

Civil Society

**How to volunteer and
change your life**

HONEST INDIANS



A BOOK TO SHAKE UP DELHI

Manoj Mitta on why
and how he and HS
Phoolka wrote on the 1984
anti-Sikh carnage and the
search for elusive justice

Pages 28-30

FISHERFOLK PROTEST COASTAL RULES

Page.6

MALDHARIS FIND BREAD IN CHEESE

Pages.8-9

NORWEGIAN MEDICINE FOR VEDANTA

Page.31

KAREEM'S DARK AND DEEP FOREST

Page.35

AD MICROSOFT

Photographs by LAKSHMAN ANAND



The Youthreach team at its office in Saket, New Delhi

VOLUNTEER AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Civil Society News
New Delhi

YOU walk into the Barista at the Saket PVR market complex in south Delhi, pick up a sandwich and coffee and choose to sit among the smokers in the verandah outside. Just as you settle down and take a bite, a grubby child, clad in very little despite the chilly weather, sticks out a bony hand and asks for food. What do you do? Buy the child a meal? Give your sandwich to her? Give some money to her in the hope that she will go away and leave you in peace? Pick up your plate and go inside the Barista to protect your self from such unfortunate intrusions? Or do you rudely chase the child away and continue with your meal?

Most of us, if we are ready to be frank, will admit that we have at some time or the other done all of the above. Upwardly mobile India lives in growing secession from the problems of poverty by which it is surrounded.

As the economy expands and finds ways of generating money, some of us get richer, some of the poor get less poor, but poverty does not go away. It has ways of repeatedly haunting us.

If it is not the child asking for a sandwich, it could be the child performing at the traffic lights as you look on from your well-heated new car. Or it could

be that family huddled together in the apartment under construction that you and your wife are checking out to put those surplus savings to good use.

When poverty doesn't thrust an unwashed face in your well-creamed one, it could be the collapse around that makes you think and shudder. Perhaps you've seen those filthy hospitals where nothing seems to work, the government schools that don't have toilets, the overcrowded buses, the chaos in the courts where the search for justice is a heroic struggle....

It is a long and predictable list and perhaps you have wondered alternatively how to flee from it all and how to face up to it and help make a difference. Invariably the feeling has been one of being overwhelmed. Where after all does one begin? And how?

At Saket, the answer is coincidentally quite easily found in a basement across from that beleaguered Barista where Youthreach has a cheerful office, brimming with positive energy. Its mission is to promote volunteering among the sensitive who find it difficult to turn away but at the same time don't quite know how to engage with the realities that trouble them so much. It is a helping hand that knows rather well how to deal with the angst of having too much in a society where most folks have too little or nothing at all.

Youthreach was set up in 1997 by the very wealthy but also introspective and concerned, Uday Khemka. The NGO's chief areas of interest are the wel-



Janaki Chaudhry & Pinny Mann

‘ Those of us who are in the forefront of the economy today are privileged because of the education and the opportunity that we have. It is necessary that we give back to society and enable others to come up.’

fare of children and protection of the environment. Nanni Singh leads the Youthreach team, which has members who come from different backgrounds and have many strengths.

Youthreach helps people connect with causes and other people. It teams up with some 70 NGOs who need support and capacity building. So, if you are looking for someplace where you can make a contribution by giving time or using your skills or just making a donation that you are sure will reach someone, Youthreach is a good place to go.

Youthreach's portal www.youthreachindia.org makes it easy to get in touch. The portal provides links to partner NGOs and lists volunteering opportunities. It helps understand the concept of volunteering better. It deals with the issues faced by organizations at the grassroots. There are the do's and don'ts of volunteering and the experiences of other volunteers so that the uninitiated have something real to hold on to as they take those first tentative steps.

Youthreach's success is in zeroing in on what exactly a volunteer will be good at doing. Often it is related to the profession of the volunteer such as a management consultant helping an NGO structure itself better. Or it could mean drawing on a talent like painting and having an accomplished painter help underprivileged children express themselves on canvas. Sometimes, it is a completely out-of-the-box role such as a strategic media planner using her passion for designing jewellery to enable women entrepreneurs make their products more marketable.

Youthreach's success is in being able to give volunteers roles that truly absorb them. It takes into account time constraints and the kind of commitment that a volunteer will show at a certain stages in life --- when the volunteer's kids are young or when they have grown up; when the volunteer is in between jobs and at a loose end or with no time to spare because of a new work responsibility.

On the other side Youthreach works with NGOs on volunteer management training so that they know to put their volunteers to good use. Before doing this, the Youthreach team itself had to go through training to upgrade their skills. A volunteer management module and manual were developed. The manual serves as a reference for volunteer coordinators who come to the Youthreach workshops.

Managing volunteers who go to an NGO isn't easy. For one, they have limited time. Secondly, they mostly remain outsiders to the organisation. The challenge for the NGO is to not only assign them work, but to understand their aspirations and talents and get the best possible results out of them.

