.

Glocal is all poised to expand exponentially. After setting up five hospitals in poor areas, it plans to construct another 50 hospitals with 5,000 beds in the next 18 to 20 months. Glocal aims to become India's largest hospital chain by 2015 outrunning current private sector healthcare leaders, Fortis and Apollo, which cater to the rich in urban areas.

"All healthcare indicators for India are poorer than each and every South Asian country. But we are right at the top globally when it comes to the number of CT Scans and MRI machines per capita. This just shows how private sector healthcare in India is more focused on a patient's wealth rather than health," remarks Dr Sabahat Azim, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Glocal Hospitals at his modern minimalistic office in Kolkata's Rajarhat New Town.

The youngest son of a civil servant in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Azim was persuaded to become a doctor by his parents. Keen to work for the country, he joined the IAS and ultimately became Secretary to the Chief Minister of Tripura.

But he found his role as a bureaucrat limiting. So he quit his secure, prestigious government job and joined the SREI Group in Kolkata which had undertaken the task of building rural IT infrastructure in India under the Union government's National e-Governance Plan (NEGP).

In 2007 Azim helped launch Sahaj e-Village, which envisaged creating Common Service Centres (CSCs) in six states, offering B2B, B2C, G2C and e-Learning services. While setting up 18,000 such centres, he identified a major rural lacuna – the absence of affordable and quality healthcare.



A patient with the RSBY card

# be bigger than Apollo by 2015

PRASANTA BISWAS



comprises 400,000 rural people. The hospital began functioning in June 2012.

The fourth hospital with 70 beds is at Bolpur, another sub-divisional town in Birbhum district. It caters to 60,000 urban and 300,000 rural people. It became operational in July 2012.

The fifth hospital with 100 beds is at Bahrampur, headquarters of Murshidabad district. This hospital attracts an urban population of 100,000 people. It began providing services in November 2012.

"The first four hospitals were our laboratories. We learnt and standardized our model. Now all our hospitals have been upgraded to 100 beds or are adding beds. Our future hospitals will have 100 beds," Azim says. The time taken to construct and make each hospital operational has been fixed at six to eight months. This helps to cut costs, he explains.

Meanwhile, land acquisition for two more hospitals – at Jeypore in Orissa and Raipur in Chhattisgarh – have been finalized and construction will start this month. Land acquisition for four more sites in Lucknow and Rai Bareilli districts of UP and Siwan district in Bihar is expected to be completed shortly.

Over the next 12 months, four hospitals will start construction each month so that by August 2014, Glocal will have another 50 functional hospitals with 5,000 beds.

"By 2015 we should equal or cross Apollo Hospitals, which has 49 hospi-

tals and 7,946 beds," says Azim.

In 2010, Azim and some of his colleagues quit SREI to bridge this gap. Azim floated Glocal with an initial capital of ₹1 crore pooled from his own savings and from his Sahaj colleagues, Major (retd) Ashutosh Shrivastava, Gautam Chowdhury and Paresh Singhal. The company brought on board as chairman M. Damodaran, former chairman of UTI and SEBI, well-known as a champion of corporate governance. He is also a founder investor.

Impressed by Glocal's innovative business and healthcare delivery plan, Sequoia Capital, financier of search giant Google Inc., and Elevar Equity co-invested \$3 million (₹15 crore) as equity in January, 2011, even before the company set up its first hospital. United Bank of India (UBI) chipped in with debt funds of ₹18 crore and in March, 2011, Glocal dug the foundation of its first hospital at Sonamukhi in Bankura district of West Bengal.

"Our first hospital had 30 beds," recalls Major Ashutosh Shrivastava, Glocal's chief operating officer. Sonamukhi is a sub-divisional town and the hospital's catchment covers 40,000 urban and 100,000 rural people. It became fully operational with all licences and permits in just five months. In July 2011, the hospital admitted its first patient.

Glocal's second hospital with 30 beds was built in Dubrajpur, Birbhum, another sub-divisional town with a population of 50,000 urban and 300,000 rural people. It became operational in December 2011.

The third one, also with 30 beds, is at Khargram in Murshidabad district. Khargram's population

**SPEED AND VOLUME:** Ranjit K. Maity is Glocal's Senior Governance Advisor. A former Special Secretary to the West Bengal government, Maity ensures that compliance and licensing issues are dealt with quickly and hospitals are constructed as per deadline.

"In West Bengal as many as 30 licences, permits, NOCs or empanelment processes are required to set up a hospital," says Maity. Glocal thoroughly studied all licensing norms and incorporated them into the design of its hospitals. This has helped the company to get clearances within six to eight months.

"Our credibility and connections in the state government have helped us get clearances in record time without paying any bribes. But in other states we are forming limited liability partnerships so that our partners can take

care of clearances within our construction time of eight months," Maity said. "The regulatory framework is a lot simpler in other states so our hospitals should get the clearances even faster."

Apart from the speed of construction, what is more unbelievable is the fact that financially all five hospitals have broken even. "The Khargram hospital which is in the poorest area and became operational only in June 2012, has just broken even. This proves that it is possible to provide the highest quality healthcare service to the poorest of the poor thanks to the RSBY," says Azim.

Currently, 44 per cent of Glocal's revenue comes

**'Our first four hospitals were our laboratories. We learnt and standardized our model. Now all our hospitals have been upgraded to 100 beds or are adding beds.'**

# COVER

from RSBY patients while the rest is from cash patients. For surgical procedures, cash patients are charged the same rate as RSBY patients. It is only in the case of conservatives – patients that do not undergo any surgery but are hospitalised and only given medication – that there is a difference in rates. RSBY permits ₹500 per day for cost of bed, doctors, food and medication, but cash patients are charged ₹700 per day plus the cost of medication.

“We make some money even from RSBY patients for surgical procedures as the rates are very reasonable. But we lose money on conservatives because the RSBY rate of ₹500 is too low,” says Shrivastava. Glocal makes this up by levying a higher charge for cash patient conservatives. Moreover, some of the hospitals offer separate cabins for patients who are willing to pay although rates for such facilities are still far lower than for other hospitals. “All wards including those for RSBY patients and for cabins are air-conditioned as this improves cleanliness, reduces air pollution and mitigates the risk of infection,” says Shrivastava.

Rapid scaling up to gain volumes is playing a role in ensuring sustainability, Azim says. By the end of January the company’s hospitals had treated as many as 77,834 patients, conducted 3,452 surgeries and till end-December managed 274 childbirths and 2,505 emergencies including trauma and accident cases.

**NUMBER CRUNCHING:** Glocal is scaling up rapidly and confidently because its model is based on ground realities. Culling data from the 2005 report of the National Commission of Macroeconomics and Health chaired by the then Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and Union

Health Minister Ambubani Ramadoss as well as from other sources, Azim’s team found out that just 42 diseases accounted for 95 per cent of the disease load in rural areas. Eighty five per cent of the population suffered from only 17 diseases.

Glocal concluded that the healthcare needs of 95 per cent of the population could be met with secondary level hospitalized healthcare.

“The larger market is in secondary healthcare,” explains Azim. “So we decided right from the beginning that we will set up hospitals with radical changes in the design of the healthcare delivery model, far beyond the much tested approach of beginning with the tertiary model and cutting it down to suit actual health needs.”

The Glocal team worked out a standardized diagnosis and management protocol for the 42 diseases that 95 per cent of the population suffered from. These ranged from ischemic heart disease to malaria. Glocal mulled over what was needed in secondary level healthcare to treat these diseases. Its first hospital was designed on this

basis. A costing exercise revealed that on paper a tehsil or block comprising around 140,000 people could be provided secondary level healthcare at an annual cost of about ₹8 crore.

But that was not all. An even more important finding was that an average villager spent as much as ₹1,115 a year on secondary healthcare. So, totally, the population of a block spent approximately ₹16 crore a year on such healthcare.

“Even if the ground reality turned out different from what we had worked out, there still remained a big gap of ₹8 crore from the theoretical cost of secondary treat-



PRASANTA BISWAS

A patient on her way back home after surgery at Glocal’s Khargram hospital



LAKSHMAN ANAND

Surgery at Glocal’s Bolpur hospital



A patient recovering in the ward of G

## COVER

LAKSHMAN ANAND



Dr Sabahat Azim, founder and CEO, Glocal Healthcare Systems

**Glocal developed its own modular and scalable design which eschewed all ornamentation. Instead the focus was on what was essentially needed to provide high quality secondary healthcare. There was emphasis on being green and energy efficient.**

LAKSHMAN ANAND



f Glocal's Bolpur hospital

ment for a block and what was actually being spent by the people. We could certainly step in, provide high quality healthcare at affordable rates and still be sustainable by making some money for ourselves as long as we dealt in volumes," Azim says.

**APPROPRIATE DESIGN:** Glocal has designed its hospitals to fit its healthcare model. "We adopted the architectural philosophy of Howard Roark, the chief protagonist of Ayn Rand's famous novel, *The Fountainhead*, who believed that buildings should be designed and built to fit their location, material and purpose elegantly and efficiently," says Azim.

Going against the grain, Glocal adopted what Azim calls a 'zero-based framework' where all assumptions were questioned. It developed its own modular and scalable design, which eschewed all ornamentation. Instead the focus was on what was essentially needed to provide high quality secondary healthcare. There was emphasis on being green, energy efficient and durable.

A set of rules for construction was drafted so that the company could build 28,000 sq. ft, 100-bed hospitals in just six to eight months. These hospitals look aesthetic from outside and are efficient and comfortable inside for both caregivers and patients. The technologically superior layout also ensures effective containment of infections.