Youthreach also works with companies which want their employees to have a conscience and connect with social realities. GE, Microsoft and the Tatas for instance have huge volunteering efforts that take employees into the community. At one level it provides a degree of self-fulfillment that work alone can-

not provide. At another level, it makes the employee aware of larger realities that are often forgotten amidst the cushioned comforts of a corporate existence.

How, for instance, can Microsoft hope to cater to the "real Indian market" if its employees have no idea of the challenges of poverty and empowerment in an emerging economy. It's ditto for GE, whose aspirations are so linked with size that it can't be satisfied with an employee vision that is limited to the affluence of a few. If companies are to remain relevant, it is necessary that their employees receive exposure. Since the exposure invariably does not grow out of the daily grind of the business, volunteering is a means of taking employees into those social equations on the periphery so that companies can ensure that they develop a sensitive corporate core.

Most importantly, volunteering gives employees something more than their jobs to live for. Companies draw on well-off, educated Indians who are constantly caught in the contradiction of having too much in a sea of deprivation -- the boney hand asking for that chicken tikka sandwich, the shirtless child performing at a traffic light in a Delhi winter. These employees are honest Indians who are troubled by inequality. Encouraging them to volunteer helps companies give them a sense of fulfillment that their jobs alone cannot provide.

Tansen Chaudhari, is GE's General Manger, Enterprise Sales. He is GE Volunteers' India leader. "Volunteering is a part of the company' statement



Yogesh Goel

that we are here to care for society," says Tansen. The GE Volunteers' Foundation exists globally. In India there are five council's based in Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Mumbai.

The councils meet once in a quarter and a national council meets once in a year. The focus areas are health, education and computer education. The emphasis is on volunteering and not donations, though some \$ 3 million have been collected for Pratham and the entire volunteering programme spends about \$ 10 million.

"It is all about employee engagement, passion," explains Tansen. "People must want to do what they are doing."

Volunteering reduces attrition in the GE workforce because it provides a sense of belonging and involvement, says Tansen. It also provides a rare

‘ All NGOs are looking for structural guidance,’ says Yogesh. Putting systems in place is the best help he can give Srishtii. It also suits his work schedules.

degree of connectivity through the organization. Not only do employees bond with their colleagues, but the volunteering programme gives them the opportunity to come into contact with distant bosses. "You could find yourself having dinner with the global CEO."

At Microsoft, some 500 volunteers help the company discover new frontiers of the emerging Indian economy. A creator of computer software cannot be satisfied with a narrow elitist identity. It has to explore inclusion to understand the true size of the Indian market.

Says Vikas Goswami, who leads CSR in Microsoft: "The idea of having a volunteering programme is to give back to society and be instruments of change. Most of our employees come from well-off backgrounds. They don't have experience of what life is like for most Indians. Volunteering brings them a sense of achievement and a realisation of reality. It also sensitises employees to the kind of talents other people have. It pushes them to find appropriate



Damyanti Sharma

' Volunteering is a process in motion. It is the connections that are important, the reaching out. It should be made compulsory to volunteer.'

technology."

"We do give three days off in a year to employees who might like to volunteer. In Microsoft they volunteer as teams, about five or six people together. The advantage of team work is that it builds camaraderie, they get to understand the issues, commitment is shared and it is well accepted in the company. If an employee gives Rs 50,000 as contribution then it is matched equally by Microsoft."

Janaki Chaudhry is a vice president with GE in its India Growth Team. She has engineering and MBA degrees and spent nine years with the Tatas. She chooses to volunteer because it helps her connect with the less privileged and understand the larger reality in which she exists as a citizen and a manager.

"Those of us who are in the forefront of the economy today are privileged because of the education and the opportunity that we have. It is necessary that we give back to society and enable others to come up," says Janaki.

She currently spends one Saturday a month at Literacy India, which is in Gurgaon. As part of the NGO's Voice programme, Janaki imparts soft skills to young adults so as to help them be a part of the organised economy. She teaches financial literacy, how to handle interviews, write a CV, workplace interactions and so on.

"I get a sense of deep personal satisfaction because I feel I am making a real difference," says Janaki. "After all what does one do on a Saturday? One spends time with the family, goes to a movie. I'm at a stage in life when I can give this personal time. My family is supportive and doesn't mind."

She stumbled upon volunteering when a colleague took her along to Mobile Creches, a reputable NGO that works with the children of construction labour. "I was amazed at the dedication and the sense of purpose at Mobile Creches," she says. "I was also stunned by the extent of the problem and the fact that there could be no simple solution. Everyone would have to do their bit if anything at all were to change and even after that there would be so much to do. I also saw how one of the children came back to Mobile Creches and served as a tutor."

Pinny Mann is Logistics Leader at GE. In her spare time she works with a group that helps cancer patients with money for treatment. For instance, when eight-year-old Yukta needed to be supported she tapped into the GE net-

work and raised Rs 2.75 lakhs.

Pinny also plants trees and distributes saplings, canvassing to have them replace the usual corporate gifts and presents at birthday parties.

For Pinny, volunteering is a way of life. Her grandfather was in the police in Orissa and he and her grandmother were public spirited people. Her mother was a young widow and was involved with an orphanage in Patiala.

Once while passing a government school at Samalkha on the route to her home in Gurgaon, Pinny decided to stop and see for herself what the conditions were. "It was a horrifying experience," she recalls. It was the lunch hour when children are given a free meal. But the quality of the food was poor and even more upsetting was the exclusion of some of the children because they belonged to the families of migrant labourers and were not permanently enrolled at the school. This meant that some children looked on as the others ate. The bathrooms were under lock and key so that only the teachers could use them.

At first Pinny's big car attracted the kind of attention that she found uncomfortable. But she decided to work with the school on improving the conditions there. The bathrooms were opened up after some persuasion and since GE has a water business, supply of clean drinking water was provided. She also managed to get the civic authorities to carry away garbage that had been piling up near the school.

Volunteers from GE Money have similarly worked with another school in Gurgaon. They have provided potable water, painted the school and spruced up classrooms, set up a library and medical room. English classes for senior students have been very popular.

Pinny and Janaki point out that it is easier to get out and do things in GE because the company provides a structure in which people can volunteer. Globally there is the GE Volunteers' Foundation. In India there are five councils who have one all-India representative. Volunteering is optional and is not counted in workplace assessments. But the impor-

tant thing is that it is encouraged. So while all GE's 14,000 employees may not be volunteers, a great many are and sometimes all it needs is an email on the intranet to raise money or get a few helping hands for a good cause.

Yogesh Goel is a young Associate Consultant at Ernst & Young who comes from Forbesganj in Bihar on the border with Nepal. His father is a grain trader and he grew up in a rural community where it is not uncommon for people to help each other.

So, when he found that the ironing man at his apartment block in Vasant Kunj had four children who didn't go to school, he wondered how he could get them admitted to one. Education is empowerment, as Yogesh knows so well, having gone from Forbesganj to Pilani and an MBA in Delhi before finding employment at Ernst & Young.

At first he thought he would offer to teach the ironing man's children himself in his spare time. But he quickly realised that it wasn't practical. Then one day the ironing man told him that there was a school in the neighbourhood that charged as little as Rs 50 a child per month.

Yogesh's curiosity was aroused. He went to check out the school to find it was being run by an NGO called Srishtii, which was started and is driven with inspiration and passion by Sanghamitra, a homemaker who wanted to help children who weren't in school.

Srishtii began in Sanghamitra's home with two children. It now has three centres and several hundred students. It essentially serves as a bridge between children on the street or belonging to the families of migrant labourers who haven't had any serious education and need to be brought to the level at which they can join a government school.

Yogesh wanted to help Srishtii and was told: "Do what you can. But first

spend time with us."

He examined the possibilities and realised that it would be impractical for him to teach because he returns late from work and often has to travel.

Yogesh felt he was better equipped to give Srishtii certain processes that it needed to function more efficiently. For instance, it was necessary to get a commitment from parents that they would keep their children in school for at least six months and pay Rs 100. A photograph was needed of the child. Yogesh created a standard form for this.

Srishtii similarly had a lot of difficulty with its IT purchases. Yogesh drew up a budget, visited vendors and streamlined the system of buying computers. He also put a maintenance contract in place.

"All NGOs are looking for structural guidance," says Yogesh. As a management consultant, putting systems in place is the best help he can give Srishtii. It also suits his work schedules.

Yogesh connected with Srishtii through the ironing man. Almost simultaneously he was in touch with Youthreach, which also suggested Srishtii because it was close to his flat in Vasant Kunj and needed help in scaling up. So perfect is the fit and Yogesh has stayed with the NGO and become an integral part of its strategising.

Damyanti Sharma is a contemporary artist. We met her at a second floor studio that she shares with friends in Defence Colony. She also has a gallery called Damyanti's Gallery.

Youthreach approached Damyanti in 2005 to train children from NGOs in the fine arts. She agreed, but only reluctantly because she hadn't reached out in this way before.

All her fears about not being able to communicate seemed to come true at the first session with 15 children. She and the children seemed to belong to different worlds, not just in the kind of art she was introducing them to, but also in the way she dressed and spoke. The ambience of the gallery in Defence Colony was also perhaps intimidating.

But if Damyanti was trying to help the children, they were, without knowing it of course, also helping her to discover herself. Damyanti was looking for deeper satisfaction and children, with their innocence and sense of wonder, were to become a medium for her outward-inward journey.

At the second session with the children, Damyanti stopped telling the children about art and instead let them loose in the studio, encouraging them to paint and draw. She also provided them with a snack because they would invariably be hungry.

She continued in this way for a year, giving individual attention to each child. In March this year, when someone asked her to curate an exhibition, she asked for permission to display the work of the children. The show was called "Warriors of Light" and Damyanti used it to raise funds for the children.

"The work of the children is fabulous," says Damyanti. "They are not trained. When they paint it is an expression of whatever they absorb, whatever happens to them at home...."

Through their interaction with Damyanti they also come to identify styles. So, now when they visit art galleries with her it may not be uncommon for a child to point to a painting and say it is an abstract.