The no frills approach cut costs and helped to improve efficiency. By removing clutter and smoothening traffic flows, Glocal hospitals have brought down the time that OPD patients take to get check-ups, tests and reports done from six hours to about 1.5 hours. "This means that less waiting spaces are required," Shrivastava said.

Medical equipment was selected according to the disease load. So all fancy equipment that wasn't required for treating the 42 identified diseases were excluded. None of the hospitals have a CT

Scan or an MRI machine. Even then all the hospitals are multi-speciality. They have medicine, surgery, gynaecology, obstetrics, paediatrics, orthopaedics, critical care, trauma and emergency departments. "We are also adding eye and dental care especially in rural hospitals where there is a dearth of such basic amenities," Azim said.

Equipment was not bought off the shelf. Instead, Glocal infiltrated the supply chain of equipment makers, identified their original component manufacturers and got their equipment assembled at costs much lower than what most hospitals pay for the finished product.

Glocal has also adopted a number of innovative techniques to cut down equipment costs. For example, GHSPL attaches a low cost Chinese made camera to an analogue X-ray machine to digitalise the images at a much lower cost than a digital X-ray machine.

"We have a radiologist sitting in Lucknow. All X-rays done in the morning are sent over the Internet to him. The radiologist sends them back with his expert opinion by 2 pm. Similarly, all X-rays done in the afternoon come back with his opinion by 8 pm," says Shrivastava.

This radiologist in Lucknow peruses the X-rays of all five hospitals.

"What differentiates us from others is our in-house technology division," says Soura Bhattacharya, Glocal's Chief of Medical Technologies. He graduated from IIT Kharagpur and Harvard Business School. "We have pioneered the use of technology to integrate all aspects of the hospital. Our hospitals are digitalised, paperless and Wi-Fi enabled. Each hospital is linked over a 2 Mbps link to a data centre. There is a very high level of technology integration."

"Apart from tele-radiology, we routinely use tele-consultation, tele-pathology, tele-sonology and tele-endoscopy so that our clinical experts can convey their opinion to doctors and patients in remote locations from the comfort of their offices," Bhattacharya said.

"We have also integrated clinical intelligence with process flows and pioneering applications for which patents have been filed," he said.

To trim diagnosis and disease management costs, Glocal has adopted a standardised Medical Diagnosis & Management System (MDMS) that is con-

# COVER

nected to the Hospital Management Information System (HMIS). This is an artificial intelligence system that helps in diagnosis, in choosing medication, preventing drug interaction, contra-indication and adverse drug reactions.

"The MDMS is an expert learning system. As soon as a doctor begins to attend to a patient he or she feeds in the symptoms and clinical findings on an already formatted online form. The system provides the necessary prompts at every stage so that the whole process of diagnosis and management is standardized. The system itself provides results. Based on symptoms and clinical examinations, it suggests the pathological tests needed to arrive at a diagnosis. If no such tests are needed, the system itself will say so. We started with an initial version developed by Dr Azim which focused on a protocol for diagnosis. With constant feedback from attending doctors, the interactive and learning system has gradually got fine tuned and we now have certain set processes for disease management," Shrivastava said.

While the system's in-built reference helps in diagnosis and treatment, doctors are free to exercise their judgement. If a doctor does not agree with what the system prompts then he can prescribe differently but he has to give detailed reasons why.

Finally, actual outcomes are fed back into the system. If the doctor was right and the system was wrong the system automatically gets updated. On the other hand, if the doctor was wrong and the system was right, the doctor learns why and where he went wrong.

To ensure high quality feedback, Glocal also routinely measures healthcare delivery outcomes. "Most other hospitals only ask about a patient's experience at the hospital at the time of their discharge. Our tele-callers call up patients a week after their discharge to find out whether their health problems have been resolved," Shrivastava said.

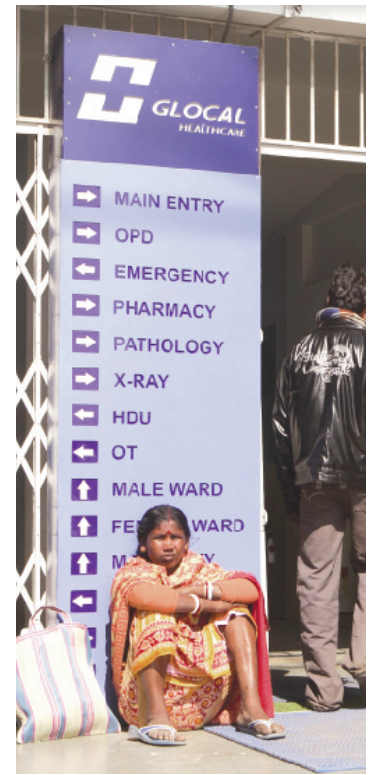
This makes the entire process of diagnosis and management fully transparent and documented. It ensures that an accurate diagnosis is arrived at quickly without unnecessary medicines, pathological tests and procedures. The whole process is also auditable so the scope for management or doctors to make patients undergo unnecessary tests and procedures is ruled out.

"To cut medication costs, we are trying to do away with branded drugs completely. But there are issues like spurious generics. So although we have to sometimes fall back on branded versions, we are constantly identifying and eliminating poor quality generic producers and replacing them with high

LAKSHMAN ANAND



A mother with her newborn baby



Glocal's Khargram Hospital

quality ones," says Shrivastava.

"All this means lean healthcare management and predictable and controlled costs. We have cut the need for all kinds of in-house super-specialists. Even an MBBS can manage hypoglycaemia or any such disease as specialist knowledge is either built into the system or a specialist's help can be sought through our tele-medicine backbone," explains Bhattacharya.

Glocal has about six full time super-specialists and another 10 to 12 specialists on an empanelled basis in each hospital. The system helps delegation of more work to MBBS doctors under the guidance of specialists.

LAKSHMAN ANAND



The Glocal team at the Bolpur hospital

# COVER



LAKSHMAN ANAND



LAKSHMAN ANAND

A doctor attends to a patient in the OPD

## ATTRACTING TALENT:

Glocal's professional, technology driven environment and its emphasis on quality healthcare has helped it attract talent.

Dr Arun Mathur quit Apollo Hospitals to join Glocal's Khargram hospital as chief anaesthetist.

"Here I am asked to heal patients, not to make money out of them," he says. Well-known gynaecologist Dr Nikhilendu Mahapatra is known as the "bloodless surgeon" since he conducts most surgeries without requiring blood transfusion. Glocal has rightly placed him at Khargram where there are no blood banks and getting blood in an emergency is often impossible. "I love the challenge of serving people in such an area," he says proudly.

Patients are equally happy. Habibur Mullick, 60, lodged in the male ward at Glocal's Bolpur hospital is recovering from surgery. He doesn't have the RSBY card but he is effusive in his praise. "The nurses, doctors and attendants should be given prizes for the excellent care they have taken of me," he says. Asked why he chose this hospital when Bolpur also has a government hospital, he said "I have been to PG Hospital in Kolkata and hospitals in Burdwan, Bolpur and Siuri. But no hospital is as clean as this place. Most importantly, people promise but don't really deliver. Here the service is so good. I don't know how they got such good people," he wondered aloud even as Shrivastava and other members of the management team stood around.

**RSBY CHALLENGES:** Azim gives a lot of credit to Anil Swarup who devised the RSBY for Glocal's success. "The RSBY is an absolutely amazing and highly intel-



LAKSHMAN ANAND

Patients being admitted at the Glocal Hospital in Bolpur

**Habibur Mullick, 60, is recovering from surgery. He doesn't have the RSBY card but he is effusive in his praise. 'The nurses, doctors and attendants should be given prizes for the excellent care they have taken of me.'**

ligent scheme. Anil Swarup should get the Nobel Prize for it," gushed Azim. "What RSBY has done is to use market forces to ensure free but high quality healthcare for the poor. It has encouraged private players like us to quickly build health infrastructure even in the most underserved areas," he said.

"There are concerns that RSBY has resulted in hospitals carrying out unnecessary surgeries so that they can get more money out of the scheme. No system will be perfect. What we do need to note is the low percentage of fraud that is possible under the RSBY system," said Azim.

"The premium is collected by insurance companies and they do not want to pay unnecessarily. Therefore, they have an incentive to conduct thorough audits. We also have an incentive to ensure that we get paid on all claims so if a doctor in our hospitals does too many procedures, the audit system alerts us too.

I can say the RSBY system uses market forces to ensure that both service providers as well as insurers actually end up working together to reduce fraud," explained Azim.

There is an unmet need for surgeries that has built up over the years. Glocal hospitals report that people live with hernias, hydroceles and debilitating growths for years because they cannot afford the so-called free treatment being provided by public hospitals. RSBY has provided a mechanism to fulfil this unmet need.

The problem is that in most states there aren't sufficient healthcare providers even when RSBY patients can pay. "But when other private players see that we are making money serving RSBY patients, they too will set up health infrastructure in rural areas," says Azim. ■

# Business

- Enterprise
- Inclusion
- CSR
- ICT
- Go Green

PICTURES BY LAKSHMAN ANAND



Skilled traditional metal workers grind and sharpen scissors in Meerut

## Meerut scissors are special

**Arjun Sen**  
Meerut (UP)

FOR nearly 100 years, Meerut's scissors have been the preferred choice of barbers and tailors throughout India. Around 70,000 traditional metal workers manufacture these scissors. Among them are Irfan Ahmed, Imran Saif and Kamar Ahmed. They work long hours, earning about ₹200 a day.

But, hopefully now, they are close to seeing better days. The Scissors and Razors Manufacturing

Cluster in Meerut, consisting of 200 micro-enterprises, has joined hands with metal workers to seek a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for their scissors.