The sessions are meant to be for one hour but they could go on for four hours. Often the children see what adults may miss. Asked to draw one of the staff of the gallery, the children gave him birthmarks and moles that Damyanti had never noticed in several years. They are more perceptive than adults.

Speaking to children from the street is a challenge in communication. They live in fear of being exploited and abused. If you give them something they think it is because you want something in return. "I see children of a family sticking together, taking things to sell on a cart may be, intimidated by the world around them. I wonder what they will earn in a day and how they survive on so little."

Damyanti says it was in interactions with Nanni Singh that she began look-

ing within and trying to understand "where one comes from". There would be greater justice and equality if "we were all socially responsible," she says. Children wouldn't be living in poverty on the streets "if we all said these are our own children."

For the rich in Delhi, everything is contractual, says Damyanti. "If you show compassion, people look down on you. Kindness is seen as weakness." The

result is that nothing changes and the gulf between the rich and poor gets wider. The unwillingness to show compassion becomes a barrier to discovering your self.

Damyanti says: "Volunteering is a process in motion." When you get out and do something for someone, you meet people who influence you and get influenced by you in turn. It could be a lawyer who provides a legal aspect to the rights of children or a film-maker who gets inspired.

It is the connections that are important, the reaching out. "It should be made compulsory to volunteer," says Damyanti.

"Let's Leap" is message on the calling card of Aiyana Gunjan, who describes herself as a planning and idea consult. Her background is in advertising and her strength is in creating media strategies. But she's not working full time these days and Youthreach has helped her find a new kind of fulfillment in volunteering.

Interestingly it is not her advertising and marketing skills that are being drawn upon, but her fascination for jewellery design.

"I was really surprised when Youthreach zeroed in on jewellery design when I went to them for volunteering opportunities," says Aiyana. "I found it very refreshing and fulfilling."

"Creativity is in my blood and I like doing new and different things. The big challenge for all of us is how to unleash creativity. Every human being is creative," she says.

Asked to do a two-day workshop on jewellery making under the Hope Project, Aiyana found that she had to communicate with women who by circumstances had been limited to their homes. They did not have an understanding of the market in which they were putting out their products.

"What I got out of the workshop was the realisation that I was making a difference in their lives," says Aiyana. "I was helping them know the world outside."

She gave the women magazines and exposed them to new styles in jewellery. She then encouraged them to come up with new designs using the same material."

Aiyana sees volunteering as a creative process which involves thinking and ideating. "There is no 'have to' about it as in a job," she says. For someone like her who has stepped out of a demanding job to take a break, volunteering is a refreshing experience. "As a person you feel so much more alive."

The key thing is to get involved with something that you really want to do. And do it in the kind of time you want to spare. This is where an organisation like Youthreach plays an important role.

Priyanjana Ghosh and Prerna Bhargava of Youthreach speak of how important it is to structure an opportunity to suit and enthuse the volunteer. It is only then that the arrangement truly works to everyone's benefit. What volunteers can offer will be different in time, commitment and skills. Getting all three into a balance is essential. Often people don't come forward because they feel daunted by what may be expected of them. It is necessary to bridge that gap.

Youthreach perhaps best sums it up with its slogan: "We know you've always cared. Let us help you reach out..."



Aiyana Gunjan

' Creativity is in my blood and I like doing new and different things. The big challenge for all of us is how to unleash creativity. Every human being is creative.'

Worldview

LATITUDE MATTERS

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

Pakistan's students' movement

Sonya Fatah
Islamabad

STUDENTS and lawyers have been at the forefront of the movement for democracy in Pakistan. The entry of students, some from elite private institutions, is perhaps a harbinger of things to come. Protests, hunger strikes and various forms of civil disobedience have continued in universities across Punjab, despite increasing government pressure to silence the students' movement. Police have baton-charged rallies, arrested students and roughed-up faculty at the University of Punjab.

Interestingly, the splintered student movement wasn't just found on the campuses of public universities, the traditional source for student uprisings. This time around, it was private university students who led the charge.

At the campus of the Lahore University of Management Sciences, or LUMS, a leading university in Pakistan, several hundred students protested, un-intimidated by police barricades and warnings against protests issued by plainclothes officers.

And about half the student population of Beacon House National University, a liberal arts institution in Lahore, rallied against Musharraf's regime, demanding an end to martial law, arbitrary arrests of civil society activists and an end to curbs on press freedom. Some among these students, most of them belonging to the country's generally apolitical upper-middle class and upper-class elite, even went on hunger-strike to demonstrate their anger.

What's lent a soul to the student protests is its support from university heads and faculty across the country. Although some succumbed to pressure, a good number have borne the punishment for their refusal to remain silent.

Encouragement from university administrations to continue protesting the government's actions is one reason why Pakistan's educated but politically alienated youth are taking a stance against the government. At LUMS University the vice-chancellor and faculty members gave the students their blessings to register their protests on campus.

"Terrorism is being supported in this country when the rights of its 160 million people have been suspended just because of one man's greed for power and



Encouragement from university administration is one reason why Pakistan's educated but politically alienated youth are taking a stance.

university who did not want to be named.

"Zia did it. So did Ayub. So did Yahya," said the visibly angry organiser as he rattled the list of Pakistan's past dictators, men of uniform who have led Pakistan more often than the country's democratically elected leaders, since the country attained independence from the British in 1947.

At the BNU protest, students distributed copies of *The Emergency Times*, a four page circular documenting student protests elsewhere in the country, and encouraging other students to join in the protest against "martial law."

(Continued on next page)

his fear of losing it," said Dr Mumtaz Ahmed Saliq, a professor at Punjab University and head of its Academic Staff Association.

At BNU the students were inspired to protest after one of their deans, Salima Hashmi, was among the arrested on the weekend the emergency was announced.

Hashmi, a known human rights activist and the daughter of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, one of Pakistan's best loved poets, encouraged her students to throw in their support to the movement against martial law.

The small but increasing vocal and demonstrative student movement follows in the footsteps of the aggressive and unrelenting lawyers' movement that challenged General Musharraf's unconstitutional methods of staying in power since he toppled the country's top judge in March this year.

Student activism is also a reaction to General Musharraf's continued harassment and persecution of the country's intelligentsia at a time when suicide bombers have flooded the country on mission.

Instead of tackling that crisis Musharraf made every effort to silence the country's media, its lawyers and its students, all of whom voiced critical views against the general's leadership.

A large number of professors, lawyers and human rights activists were jailed the day after General Musharraf announced an emergency. Some have been released since then but an unknown number remain under house arrest or in jail under detention orders.

Students, too, reacted sharply to news that some of the country's most articulate voices were being silenced by the use of force and torture.

"I am here because of Mrs Hashmi and because of what Pervez Musharraf is doing to our country," said one of the organizers of a protest at BNU, a second year student at the

Afghan villagers make electricity

Zainullah Stanekzai
Helmand

AS night falls in Nad Ali district, a humming sound can be heard in the air. Small turbines fixed in local canals work throughout the evening, providing light and warmth to village homes. The people generating their own hydroelectric power have provided the equipment and labour themselves, but complain the government is trying to tax them.

Helmand is comparatively well-off when it comes to energy, with the powerful Kajaki hydroelectric station theoretically capable of providing enough power for neighbouring Kandahar as well.

The United States is funding a major reconstruction of the dam and power station, a project that will ultimately cost up to \$ 500 million.

But the Taleban have extended their reach into Kajaki, and the resulting battles with Afghan government and foreign forces have derailed the work. In addition, power lines through troubled districts such as Sangin are often cut either by the Taleban or by local residents, causing power outages throughout the province.

Generators in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah provide electricity whenever the government has enough fuel to run them, but the city often goes without power. Even the state media cannot always command enough electricity to keep television and radio on the air.

According to the deputy head of Helmand's power department, Engineer Mohammad Nabi, the Kajaki dam now produces 20 megawatts of power, about half of which goes to Kandahar. The rest goes to Helmand, with half for the capital Lashkar Gah and the rest distributed around the province.

This is woefully inadequate for the province's needs, he added.

"The Kajaki dam cannot produce more than 20 megawatts because the equipment is old and damaged," said Nabi. "Lashkar Gah alone needs 25 megawatts." The result is that many districts are left in the dark.

"We can't supply power to every corner of Helmand," said Nabi.

Enterprising residents of Nad Ali, a rural district adjacent to Lashkar Gah, have taken matters into their own hands, installing small turbine systems in irrigation canals to generate power for their communities.

"The turbine has changed our lives," said 35-year-old Mullah Atiqullah, a resident of Chan Jir, in Nad Ali. "We use it to run fans in the summer and lighting in the winter. Many residents also watch television."

A turbine costs 320,000 Pakistani rupees – about \$ 5,200 – and is shared among 20 families.

Over the past three years, more and more residents have been installing their own turbines and now the trend is reaching even the remotest areas of Helmand.

"This is progress," said Atiqullah. "There are television antennas on the roof of every house and light bulbs in people's windows."

He complained that the government has been quick to cash in by levying arbitrary taxes. "Government officials have taken money from me three times in the past year," he said. "The first time it was 30,000 Pakistani rupees, then it was 10,000 and the last time it was 3,000. I don't know what this money is for."

The Pakistani currency is commonly used in Helmand in place of the afghani.

Engineer Faizullah, head of the power department, denied that his officials were taking money. Moreover, he said that he supported the residents' initiative in setting up their own mini power stations.

"We do not prohibit the installation of turbines," he said. "We do not take money from people for this. A number of turbines are registered with us. We are happy that people can provide their own electricity."

About 41 private turbines have been set up in Nad Ali and Marjaa districts, providing electricity to about 1,000 homes. Over the past three years, more and more residents have been installing their own turbines, and now the trend is reaching even the remotest areas of Helmand.

The technology is not complicated, said Hayatullah, who makes money by helping people install the generating systems.

"Setting up is easy," he said. "You just put the turbine where the water current is strong. The water turns the blades, and they turn the wheel which pulls the belt which runs the engine. That produces electricity."

duces electricity."