"The GI listing will protect us from imitations produced by other makers in India. It will also help us to compete against imports from large scale industries in China, Germany, Japan, Italy, Brazil and Pakistan," says Sharif Ahmed, secretary of the Meerut Scissor Manufacturers Special Purpose Vehicle (MESMA SPV), the association that has applied for GI registration. It has sought the help

of the Intellectual Property Facilitation Centre (IPFC) of the Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME).

"The Uttar Pradesh (UP) government has allotted us land in Meerut's Lohia Nagar to set up a manufacturing cluster with a Common Facility Centre (CFC). This will improve working conditions for metal craftsmen, help technology and diversify our product range. The GI tag will fetch us better prices and bigger volumes. It will improve the lives of all those engaged in this traditional handicraft and boost local industry," says



# BUSINESS

Girish Kumar, Vice President of the Meerut Economic Development Forum and Central Executive Committee Member of FISME.

A GI registration is given to a product if it is unique, traditional and enjoys a certain reputation due to its geographical origin, which could be a town, region or country.

Some examples are Darjeeling Tea, Kancheepuram Silk, Mysore Sandal Soap, Bastar Dhokra, Kashmir's Pashmina, Lucknow Chikan, Goa's Feni, Banaras Brocade, Bikaneri Bhujia and Baluchari saris. So far the GI Registry office under the Union Ministry of Commerce has granted GI registration to 178 such products.

FISME is helping the MESMA SPV acquire the GI tag. Ravi S. who heads FISME's Hyderabad IPFC and Karmajit Singh Saluja, head of FISME's New Delhi IPFC office are both experts in intellectual property rights (IPR) and advocates specializing in GI applications. They are now preparing the final documentation required to get Meerut's scissors the GI tag.

While the application for GI registration was made on 19 December 2012, the process of registration may take at least another six months. "We will soon file all the supporting documents and after that the GI Registry office will appoint a panel of experts to verify the claim. The GI tag will be granted once they are satisfied," says Saluja.

"GI is a form of IPR like a patent or trade mark. Once Meerut scissor makers get the registration they will be able to put the GI tag on all their products. They can seek civil and criminal remedial measures against those who claim their products to be Meerut Scissors even though they are not members of the MESMA SPV or have not got permission from them to produce scissors according to their exact specifications," explained Ravi.

The reputation of Meerut Scissors will then be protected. Nobody can fool around with it. After all it is a brand that has been built over a century by inventive Indian blacksmiths.

"Meerut's scissors eminently qualify for the GI registration as they meet all the required criteria. We want to make this a model GI listing for traditional Indian products made in the MSME industrial manufacturing sector," says Anil Bharadwaj, Secretary-General of FISME.

"The scissors have all three criteria for getting the GI tag. They have certain unique qualities, they are manufactured using highly skilled traditional methods and they have a pan-India reputation," says Ravi.

The most important quality of Meerut scissors is that they can be re-sharpened and used over generations. It is said about Meerut scissors that *Dadu le, pota barte* or "Grandfather buys, grandson uses," says Sharif, who is owner of Sheikh Scissors Industry and specialises in making scissors for tailors.

"Unlike Meerut scissors, similar products including those from China and elsewhere are use and throw," says Kumar. This is the reason why tailors and barbers, especially in rural areas, prefer to buy Meerut's scissors. "The key advantage is that people in rural areas cannot afford to go to the city every time their scissors become blunt. They can easily get them re-sharpened locally," says Mohammed Alam, owner of Munco Industries, which specialises in the manufacture



Mohammad Alam with workers at his workshop



Scissors for tailors are heavier and have unbreakable brass handles



A skilled grinder at work

of barber scissors. His father Mizbahuddin registered Munco as a trademark in 1956.

Cheaper imports from China have hit the ₹25 crore Meerut scissor industry hard, said Sharif. "My orders have come down from 300 pairs to about 150 pairs now," says Alam.

But the ingenious Alam is trying to counter the Chinese threat. Using carbon steel he has developed high quality and well-designed scissors with plastic handles for beauty parlours. And the added beauty of his scissors is that they can be re-sharpened unlike the Chinese ones, he said.

The Meerut scissors industry has a long history. According to local legend, makers of swords and knives accidentally hit upon the idea of scissors when two swords placed across each other and tied together were found very effective in cutting leather some 360 years ago.

Documented evidence, however, shows that

# BUSINESS



Left to right: Girish Kumar, Sharif Ahmed, Hemant Kumar and Main Pal Singh



Barber scissors ready for riveting



Molten brass being poured into a cast for handles

the Meerut Scissors cluster is about 135 years old. According to an entry made 44 years ago in the UP District Gazetteers Meerut, 1965, "The scissors industry (in Meerut) is about 90 years old. It was first started by a dexterous blacksmith, Muhammad Akhon. He was able to produce three or four pairs of scissors of good quality in a day. His method was copied and gradually the industry grew, as did its reputation. The workmanship was improved by successive generations of blacksmiths." This is the key documentation that establishes the association of Meerut Scissors to its geographical location and is the basis of the GI application, said Saluja.

Also, the Meerut Scissors cluster is originally based on traditional technological processes that have been used by Indian blacksmiths since 400 to 500 BC. Natural iron ore lumps were converted into molten steel by using coal or wood. Different processing methods were followed to make the

iron hard and less prone to rusting.

At present, the Meerut Scissors cluster uses scrap leaf springs from scrapped heavy vehicles such as buses, trucks and railway carriages. These leaf springs are made from fairly high-quality steel.

The scrap leaf springs are flattened using traditional handcrafting processes by heating and hammering. The flattened steel of about one-eighth inch thickness is then cut into strips about one inch wide and six to 12 inches long. This primary work is done by blacksmiths in villages around Meerut such as Meerapur, Badagaon, Sarota, Qila and Mawana.

Scissor makers in Meerut, concentrated in Kotla, Zakir Colony, Sabun Gran or Shyamnagar, buy this raw material from village-based blacksmiths to produce scissors. In the case of scissors for tailoring, used and blunt files sold as scrap are also utilised as raw materials.

For barber scissors, which are much lighter and need less strength for cutting, the blade and handle is made from a single piece of metal. Handles for larger and heavier tailoring scissors are made from brass obtained from scrap brass utensils. The brass is hand forged into the blade using an open air-blown furnace to melt the metal. It is then moulded on the handles, using an age-old mould casting process.

"These heavy tailor scissors with unbreakable brass handles are also unique to Meerut," says Sharif. "It takes between three to six months for an artisan to acquire the skills to do this job to the required level of quality," he added.

The strips have to be drilled with great precision for riveting and curving and then grinding for sharpness. A process of tempering is also done to ensure uniform hardness of the metal. The blades are then sharpened to the right degree, again using handcrafted methods. Quality control is entirely through visual and manual inspection and this too requires a skilled and sharp eye. It is essential for scissor blades to have the right curve and sharpness to be able to meet only at the cutting edge. Then cutting can take place with ease.

"To get a GI for agricultural and food products the special characteristics that come from the geography, geology and climate of a certain place interacting with the plant or agriculture product is most important. In the case of manufactured products which have acquired a reputation for certain specific qualities, the method of production and skill required that are exclusively obtained in a specific geographical location is the primary requirement for getting a GI tag," explained Ravi.

And this is what makes Meerut Scissors a perfect candidate for a GI application, he said. The skills required to produce the perfect scissor is not available anywhere else. ■

# Insights

- Opinion
- Analysis
- Research
- Ideas
- Angst

## From village to global market

RAM GIDOOMAL

**M**Y passion is to see the disadvantaged – both individuals and communities – transformed and restored. I love to see people and groups of people becoming empowered and gaining back their self-respect, whether they are marginalised because of poverty, faith, political persecution or some other reason.

Business has a lot to offer the disadvantaged, particularly the economically disadvantaged. Ethical business, in particular, has the values and the tools to transform whole communities, and this is something I have seen time and time again across the world.

This is because ethical business has a heart of compassion for the underdog. But it's an active compassion that sees a need and then does something about it. This might include enabling people who need empowering, who are denied basic rights by our modern society. It might mean seeing a need and linking up small communities with the wider world, for example, connecting villages with cities, or the east with the west.

I currently chair Traidcraft, where we help the world's poor build more sustainable businesses for themselves, expand their local markets and even sell their products to the Sainsbury's and Waitrose's of the world. Through Traidcraft, and other businesses with which I am involved, we provide an economically sustainable engine to promote social justice and stewardship of resources for generations to come.

How this translates, at grassroots level, is that disadvantaged individuals and communities get to experience transformation through business.

My recent visit from the UK, where I live, to India, provided several exciting examples of this. One particularly striking one occurred when I went south, and I'd like to tell you about that.

I visited India in September 2012 as part of my induction as Chairman of Traidcraft, having been appointed the previous year. On this trip, I had the pleasure of visiting Kerala, Mumbai, Goa, Delhi and Jaipur. The aim of the first part of my visit was to see various Traidcraft projects, and these took me to the villages.



Sustainable businesses can find robust markets

**Ethical business has a heart of compassion for the underdog. But it's an active compassion that sees a need and then does something about it.**

I had been to Bangladesh earlier that year and to Kenya, where Traidcraft also has offices, and so when I visited India, the villages were very much on my mind. So, I was looking forward to visiting Kerala, and was being hosted by FTAK (Fairtrade Alliance of Kerala) which works closely with the villages in the region, helping them to build their businesses and make connections further afield.