Hayatullah said that he charges between 15,000 and 75,000 rupees for each installation job. Mohammad Saleem, from Nad Ali district, also makes a good living from do-it-yourself turbines. "I earn about 17,000 afghani monthly, and I provide power to 35 homes," he said.

But residents complain that officials are getting in the way of their cottage industry. "The government does not help us, but the police take money from us," complained Hajji Meera Jan, whose village has just acquired its own turbine generator. "We have to pay them between 20,000 and 30,000 rupees a year."

Najmuddin, 25, from Nad Ali, wanted to set up a turbine in a local canal, but the irrigation department demanded that he pay them 30,000 rupees. In order to avoid the fee, he tried to complete the project under cover of darkness.

"The police caught me during a midnight patrol and fined me 10,000 rupees," he said. "The next day, I finally paid the irrigation department and they let me resume work. But every time the police have a change of commanders, we have to stop until we have paid them again."

Zainullah Stanekzai is a freelance reporter in Helmand. www.iwpr.net

(Continued from previous page)

The anonymous group, which states that "it is a humble effort to inspire and make aware – for we together can make a difference in these troubled times," is not affiliated to any political or social group and can be found online at: pakistanmartiallaw.blogspot.com

"They will try to suppress us further, to intimidate us into timid obedience," stated the publication's editorial statement. "But we will not be ourselves silenced. In Complete Unity, we will lay bare the sins of the oppressors; In Complete Unity, we will voice ourselves against them; In Complete Unity, we will bring them down."

The movement is hardly massive but it's the first serious effort by the country's youth to question the manner in which the general ran roughshod over political processes.

"I didn't know anything about politics or about what role we can play," one student at BNU said. "But when I saw what was going on, I decided I had to find out how to play my part."

"A lot of students are depoliticised but I think what is happening in Pakistan today is an opportunity to politicise them," said the movement's organiser, whose parents were both political activists when he was younger.

Moreover, he sees it as an opportunity to cut into the divide that separates Pakistan's elite private college students and its middle-class public school students.

"This movement is just in its infancy," said (Retd.) Brigadier Rao Abid Hamid of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, who also spent two nights in police custody after emergency was declared.

"Educated Pakistani youngsters know very little about politics or their place in the political system. They've been kept at a distance for decades."

Indeed, many signalled the nine-month long lawyers' movement, the boldest and most sustained movement of its kind in Pakistan's 60-year history as a sign



of changing times.

"Something has changed. There has been a very deep schism within the Pakistani elite," said a human rights lawyer.

"The civilian-military bureaucratic and professional elite – the people who are the dealmakers and the opinion makers are split. The lawyers' movement and the students' movement are showing that the elite compact that ran the state has collapsed."

The death of education

LETTER FROM EUROPE



Riaz Quadir in Versailles

WHILE Michael Moore's latest diatribe, 'Sicko', against the American system – this time it's healthcare system – was showing across local movie halls in Europe, France was engaged in workers' strikes that crippled the local public transport system for the few days it lasted. Ironically, Moore was extolling the social system of the French State at the very moment it was being challenged

by the new right-wing government of Nicolas Sarkozy. Not that the right-wing, left-wing label means much in this brave new globalised world. If one wasn't informed about his Party membership, who would have believed Tony Blair to be associated with left-wing Labour as we once knew it. Nor would they associate Lionel Jospin with the Socialist Party of France after examining the list of privatisation deals that actually took place during his watch.

So what is it about this brave new world where traditional party politics have lost their ideological moorings? It has often been said about American politics, that in almost every presidential election after the Second World War, the principal issue publicly debated was always abortion, not because it was vastly important to the American people (contrary to what the world has come to believe) but because the Republicans and the Democrats agreed on almost everything else. This is perfectly reflected when one examines the budgets of successive governments. The allocations do not speak of their political or ideological differences. Rather of their similarities.

America, being the mother of all global models, has successfully exported this political ideology, or rather the lack of one, to all those who dream the American Dream.

I spoke to some students who were on strike, and some who supported them, and came to understand why they were upset and "en colère". An average university student in France pays between 500 and 1,000 Euros per annum out of his pocket. Sarkozy's government was hoping that the private sector would step in and sponsor university education and 'spruce' it up while the State could withdraw the funds that subsidise higher education. This, the students fear, would be the first step to privatisation of higher education. Why is that so?

Simply because on the way to fulfilling our American Dream we (the rest of the world that mistook crass Hollywood and American TV to be the American reality) missed out the trauma-ridden path that America has really been on. Education (like healthcare) has suffered terribly. Education has been replaced by what can be seen as the honing of functional skills – as required by industry and big business.

Most importantly, higher education has been privatised. The average annual college tuition with boarding and lodging for any university with a decent enough reputation can easily add up to \$40,000. A four-year degree course therefore costs over \$150,000. No average family can pay even half that sum for a single child. Result: the loan sharks have the American youth mortgage their future to them before you can say Harvard University (non-governmental private sector loans by students in 2003 was \$4.5 billion). Four years later, the young 22 year-olds walk out of their Alma Mater with a debt albatross hanging on their necks, compromising whatever ideological independence and critical thinking they may have salvaged living in the US. Meet the 21st century indentured servant!