The first thing that struck me was the similarities of village life – the villages in Kerala were not far different from the ones I saw in Bangladesh or Kenya! I'm talking in generalities here, but I saw the same types of houses – ones that are not as

*Continued on page 28*

# INSIGHTS

**Continued from page 27**

robust as ones in the city. The villages in the three places I mentioned also face the same challenges in terms of access to power, electricity and clean water.

The journey to the villages was very interesting, as we transitioned from tarmac roads to dusty tracks. I had just come from Dubai with its tall skyscrapers and evident affluence. My flight took me into Kozhikode airport in north-western Kerala, and I then had transportation that took me as close to the villages is possible, on roads that were excellent to start with. Then, as we approached the villages, we encountered the dust clouds that rose up from the dry, dusty tracks!

The interesting thing was when we started looking for satellite navigation directions to a particular village – the sat nav wasn't helpful at all! The easiest way was to ask a villager for directions, and of course everything is "five or ten minutes that way..." and then the next person tells you the same thing. Naturally, the journey was much longer than we were anticipating. The villagers we asked obviously knew the area, as we got there in the end.

The FTAK team took me to a hut to meet local businesspeople and it was exciting to sit down and engage with them. They also showed me some of their businesses. I was inspired by what they had achieved. They had set up small farming communities, and industrious individuals were producing rubber from many trees. They explained how they were able to transition from product to product, creatively and effectively, depending on market forces. I told them I was very impressed by what I was seeing and hearing.

When they asked us how they could find capital



There are investors for fair trade products

investment for ideas they had for new projects, which was partly the reason why FTAK had set up the meeting, my response was, "I think the answers are here in this room!" If people worked more effectively together to raise capital for projects that needed it, they would grow their businesses. I was told, "You are right, we have never discussed this together before, though we have occasionally pooled our savings to do a single project."

I asked whether they would consider setting up a 'fair trade exchange' – like a stock exchange – linking up people who have ideas with those who have capital to invest.

On one level, this concept could work locally, and I've seen this in Kenya. People who make more than others could trade resources or products with each other, or share business ideas and expertise. They could also invest in each other, so, farmers could get together as a mutual society enabling them as 10 or 20 individuals to club together to buy a piece of capital equipment to share.

The exchange could also work on a larger scale. I suggested to the villagers that if they were prepared to invest their own resources, I could link them with people from the bigger cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, who have a heart for fair trade and the means to invest larger sums of money. The villagers were excited at the prospect.

The next challenge was that they would need to write their business plans. Again, the businesspeople I had in mind have the capability and resources to help write these and secure the investment. Again, the villagers were inspired by the potential investment and the practical ways in which FTAK could help them by linking them to others in the big cities. There was an atmosphere of hope and excitement.

Later on in my trip, I met up with some people from Opportunity International, a charity that specialises solely in micro-financial services for the developing world, in places like Mozambique and Malawi.

They had set up a multi-million rupee fund and were looking for opportunities to invest in micro-financing initiatives in India. They told me they had the funds in place and even had volunteers to help potential projects to write their business plans. Linking them up with FTAK meant that investment and expertise could go straight from the cities to the villages.

Rather than merely throwing money at a situation, this model has the power to equip a community to help itself. It means villages can gain new business skills, and partner with others using what they already have to offer: their own physical resources, business ideas and hard work. The result of this partnership is lasting change that will benefit the generations to come. ■

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## INSIGHTS

# MoEF has no muscle

KANCHI KOHLI

ONE should be able to say with affirmed consideration that we are a country where the government seems to be at odds with its own people. With conflicts mounting in different shapes and sizes in every corner of India, it is difficult to fathom why the unrest is mostly not being noticed. Or if it is, why is it being kept at bay from envisioning policies. It is also perhaps comprehensible that laws are subject to interpretations and political decisions arrived at through negotiated compromise. But the intra-governmental conversations around 'natural resources' in the country appear to be ridden with conflictual debates.

The above statement has been said with trepidation because, beyond a point, it is difficult to draw details of inter-ministerial sessions and those with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) based on finalised documents and media reportage. But in the last few years, there have been three clear instances which show that the tussle for jurisdiction, mandate and the commitment of ministries don't seem to match. This game of give one, take two has left people gasping, because before one compromise is delivered the second is already under way.

On 24 January, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) uploaded on its website a July 2012 "Report of the Committee to Formulate Objective Parameters for Identification of Inviolable Forest Areas." The primary purpose of this exercise has been to come up with a formula by which areas can be declared as pristine and inviolable where coal mining (and not any other industry) is not to be allowed. What started as an exercise of declaration of "go" and "no go" areas during Jairam Ramesh's tenure as environment minister, evolved into this during the tenure of Jayanthi Natarajan, through many discussions with the Ministry of Coal (MoC), PMO and an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) headed by Pranab Mukherjee. While MoEF wanted to apply limited forest density criteria to ensure that some forest areas are kept as "strategic energy reserves" for the future and therefore not opened up for coal mining, the MoC wanted that they be given independence to grant all approvals. Caught in the tussle were specific coal mining projects such as Mahan and Chhatrasal in Madhya Pradesh where MoEF said no, and EGoM said yes.

Such criteria sets a very problematic precedence, even though one seeks to locate it within the theory of political negotiations and saving "at least" some of these areas. The inviolable criteria is very limited again because it recognises forests for their biological landscape, wildlife and forest cover in order to identify what is "pristine". What this largely means is that the premise for protecting forests will take into account contiguity,

important species, tree cover and also forest/wildlife corridors. Notwithstanding its importance, this is simply not enough. Moreover, it will not go far enough in getting the social and political traction that is needed in the long run for the protection of forests. Further, the note does not address the overall issue of fragmentation of forests as it limits itself only to coal mining. Using such criteria if some areas are recognised as inviolable and the adjoining areas are opened up for



mining it is likely that these designated no-go zones for coal mining will be negotiated for ancillary infrastructure, power or industry. There is no embargo on that.

The second big narrative around the inter-ministerial tussle was out in the open with the accepting of the proposal for the Cabinet Committee on Investments (CCI), rechristened from its earlier avatar, the National Investment Board (NIB) proposed by the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram. This committee set up under the Government of India (Transaction of Business Rules), 1961, creates a new standing committee with overarching powers.

Going against the legal requirements of its own ministry's laws, the new notification/amendment allows for this committee to have powers to identify investments over ₹1,000 crores and other critical projects, set limits for the number of approvals/clearances that might be required for these and ensure that such projects be done within a "stipulated timeframe". The MoEF had strongly objected to this proposal calling it both unconstitutional and against the spirit of the environmental laws in the country but later seems to have not held on to its position openly when the cabinet voted for this committee to be set up. This, despite the fact that the CCI will

have the power to review the procedures followed by other ministries and departments to grant and refuse approvals.

In effect the CCI would have the powers to overrule the MoEF if it does refuse environment or forest diversion related permissions, either due to issues of environmental impact or incomplete procedure. There cannot be a more blatant messaging for the people of the country that ecosystems and ecosystem based livelihood

can be overlooked when high investment projects are to pave their way in. Leave aside understanding why there is so much unrest and conflict and how it is linked with the tussle between industrialisation, social security and environment, such instances only present a disconnect, not just between the people and the government but the government and the government too.

The latest in this repartee is the decision of the MoEF to dilute its August 2009 circular which mandates that the process of recognition of rights under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) is to be completed prior to any forestland being diverted for non-forest use under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA). One particular requirement under this circular is the consent of the gram sabha (village assembly) from where forestland is being diverted.

It appears that a report backed by the PMO suggested the environment ministry remove this clause. K.C. Deo, Minister of Tribal Affairs and Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of Environment and Forests (MoEF) vehemently disagreed to any dilution of this law and from December to January this year there were several sit-ins to "discuss" the deadlock between ministries.

Eventually, on 5 February, the MoEF caved in. It issued a statement that linear projects such as roads/canals, laying of pipelines, optical fibre lines and transmission lines would be exempt from seeking the consent of the gram sabha. This is not just an arbitrary change to an otherwise strong constitutional and democratic requirement, it is also a limited view of how projects are designed and implemented.

Many transmission lines, roads and pipelines are required to set up a power plant, industry or port. Project authorities have successfully broken up these projects in the past and sought different approvals for various components. Not only has this issue gone unrectified, the fragmentation of projects is getting strengthened even more. It ends up giving enough reason for project authorities to ask for fait accompli approvals for other bigger components citing grounds of incurred investment. ■

# New law goes beyond CSR

AMITA JOSEPH

ON 18 December, the Lok Sabha finally passed the Companies Bill 2012 to replace the Companies Act of 1956. It has 29 Chapters, 470 Clauses and Seven Schedules. The Bill aims at improving corporate governance. It contains provisions to strengthen regulations for companies and auditing firms. In addition it has provisions on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spend and its reporting – a welcome and long awaited step forward.

Most discussions of the Companies Bill seem to focus only on Clauses 134 and 135 that talk about CSR. What then is this widely debated section? This specifies that companies having a net worth of ₹500 crore or more, or a turnover of over ₹1,000 crore or a net profit of ₹5 crores or more during any financial year are required to constitute a CSR Committee that will formulate their CSR policy.

Such a company is required to spend at least two percent of its average net profits made in the preceding three financial years before the policy was passed. If the company fails to spend this amount its board will, in its report, specify the reasons why it could not do so, making it a binding obligation on the board. CSR spend will no longer be at the sole discretion of the CEO.

This takes out the arbitrariness that has often accompanied CSR funds, firms up the CSR budget and mainstreams it with the full knowledge of the company's board guided by an articulated policy that can now be monitored and analysed. Development deficits in the country can be addressed. Companies are expected to work in partnership with other organisations.

Section VII of the Companies Bill lists specific activities that qualify as CSR initiatives. These are: eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, promotion of education, gender equality and empowerment of women, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, employment-enhancing vocational skills and social business projects. Also included is contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or any other fund set up by the Union or state governments for socio-economic development. Relief and funds for the welfare of SC/ST, other backward classes and minorities and women qualify as CSR initiatives.

A CSR Watch by non-profits or academic organisations may be a good idea. Companies do not exist in a vacuum. Nor do they manufacture goods or services out of thin air. They are given subsidies, tax holidays, land etc. by the govern-

ment that often bends over backwards to oblige the corporate sector. Substantial revenue foregone in every budget is an indicator of the largesse extended to industry although it is no secret that industry associations lobby hard to wrench more from the government. This is an



Specific activities qualify as CSR

opportunity for companies to demonstrate goodwill, to walk the talk and to address issues that need attention such as a robust policy on Affirmative Action, skills training programmes and reach some of the most marginalized through ideas and funds.

However less talked about is that the Companies Bill intends to improve corporate governance. It gives teeth to shareholders who can take action against fraud. Independent directors will not get stock options. Clause 149 lays down that every listed company shall have at least one-third of the total number of its directors as independent directors. It seeks to provide that an independent director shall not be entitled to any remuneration other than a sitting fee, reimbursement of expenses for participation in the board meeting and a profit-related commission as approved by the members. It provides for rotation of independent directors who may hold office for a term of five consecutive years and shall be eligible for re-appointment on a special resolution.

The fixing of tenure is a welcome step as it will ensure independence in a true sense and shield the independent director from the pressures of the management. It caps the director's remuneration at five per cent of the net profits of a company. The Bill defines an Independent Director as one who is required to submit a declaration outlining integrity, qualifications including disqualifications.

The Board of Directors of every listed company shall also constitute an Audit Committee, a Nomination and Remuneration Committee and a Stakeholders Relationship Committee under clause 178.

Presently public companies with a paid-up capital of five crores upwards are mandated to have committees. These committees, made up of a minimum number, remains at three. But they are required to have the majority of their directors as independent directors to not only bring independence in their functioning but also to protect the interests of minority stakeholders.

Clauses 139 deals with the role of auditors which has been in the eye of a storm in India in recent times. The Bill provides for mandatory rotation of auditors every five years. An individual can be appointed as auditor for not more than five consecutive years, and a firm as auditor for more than two consecutive terms of five consecutive years.

It also empowers the members of a company to decide by resolution that the auditing team shall be rotated every year or that the audit shall be conducted by more than one auditor. The Bill states that the chairperson of the Audit Committee shall be financially literate. In addition, the terms of reference of the committee must include a review of the auditor's independence and monitor the end use of funds raised through public offers.

The present Companies Act has no such charter. Clause 212 creates the provision for establishment of a Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) by the central Government which can then assign an investigation into the affairs of the company. The SFIO will get a prominent role once this legislation comes into force. The Bill also stipulates establishment of a 'vigil' mechanism to safeguard whistleblowers.

Introduced by Clause 245, Class Action suits empower the shareholders or depositors or any class of them to file an application before NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) if they are of the opinion that the management or conduct of the affairs of the company are being conducted in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the company or its members or depositors. The clause also provides the number of such members or depositors required to file suits.

Changes have been made regarding the grounds for winding up of a company. If it winds up operations it must pay two years salary to its employees. ■

(Views are personal)

# Living

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

## The wayward river

*A film about life in a sinking environment*



Soil erosion continuously changes the landscape forcing people to adapt



Sourav Sarangi

placed by soil erosion. The epic-scale documentary is informed with as much cinematic ingenuity as urgent emotional force.

*Char-The No Man's Island*, a co-production involving India, Japan, Norway, Italy, Denmark and the UK, is making waves around the world. "The river never stops," says 47-year-old Sarangi. "It flows on no matter what comes in the way. It simply changes its course when it is up against an obstacle. I had to be a bit like the river during the making of the film."

**Saibal Chatterjee**  
New Delhi

TEN years in the making, *Char-The No Man's Island*, posed daunting physical and logistical challenges. But much like the mighty river that the film is about, director Sourav Sarangi found his way around the hurdles to come up with a film that is going places.

*Char-The No Man's Island*, captures the many moods of a dramatic landscape on the India-Bangladesh river border while focusing primarily on the plight of its people, perpetually susceptible to the vagaries of nature and ill-advised development initiatives.

It is a searing critique of a big dam that has wreaked havoc as well as an empathetic anthropological study of an impoverished community dis-

Shot on the Indian side of the border, the project was hugely demanding on the unit. "It is the first long, elaborate venture of my career," says the director. Access to the location was arduous at the best of times and transport facilities were rudimentary.

The island has no electricity and nobody is allowed on or off it after sundown. Sarangi had to

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## LIVING

*Continued from page 31*

keep riders on standby to ferry the camera batteries to the mainland for charging. And the cameras had to be set to night-vision mode after sunset for filming the villagers, which explains some of the film's most striking images in which humans assume the contours of spectral creatures in a strange, dark nether world.

The citation of the 2012 Guangzhou Documentary Film Festival, which gave Sarangi the best director prize, acknowledged the enormity of the risks the filmmaker endured in bringing the plight of the hapless inhabitants of this no man's land abandoned and forgotten by politicians on both sides of the border.

It read: "Director Sourav Sarangi paints a subtle but fearless portrait of the urgency of a group of people who belong to no one... desperately in need of a deeper stability as the earth they inhabit literally disappears beneath their feet. This is a story that, like the island itself, may have been lost without his inquisitive eye and courageous camera."

Not an iota of exaggeration there. The 150-sq-km island where Sarangi filmed is inhabited by tens of thousands of people whose lives are a daily struggle for survival. Smuggling of rice, cows and banned cough syrups is their only means of livelihood.

This barren patch on the Ganga is controlled by the border police of both countries. Its occupants are sitting ducks for the trigger happy, like 10-year-old Sofikul Sheikh's father, killed some years ago by security forces while trying to smuggle cows into Bangladesh.

Although the film's "principal character" is obviously the omnipresent river, it is the Ganga's timeless and ever-shifting relationship with the people that Sarangi explores. The focal point of *Char- The No Man's Island* is 14-year-old Rubel Mondal, who was only four when erosion wiped his village off the face of the Indian map.

"The river gives back what it takes," says Sarangi. "The land that was lost resurfaced as an island called Char." The homeless rebuilt their dwellings according to the old alignments – those that were neighbours in the submerged village became neighbours on the new island as well."

The spirited Rubel now lives, along with hundreds of uprooted families, on the island that emerged in the riverbed a few years later. Sofikul is his neighbour. The two boys help each other out on their dangerous sojourns across the border with their contraband. Life hangs by a thread here and death is a bullet away.

The story of Rubel sums up the plight of these people. He wants to cross the river and go back to his school in India but is forced by circumstances to frequently travel in the opposite direction to smuggle rice to Bangladesh for a living.

"It took me a while to zero in on Rubel," says the filmmaker. "But once I was introduced to him, I knew that he would be the voice of my film. He was good at his studies but he cannot go back to school anymore. He has to earn a living for himself and his family. He is only a boy but is very mature, intelligent and blessed with a sense of responsibility."

Sarangi first saw the effects of soil erosion in 2002, when he travelled to the village of Pasrashpur in Murshidabad, across the river from Bangladesh's Rajshahi district. "The village vanished before my eyes over a period of time," he recalls. "Trees, buildings, roads, temples, mosques, everything crumbled and disappeared into the water."

He captured what he saw on a digital camera. "I would go back every year to the edge of the village shoot as the villagers lost their land, one bit at a time," says Sarangi.

Since the Farraka barrage was commissioned in the mid-1970s to control the river and benefit the people of the area, it has yielded exactly the opposite result, says the filmmaker. "The landscape has changed completely, and so have lives," he adds.

In his director's note on the film, Sarangi describes the disintegration of an entire village thus: "You notice a small crack on the ground; the thin line widens, the grassroots still trying to cling together, and after a while the piece of earth where you stood minutes before jumps into the river with a splash. And sometimes it simply goes down in silence, in slow motion. The land is consumed much like a prey hypnotized by a recoiling anaconda..."

The villagers themselves, according to Sarangi, tend to use the metaphor of a snake to describe the river that has, in Hindu mythology, been associated with powers of healing and cleansing. Since the construction of the Farakka barrage, the Ganga, the villagers told the filmmaker, "has turned into a snake caught at her neck by modern technology (which)... for survival strikes back and forth to take away everything she gave us..."

But the river is all they have. "These people cannot turn their backs on the river. It is a part of their beings, so they coexist with it. They do not migrate to the city because it has nothing to offer them," says Sarangi.

The surface reality of the changing landscape and the lives that depend on it isn't what interested him in the first place. "I wanted to probe the minds of the people who were displaced, peep into their inner realities," he explains. "So I have no interviews in the film. I only have conversations."

The film is, in essence, a blend of cinema verite principles and authorial intervention, of reality blended with interpretation that reflects the mind of the filmmaker himself.

*Char-The No Man's Island*, which premiered last October at the Busan International Film Festival in South Korea before travelling to Jakarta, Dubai and Goa, had its latest screening in the International Forum for New Cinema at the 63rd Berlin Film Festival in February.

The Forum, "the most daring section of the Berlinale", showcases "avant garde, experimental works, essays, long-term observations, political reportage and yet-to-be-discovered cinematic landscapes". Sarangi's 88-minute film fits virtually all of the above qualifying definitions.