Who can afford to study anything not required by the sponsors? The future elite will all be made from the same mould. Like the Holstein cow they would eventually marginalise all other breeds. Without diversity, humanity can only become poorer. What is even more sinister is that a larger and larger majority of such compromised population become the ultimate source of power for the corporate sector.

As evidenced during the strikes, those compromised by the system could only think of safeguarding their individual hard won turf and refused to allow



The University of Paris

their reasoning to wander from their blinkered safety zone. "I have bills to pay" or "who's going to take care of my family" or the typical "how can I change the world?" Considering 80 per cent or more salaries come from the business sector, the vision of a mind-altered populace as pictured by Orwell, doesn't seem far fetched at all. Democracy is just a word. Corporatocracy has surely robbed us of its true spirit.

The free French spirit though, refused to bow down so easily to the prospect of importing such an American Dream which might very well become the French Nightmare - made all the more imminent by Sarkozy's arrival as the head of the nation. The traditionally flat French socio-economic hierarchy is currently being squeezed hard to mirror the American model we now see being successfully transplanted in Great Britain. With the energy sector successfully on its way to full privatisation, corporate France is rapidly making up for lost time.

If one had any doubts about how this once proud nation has been brought to its knees one should have been present at the recent address in Paris by Bruce Hack, the American CEO of the French giant, Vivendi Games. Except for a handful of foreigners, the crowd was predominantly French. Yet, he delivered his rambling address in Anglais. How the mighty have fallen!

And yet – perhaps in desperation – I still harbour hope in the French spirit. Cartesian grumblers at their core, they may eventually reach that magic threshold beyond which they won't be pushed. We have seen it before.

WHERE
ARE WE
BEING
READ?

Civil Society is going places...

Delhi, Dhaka, Trivandrum, Tennerife, Nadia, Nagpur, Kolkata, Ghaziabad, Washington, Geneva, Bhubaneshwar, Ladakh, Paris, Bangalore, Mumbai, Meerut, London, New York, Versailles, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Belgaum, Dibang Valley, Shillong, Patna, Shimla, Ahmedabad, Panjim, Hyderabad, Singapore, Porto Alegre, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Lucknow, Surrey, Srinagar, Manali, Pune, Peechi, Pondicherry...

Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

Business

BEYOND PROFIT

Rethink money with us. What should the entrepreneur of the future be like? How can you get rich and still serve society? Do causes need bottom lines?

Investing in the sun

LAKSHMAN ANAND

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

Fontana, the Taj Palace hotel's coffee shop, has an array of frosted lamp shades on its ceiling lit by filament bulbs. Harish Hande looks at the ceiling with irritation. He's just been declared 'social entrepreneur of the year' by the Schwab Foundation for spreading solar energy to villages in India. His company, Selco Solar Light Pvt Ltd, is worth some \$ 4 million.

"Why produce filament lamps? Why produce cars for one lakh? You have to be serious when you talk about climate change. If one of the most respected groups in the country does not get it how will anyone else?" he frets.

Fortunately, all of Hande's 85,000 customers in rural Karnataka 'get it'. They have installed solar lighting systems. His clients include rural households, vegetable vendors, babas in caves, silkworm rearers, road-side restaurants, churches, temples, mosques, a residential school, the SOS village and a Tibetan settlement.

"We promise service and finance at your doorstep," he says. No matter the terrain, his technicians go on a motorbike, examine the house and install a solar solution. Selco has 27 offices in rural Karnataka, each manned by technicians and people who collect payments. They are hired locally and trained. They offer a guarantee on panels and the battery.

A four light system (with 7 watt CFL bulbs) costs Rs 14,000, while a system with three lights costs Rs 12,000. A single light costs Rs 5,000. About 48 per cent of his customers have a one-light system. "We look at a house and see what they want. In one case a villager wanted bulbs installed in three rooms. We removed some bricks from the ceiling and installed a one-light system. We also asked him to white-wash his walls," explains Hande.

When Hande, a PhD from the University of Massachusetts, started Selco in 1994 with Neville Williams who ran a Washington DC-based non-profit organisation, he installed the first 200-250 systems himself with some help from a TV technician who still works for him. "That gains respect and no technician can tell me this can't be done," says Hande.

Hande spent three years convincing a banker that solar systems could generate income. He realised that



Harish Hande



regional rural banks like the Karnataka Vikas Bank and the Pragati Grameen Bank were rich, and that bankers were a powerhouse of knowledge.

To take a loan from the bank, a person has to show a 10 to 15 per cent margin. So Selco provides the guarantee on the loan seeker's behalf. If the person takes Rs 10,000, the monthly instalment works out to Rs 150. So Selco would put in Rs 1000 and in the first few instalments Selco would take its money out. "This is income-generating. If a basket weaver makes five to eight baskets a day, he could make an extra three". But we had to find a market linkage for the other three. The banks put them in touch with the wholesaler who had taken a loan from them," points out Hande, who decided to expand along the banking network.