Indeed, like the river it was filmed around, *Char-The No Man's Island* has multiple facets, each flowing into the other almost imperceptibly. ■



A bird's eye view of Silent Valley

# Silent Valley's splendid isolation

Susheela Nair  
Palakkad

YEARNING for an escape from the heat and dust of Palakkad town, we headed to the Silent Valley National Park, ensconced in the high mountains of the Western Ghats. Located in the northeast part of Palakkad district, Silent Valley is the last vestige of the virgin rainforests of the Western Ghats. The park flaunts a wealth of biological and genetic heritage and is tagged as an 'ecological island'. It is indeed nature's gift to mankind.

There are many fascinating stories about the gen-



# LIVING

SUSHEELA NAIR



SUSHEELA NAIR

esis of the name, Silent Valley. According to one version, the park owes its title to the relative absence of cicada, an insect which produces a characteristic sound at night, common to all forests. But the forest does pulsate with the incessant chirping of the cicadas and other jungle sounds. Silent Valley is also believed to be an anglicized version of the region's local name Sairandharivanam. Another legend traces its moniker to the lion-tailed macaque, *Macaca silenus*, *Silenus* being a deity in Greek mythology.

According to Hindu mythology, Silent Valley is the place where Draupadi, the Pandava bride, stayed clandestinely assuming the name of Sairandhri throughout her agnathavas. It is believed that the Pandavas, during their 13-year exile in these forests, were greatly impressed by this tranquil valley, and lived here for a long time. To add to the Mahabharata allusion, the eponymous river Kunti is named after their mother. It meanders through the valley's dense forests before joining the Bharathapuzha. And the dam site is named Sairandhri, the other name for Draupadi.

We hired a jeep from the check post at Mukkali, the base for entry into the Silent Valley National Park, to Sairandhri, 23 km away. Visitors are permitted only up to Sairandhri, the site of the proposed dam, and to the river Kuntipuzha. The topographical remoteness of the plateau has aided in preserving fauna and flora that is over 50 million years old. We saw different shades of green. The canopy of the tall moss-covered trees reduced the bright sunlight to mere beams of light. The floor of the forest was laden with a carpet of decaying leaves. The park has more than 960 species of flora, some exclusive to the park. The valley is adorned with blooming orchids of varied colours and shades. The Malabar orchid, the Queen of



Bridge across the Kunti river

orchids, the purplish red coloured bamboo orchids and the endemic Sri Lankan orchids can be seen here.

We clambered up the 30-metre high watchtower at Sairandhri, and were treated to a sweeping view of the valley with its gushing streams, waterfalls and rainforests. The Silent Valley National Park forms part of the core area of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It boasts of a wealth of biological and genetic heritage. Sprawling over 90

square km, the rich evergreen forests of Silent Valley support exquisite flora and some endemic fauna. The 25-km Kunti river, originating at an elevation of 2,400 metres in the outer northern ridges of the Nilgiris at the confluence of three tributaries, traverses the entire length of the valley and then rushes down through a gorge formed between the mountains to the Mannarkad plains.

Trek to the interiors of the forests and discover its faunal diversity. The elusive lion-tailed macaque with its trademark white beard is the pride of this exotic Eden. The park's canopy of towering *Culinea* trees shelter a variety of animals – Nilgiri langurs, giant grizzly squirrels and birds, 25 species of mammals, 12 species of fish, 35 species of reptiles, 110 species of butterflies, 255 species of moths and over 700 species of insects.

If you are an avid nature enthusiast, you can learn to identify birds and butterflies and feast your eyes on rare orchids. For bird watchers there are more than 200 species of birds to spot. The park echoes with the raucous cries of common species and rare birds like Jerdon's Imperial Pigeon, Peninsular Bay Owl, Ceylon Frogmouth, Nilgiri Laughing Thrush, and the most elusive of birds – the Malay Tiger Bittern. But the dense foliage makes sighting difficult. The valley harbours more than 110 species of butterflies including many rare ones like the Malabar Rose, Malabar Raven, Buddha Peacock, Tamil Catseye and Blue Nawab. Though Mukkali is possibly the only place in Kerala where you can catch a faint glimpse of all three species of Crow butterflies – the Common Crow, the Double Branded Crow and the rare Brown King Crow – we were not fortunate to spot any.

We also stopped by the Interpretation Centre to see the photos on display and listen to the 'jungle' orchestra. A 1.5 km path from Sairandhri leads to the bed of the Kuntipuzha where a rusty steel suspension bridge dating to the dam construction days still provides the only means of crossing over. To get a feel of the jungle, one has to trek but wildlife viewing is very difficult due to the thick canopy and vegetation.

Silent Valley is a success story of survival against all odds. Its bio-geographic isolation, the uniqueness of its flora and fauna, the minimal degradation of this protected enclave, initiated a movement to save it from a hydroelectric project of the Kerala State Electricity Board. Following a monumental battle and sustained campaigns by environmentalists, the proposed hydroelectric project across the Kuntipuzha was stopped and the state government forced to declare the area a National Park in 1985. It is indeed a remarkable achievement in the history of the conservation movement. ■

## FACT FILE

### When to go:

The ideal time to visit the reserve is from October to March.

**Tourist/ Forest Offices:** The nearest tourist information office is in Palakkad.

**Visiting time:** 8 am to 5 pm

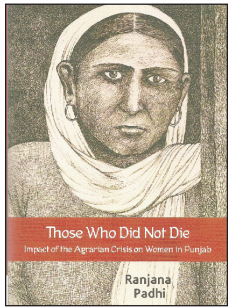
### How to get there:

**Air:** Nearest airport: Coimbatore -90km

**Rail:** Nearest railhead: Palakkad-58km

**Road:** Mannarkad- 40km, Palakkad- 58km. There are bus services from Mannarkad to Mukkali at one-hour intervals.

# The killing fields of Malwa



**THOSE WHO DID NOT DIE**  
Impact of the Agrarian Crisis on Women in Punjab

Ranjana Padhi  
Sage

₹ 650

**Civil Society News**  
New Delhi

EVERY day hundreds of people from the Malwa region of Punjab board the Bhatinda Express to a hospital in Bikaner for treatment. The train has been chillingly named the 'Cancer Express.' It's a story that surfaces in the media now and then.

Nobody has really delved deeper. There is more distress in Malwa than what meets the eye – the agrarian crisis, indebtedness, farmer suicides and the burden of cancer.

Ranjana Padhi, an independent writer and activist has sensitively joined the dots to explain what is happening in Malwa through the eyes of women whose husbands committed suicide. They left behind distraught families, struggling to cope.

Padhi's study covers eight districts of Malwa – Ferozepur, Muktsar, Bhatinda, Moga, Mansa, Sangrur, Barnala and Faridkot. She travelled to 54 villages and with the help of the Bharatiya Kisan Union-Ekta was able to reach out to the women.

Out of 2,890 suicides in Bhatinda and Sangrur, 61 per cent were farmers and 39 per cent were agricultural labourers. "A single village has so many incidents of suicide that sometimes a single lane has a succession of houses each of which has lost a family member," writes Padhi. Most farmers who killed themselves were young, between 18 to 40 years.

Jat Sikhs form the predominant peasant community here along with Mazhabis, Rai Sikhs and Dalits who are agricultural labourers. Mostly it is marginal farmers, small farmers and the landless who are committing suicide. Marginal farmers in Malwa took the most loans from informal sources like moneylenders.

Loans were taken to practice expensive Green Revolution farming. For a farmer with a small field, the rising cost of inputs or hiring of farm equipment has become unmanage-

able. A single agrarian crisis pushes a family into deep debt. Loans were also taken for giving dowry, to settle earlier loans and to meet medical expenses. In the case of the landless, loans are meant for sheer survival.

The status of the family in Punjab is gauged by how well a man provides for his family. The burden of patriarchy falls on his head. If he is forced to sell his land to repay his loans and he can't pay dowry or fend for his family, he loses his respect within the community. This loss of self-esteem combined with harassment and humiliation by the moneylender makes him take recourse to suicide.

His death resolves nothing. The entire burden now falls on his family, his wife or mother to pay back those loans, raise money for dowry and somehow keep the home fires lit. The women struggle economically and socially.

They have little say in decision-making. Often lands left behind are not in their name or the in-laws send them back to their maternal homes to prevent them from claiming the land. Jat Sikh women working outside the home is frowned

upon.

Small landholdings and nuclear families don't empower the women. Fragmentation places greater strains on women and the elderly. Often sons abandon the family after a father's suicide because they don't want to inherit loans. The result is that women-headed households slide into landlessness and unemployment.

While Jat Sikh women do backbreaking work on whatever little land they hang on to or from selling milk or leasing out their land, landless women toil for meagre wages from seasonal work. As one Dalit woman told Padhi: "When farmers are resorting to wage work in thousands how do you expect us labourers to get work?"

For cancer treatment, too, people have to take to loans. There isn't a single cancer hospital in the Malwa region. Pesticides kill not only the soil but sons and husbands too. Padhi talks to families where the son, father or husband has committed suicide and members of his family are suffering from cancer. Since the public health system is in shambles, farmers and farm hands rely on private healthcare providers who mint money – even from failed suicides.

There is rising malnourishment among women and children. The most undernourished are agricultural labourers. Women stress the need for a functioning public distribution system.

Padhi's book is a bleak picture of the Malwa region. It is a sad story with no succour in sight. Her research is thorough but not cold. There is compassion for the women she meets. Perceptively she writes that social structures in Punjab need to be changed. "Challenging the sexual division of labour would rescue men from the perceived failed project of being the breadwinners of the family and women from the increased dependence on the institution of family and marriage."

Punjab's skewed sex ratio is due to the lack of recognition given to women's work and dowry, a millstone round the man's neck. It doesn't enrich the young bride either.

Padhi's study is also comprehensive. While she has interviewed widowed women and their families, she has also taken a macro view at policies, economics, history, society and feminism to understand the death of the small farmer and its aftermath.

But where does one begin? By creating alternative employment? One study reveals that small and marginal farmers who left their fields for other work weren't happy. In contrast, 70 per cent of big farmers who left farming reported they were 'fully satisfied'. ■

**For cancer treatment, too, people take loans. There isn't a single cancer hospital in the Malwa region. Pesticides kill not only the soil but sons and husbands too.**



# Madhubani with a social message

*Shanti Devi's paintings reflect contemporary concerns*

**Vidya Viswanathan**  
New Delhi

A continuous stream of youth from Bihar crowded around Shanti Devi as she painted pictures on contemporary themes. A national award winning Madhubani artist, Shanti Devi attracted as much attention as the literary celebrities who came to the World Book Fair held in Delhi this month.

Clad in a purple cotton sari with a traditional green border, Shanti Devi appeared to be enjoying the attention showered on her stall devoted to tribal and folk literature.

A minister from Kerala arrived and Shanti Devi proudly showed him what she was painting. It was a Madhubani rendition of the day's headlines from a Hindi newspaper. One picture depicted the Supreme Court with women on both sides and a line that said: "*Mahila ko suraksha do*". Another read, "*Abala naari ka pukaar: bandh karo yeh atyachaar*".

Shanti Devi has painted pictures of the gruesome rape of a young girl in a Delhi bus. She says somebody had suggested she paint on the theme of women's safety. "But this comes from my heart," she says.

"I have travelled around the world and earned money yet I am a battered woman. My husband did not like me giving money to my mother. He did not let me educate my older child. But my younger daughter, Sujata Kumari and my son Dinesh, are studying at the Indian Institute of Craft and Design in Jaipur."

This feisty woman has had to work her way around the men in her family since childhood. Her father died while she was still a child. Her mother was an agricultural labourer and an avid painter. Twice a year she would paint their hut before the festivals of Holi and Chhath.

Shanti Devi learnt to paint from her mother using natural colours. Her older brother was enrolled in an English medium school. Shanti Devi was determined to study too. Her mother quietly got her admitted to a local school. En route she would pass the home of a lady called Poona Devi who used to paint beautifully. The little girl

set her heart on learning from her. "I fell at her feet and asked her to teach me how to paint with traditional straw and dyes. I even gave her a sack of rice from my home as fees. She used to draw stories from the Ramayana and the Bhagvad Gita. I could not learn all of that but I learnt quite a bit," says Shanti Devi.

She got married at 16 in 1976. "I cried when I saw the poverty at my in-laws place" she reminisces. But her father-in-law was liberal and allowed her to continue painting.

Shanti Devi also fought for the rights of women. A victim of domestic violence she shows a bruise on her cheek where a hot lantern was thrown at her. "I might have got beaten. But in my mohalla women don't get beaten anymore. Women used to work all day and then get beaten up by their husbands in the evening. I bribed the policemen to pick up these men and threaten to beat them up. So over a period of time no woman gets beaten. Through a craft guild we have organized ourselves. Whenever we hear that a mother-

**'Through a craft guild we have organized ourselves. Whenever we hear that a mother-in-law and sister-in-law are harassing a woman we reach there in a group.'**



Shanti Devi shows her paintings

in-law and sister-in-law are harassing a woman we reach there in a group. We will not let any woman get harassed," she says rather determinedly.

In 1977 she came into contact with Raymond Owens, an American anthropologist who was stunned by the beauty of traditional Madhubani paintings. He bought some of Shanti Devi's paintings. She soon got to know more Madhubani artists. She met Ganga Devi, another Madhubani artist who used to exhibit her paintings in Delhi. But it was her sojourn to Denmark for an India Festival as part of Indira Gandhi's entourage, which made her famous.

"I stayed in the same hotel as Indira Gandhi, Priyanka and Rahul. I painted a cow and a calf for her," she says. Since then she has worked with the government to promote Indian art and craft.

She travels, paints for children's books and sells paintings made by herself and her guild. Currently her single-minded goal is to raise funds for her children's education. "My daughter has won a scholarship and we bought her a digital camera. Now she needs a laptop. Today all work in a design school is done on a computer. I dream for her now. I hope she gets a job overseas and learns to speak English fluently," says Shanti Devi. ■

# Pacifying aching joints

Dr G. G. GANGADHARAN

## GREEN CURES



**D**ERANGEMENT of functions within the body may occur due to multiple causes like diet, lifestyle or environment. The resultant disease may manifest itself in a gradual way. In the initial phase there may be an absence of symptoms. At a later stage there may be

complex manifestations involving more than one organ. The illness may become chronic or of a long-standing nature.

One such affliction is Vatarakta (gouty arthritis), a condition caused by vitiated vata and rakta. Vatarakta can be defined as a condition in which the aggravated vata is obstructed in its course by an aggravated rakta, thus vitiating the rakta.

The subsequent association of vitiated vata and vitiated rakta is manifested as a disease called Vatarakta. The site where Vatarakta manifests itself are the hands, feet, fingers including toes and all the joints.

In the initial stage, hands and feet are affected. The illness then spreads to all other parts of the body because of the fluidity, mobility and subtle pervasive nature of vata and rakta. While they move through the blood vessels, they get obstructed in the joints which further aggravates them. Because of the tortuous nature of the course in the joints, the morbid matter gets lodged there.

Being localized in the joints, they get further associated with pitta (kapha and vayu aggravated because of other etiological factors) and produce different types of pain characterized by the nature of these elements. Therefore Vatarakta, a health problem representative of metabolic disorders characterized by changed lifestyle, diet, environment etc. results in pain in all the joints which becomes unbearable for the afflicted person. This can be correlated to gouty arthritis.

The classical sign of Vatarakta mentioned in Ayurveda texts is pain especially in the small joints characterized by a shifting and recurrent nature. The pain may originate from either pada (foot) or hastha (palm). Any condition that exhibits this sign, irrespective of the empirical cause for it, is diagnosed as Vatarakta.

Hence there could sometimes be more than one disease defined empirically into the definition of Vatarakta. On the

other hand, a disease defined as Vatarakta may fit into the Ayurveda definition in one instance and get excluded at another instance.

While bio-medicine has an empirical approach to defining a disease taking into account objective parameters like a specific laboratory or radiological parameter, Ayurveda defines a disease as a perturbation of vata, pitta and kapha in an individual from his or her homeostatic state enabling it to tailor a therapeutic regimen suited to the individual's physiology.

**Clinical symptoms:** General symptoms: Pain is the most common and predominant symptom present in this disease. Though initially joints of the hands and feet are affected, in later stages it spreads to other parts of the body.

**Specific symptoms:** Itching, burning sensation, pain, lethargy, pricking pain, throbbing pain, the outer skin color is black, red or coppery, oedema, stiffness, excruciating pain, deformity of the joint/inward curving of the joint, lameness, paraplegia

### Treatment:

- Oleation therapy
- Purgation therapy
- Repeated basthi: Medicated oil/decoction enema

Besides this Seka (sprinkling), Abhyanga (massage), Pradeha (application of paste) should be adopted.

The diet, comprising of unctuous substances or food that does not cause burning sensation, should be consumed.

Pacifactory medications include Kashayas, Choornas, Arishtam, Guggulu, Rasaoushadas and Lepasnas.

### Food & lifestyle suitable for gouty arthritis:

- Foods such as pigeon pea, chickpea, green gram, old barley, wheat, sali and shashtika rice, milk from cow, buffalo or goat.

- Abhyanga (massage), Seka (sprinkling), Upanaha (poultice), Virechana (purgation), Raktamokshana (leech therapy).

### Food & lifestyle to be avoided for gouty arthritis:

- Foods that are pungent, salty and sour, and foods which are heavy and sticky. These include black gram, horse gram, peas, meat of wet and marshy areas, curd, sugarcane, alcohol, radish and sour gruel.
- Day sleep, exposure to fire, excessive exercise and sexual intercourse are to be avoided. ■



## WONDER PLANT

# Guggulu balm

**A**S a pain relieving analgesic, guggulu (Commiphora wightii) is an excellent alternative to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). This plant relieves pain, inflammation and heals the underlying causes of such symptoms.

Today, NSAIDs are sold without prescription to millions of people for their analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties. These include drugs ranging from aspirin to acetaminophen. Most educated consumers are aware of the dangerous side effects of NSAIDs.

Guggulu is safe, acts quickly and has very effective anti-inflammatory properties. The plant also enhances circulation. Hence guggulu is a safe and effective pain reliever to NSAIDs. It is ideal for those who do physical labour – the zealous gardener, the yoga practitioner or the gym enthusiast. Guggulu relieves stiffness and pain usually within an hour or two.

Guggulu is a key component in Ayurvedic medicine. But today the plant has become so scarce that the IUCN has enlisted it in its Red Data List of endangered species. The plant has been over extracted in its two habitats, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Guggulu produces a resinous sap known as gum guggul. The extract of this gum, called guggulipid is used in the treatment of arthritis, high cholesterol, acne and other skin diseases. It can treat ailments ranging

from obesity, sores and ulcers to urinary problems, liver disorders, intestinal worms, leucoderma, sinuses, edema, paralytic seizures as well as bodyache and pain. An important plant polyphenol, guggulsterone is an active constituent of guggul resin.

**Location:** Guggulu or Commiphora wightii is found mainly in the arid and semi-arid regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan. It also grows to a small extent in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and in the rocky tracts of western India and the eastern Himalayas.

**Applications:** The Sanskrit definition of the term guggul is "one that protects against diseases." The plant is important for Ayurvedic applications. It is considered useful for removal of 'ama' or toxic substances that accumulate due to sluggish digestion and circulation associated with a slowing down of the metabolism.

Guggul has a wide range of applications. It is used for alleviating rheumatic and arthritic pain and for obesity. Guggul is also used for treating a sluggish liver, malaria, stimulating the libido, alleviating nervous diseases, bronchial congestion, cardiac and circulatory problems, weak digestion, fractures, gynecological problems, leucorrhoea, sterility, impotence, STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and skin diseases including acne and psoriasis.

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Guggulu is one of the most important rasayanas (herbal tonics) of Ayurveda where it is described as warm, dry, pungent-flavoured, and aromatic with nutritive, lubricant, stimulant and digestion-enhancing properties. Acharya Sushruta recommends guggulu for medoroga (obesity). Current research substantiates its benefit for the treatment of elevated blood lipids and coronary and arterial plaque known as atherosclerosis. As a result, today standardized guggul extracts are being approved for lowering elevated serum cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

The traditional properties of guggul are demulcent, aperient, carminative, antispasmodic and emmenagogue. It serves as an astringent and antiseptic on the mucus membrane. Internally, its bitter principles stimulate appetite and relieve bloating and gas. Its oleo-resins are excreted through the skin, mucus membranes and the urinary system, stimulating and disinfecting their secretions. It is also a uterine stimulant, making it useful for regulating menstruation but contraindicated during pregnancy. The warming, circulatory properties of guggul also serve as a potent aphrodisiac.

Guggul is warming and stimulates metabolism. It is therefore one of the few botanicals that has been shown to treat hypothyroid conditions. Guggul also serves as an antipyretic in reducing fever and secretions from diseased surfaces of the body. It is excellent when used synergistically with other anti-inflammatory herbs such as *Tinospora* (guduchi), *Echinacea* and goldenseal (*hydrastis*).

Due to its varied taste – sweet, astringent and pungent – guggul alleviates vitiation of vata, pitta and kapha.

**Gardening:** The Guggulu plant can be propagated using seeds or by using stem cuttings 30 cm long with 10 mm thickness. The cuttings are treated with rooting agents, raised in nursery beds and protected from termite attacks. The beds are watered lightly after planting. These cuttings will sprout leaves first and then roots within a month. They are then transferred to polythene bags containing organic manure for two months. Finally, these are transferred to the planting site before the onset of the monsoon. The germination of seeds is low. In India flowering takes place from October to December and fruiting from October to January. Guggul should be taken under expert guidance. ■

*R. Rangarajan is a Senior Research Fellow in the CHG Department of I-AIM, Bangalore, Email: rangan.rajaram2005@gmail.com*

## FEEL GOOD

### Ear care

OUR lives are influenced by sound. Some are soothing like the rustle of leaves, the pitter-patter of rain or the lilting song of a bird. Others are jarring like the cacophony of traffic, wailing sirens and clanging alarm clocks on wintry mornings. We like to listen to what our friends and family say. Life is all about conversation. And to listen and talk we need to keep our ears clean and healthy.

Here are a few tips which will be music to your ears:

- A daily ear massage rehydrates. Dip a cotton bud in lukewarm sesame oil and smear gently on your ears. Begin at the top portion and use your thumb and index fingers to rub the rim, moving slowly down to the lobe. Then place a few drops of sesame oil just outside the opening to the ear canal to prevent ear problems.
- Clean your ears after bathing. Use soft cotton buds to dry your ears. Do not ever twist your wet towel and use the ends to clean your ears.
- Stretch ears gently to the left, then right, to the top and the bottom. Then move your ears in a clockwise and anti-clockwise direction gently.
- Meditation, pranayama and yoga keeps ears healthy.
- Don't use sharp pointed objects to clean your

ears. Ear wax, insects or other foreign bodies stuck in the ears should be removed by a doctor.

- Avoid exposure to loud levels of noise. Wear hearing protection to prevent ear damage. Use your ear phones at a moderate volume, for instance at a decibel level that enables you to hear someone talking to you at the same time.
- While flying, swallow and yawn frequently when the aeroplane is ascending and descending to equalize pressure in your ears. Earplugs with special filters can be purchased to help equalize air pressure in the ears during air travel.
- Swimming can lead to 'swimmer's ear'. Dry your ears after a swim and shake out excess water especially if you feel water has entered. Persons with ear discharge or wax or rupture should not swim. This may lead to severe ear and brain infection.
- Avoid foods that can increase your chances of catching cold. Influenza can aggravate ear problems. For the same reason, all refrigerated foods must be avoided.
- Some medications can affect hearing. Take medications only as directed and consult a doctor if you experience unusual hearing, balance problems, or ringing in your ears. ■

*Dr Rekha R, RMO, IHC*

## ORGANIC CHEF

### Sweet tooth

#### MODAKAM

##### Ingredients:

Rice flour: 1 cup  
Water: 1 cup  
Sesame oil: 2 spoons  
Grated coconut: 1 cup  
Powdered jaggery: 1 cup  
Cardamom: 4 pods

**Method: For outer covering:** Boil the water. Add 2 spoons of sesame oil in it. Add rice flour while stirring constantly. Stir till it becomes thick and then keep aside for the mixture to cool. After greasing your hands with sesame oil, make small balls out of the flour. Now shape these balls into small cups.

**For the inner stuffing:** Mix grated coconut, cardamom and jaggery. Heat for a few minutes by constant stirring over a low flame till the mix is well-blended. Add a spoon of ghee, mix well and remove. Make small balls of this. Stuff the mix into the outer coverings made of rice flour and close each ball. Steam the balls for 10 minutes and serve.

##### Properties:

- It is the favorite sweet of Lord Ganesha

- Healthy since it is steamed
- Nourishing and strengthening
- Suitable for children and adults
- Balances vata and pitta
- Causes obesity if eaten in excess

#### GINGER SYRUP

##### Ingredients:

Ginger: 1 inch piece  
Coriander seed: 1 tsp  
Water: cup  
Honey: 1 tsp  
Lime juice: Few drops (optional)

**Method:** Smash the ginger piece. Coarsely powder the coriander seeds in a mixer. Add a cup of water and boil. Let the volume of the water be reduced to three-fourth of the cup. After the water cools, filter to remove coarse particles and add honey. Add a few drops of lime juice. Mix well and serve.

##### Properties:

- Increases appetite
- Improves digestion
- Relieves nausea and vomiting
- Gives energy

*Dr. Rekha R, RMO, I-AIM.*

## LIVING

## PRODUCTS

## GARDEN DELIGHTS

IF you have a garden that doesn't attract wildlife don't worry. Buy green frogs, tadpoles, birdbaths and ladybirds made of clay by Sunderlal, a potter from Alwar district of Rajasthan. He has set up a little factory in Delhi which manufactures all the artifacts your green space will approve of. And so what if your wildlife is made from mud. There are pretty flowerpots too and small planters for your little verandah if you aren't blessed with a garden or a lawn.

Sunderlal says he thought up the designs himself. After all, he reasons, what else can a garden love apart from the birds and bees. "Observing the gardens of the rich has been a learning experience for me," he explains. "In Delhi I get customer feedback and that helps me design better." ■

**For orders:** Sunderlal, A-59 New Sainik Vihar, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi 110059. Phone: 09871983208



LAKSHMAN ANAND

LAKSHMAN ANAND



## PUNJABI STYLE

PUNJAB's fine art of phulkari is now available in a range of designs and colours for everyone. Traditionally this intricate needlework was done by Punjabi women for themselves. Phulkari was stitched on odhnis or long scarves and worn during festive occasions. Now 14 self-help groups (SHGs) of women in Badshahpur village of Punjab have been taught to stitch phulkari by Punjab's Department of Handicrafts. The state pays each woman ₹2,000 as subsidy while they undergo training, says Harshpreet Singh of Sabby's who sells their products all over India. It takes each woman 15 days to embroider one salwar-kameez set.

There are colourful odhnis too with embroidery and sequins. The suits are in cotton and silk. Prices are very reasonable. "We keep only a 10 per cent margin," says Harshpreet who is scouting around for bulk orders. ■

**For orders:** Satinder Pal Singh, 88A Hem Bagh, New Officers Colony, Patiala, Punjab. Phone: 9855107756, 9216997756, 9971176656



# Changing Lives



## SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF HONEY COLLECTION.

Srinivasan Services Trust along with TRIFED has trained 500 youths on scientific method of collection and extraction of honey. Now people use protective gears and equipment. Their safety as well as that of the honey comb is ensured.

**Result:** Double the quantity of premium honey (5000kgs per year) is being extracted. Increase in price from ₹150 to ₹300 per Kg. The average income per person has doubled.

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# WHY DID WE ENCOURAGE THIS TRIBAL WOMAN TO REPLACE HER SARI?

Because, unskilled women employees like Asha Hansda are trained to operate heavy vehicles and machinery under Tata Steel's Tejaswini programme.

Because we believe gender should never be a reason not to be.

Because, for us, it doesn't matter where she comes from, but where she can reach.

Because she is one of our own.

Because we can't fly if she crawls.

Because we started thinking of ways to better her life over a hundred years ago.

Because it's not just a company policy, it's an unwavering belief.

Because, each time she confidently smiles, our belief finds strength.

Because however strong our steel may be, our values remain stronger.

## TATA STEEL

Values stronger than steel

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