Selco soon figured out the financing technique. "You have to match the consumer's income cycle. A paddy farmer gets paid once, a peanut farmer twice, a sugarcane farmer thrice, and a teacher, monthly," Hande explains. "A street vendor cannot pay Rs 300 a month but she can pay Rs 10 a day. Our financial mechanisms don't match her cash flow, so the idea is to piggybank a mechanism like the Sewa bank or an SHG that can." Selco is now partnering Sewa in Gujarat. An SHG can finance a lamp to a basket weaver who pays back Rs 3 everyday.

The poor pay more for lighting. Hande points out that a *pani puri* vendor uses kerosene lamps which costs him Rs 15 to 20 a day. A middle class family doesn't pay Rs 600 for one light point at home. Solar lamps could reduce that to Rs 8. To address this need, Selco has created entrepreneurs who lease out battery-operated solar lamps to street vendors. Selco installs solar panels on the ceiling of the entrepreneur's house or shop to charge the solar lamps during the day. These are lent to vendors in the evening. There are 25 entrepreneurs in Mangalore with 3,000 solar lamps.

To ensure that Selco keeps coming up with new solutions the 150-employee company has an innovations department which Hande heads. This group met a bunch of midwives who deliver babies in the darkest corner of the room. The midwives would cut a hole in the wall and use candles and kerosene. Selco designed a solar cap for them. These same caps could be used by rose pluckers who usually pluck roses between 1am to 3am.

So how does he hire employees who can think inno-

No matter the terrain, his technicians go on a motorbike, examine the house and install a solar solution.

TIS takes up LD challenge

Mallika Kallingal
Mumbai

RUCHIKA (name changed) was like any other child. She loved to sing, watch movies and play games, but she kept getting poor grades in reading and spelling. Although her teacher said she was a bright child, Ruchika's grades showed otherwise. Her mother tried everything from private tutors to coaching classes, but nothing worked. Finally she decided to seek medical help. After preliminary tests, it was found that Ruchika was dyslexic.

Specific Learning Disability is a generic term that refers to a bunch of disorders which a child might face in reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia) or mathematical (dyscalculia) abilities despite conventional instruction, normal intelligence, proper motivation and socio-cultural opportunity.

Tata Interactive Systems (TIS) has been contributing towards increasing awareness about these learning disabilities (LD) and improving remedial interventions for children. The Tata Interactive Learning Disability Forum (TLDF) was initiated as a means of expanding this effort and reaching out to a larger number of children in need.

TIS has also been funding the Learning Disability Clinic at the Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General (LTMG) Hospital in Sion, Mumbai. "In 2002, TIS was on the lookout for ways to go beyond business, to make meaningful contributions to our society. After considering options like blood banks, cancer societies and so on, we settled on LD as the focus area. Sion Hospital's LD Clinic had lost its funding and was on the verge of closure. Our team quickly got into action, and then there was no looking back," said J C Mistry, senior VP - Retail Education, who also spearheads all the LD initiatives conducted by TIS.

TLDF 2007 held in Mumbai on 27 November offered an opportunity for doctors, psychologists, special educators and teachers to discuss the challenges children with LD are facing and ways to battle them. "The aim of TLDF is to encourage and empower learners with special needs," said Mistry.

The LD clinic is one of the few certified institutions of its kind in India dedicated to detecting and treating learning disabilities. "Tata Interactive's LD team collaborates with the Sion hospital's LD clinic to simplify day-to-day logistics and management. TIS have created a Patient Information System that helps store learner assessment results. We also provide support for LD awareness workshops for schools, teachers and parents," said Mistry.



JC Mistry, Senior VP, Retail Education

The LD clinic is a certified institution that detects and treats learning disabilities in children.

child has LD. According to Sholapurwala, some schools are also reluctant to admit LD children.

TIS, in collaboration with the LD clinic, has also developed an unique book, *Brain Teasers*, to nurture the creativity of LD learners. It includes information for parents on LD. This book is distributed free to all children certified by the clinic.

The key objectives of this year's TLDF have been to increase LD awareness, promote remedial activities, best practices and knowledge sharing, inculcate a multi-disciplinary approach and emphasise the role of the special educator.

"We envision a need to take our efforts to the outside world. To achieve this we have redefined the focus from internal to external goals. We have succeeded in making fundamental changes in the syllabi of medicine, making LD a part and parcel of MBBS courses. Now we are targeting B Ed programmes too, so that each and every school eventually has its own special educator to give special attention to LD students," said Mistry.

Sanjaya Sharma, CEO of TIS, said that one of the goals of the organisation is to increase the number of students receiving the LD certification.

At the TLDF 2007, Dr Madhuri Kulkarni, dean of the LTMG hospital, said that there was a "need to create awareness, organise assessment and offer counseling and support to children with LD and their families".

According to Lorraine Petersen, CEO, Nasen (UK), LD children should be allowed to lead lives that are "mentally, physically and emotionally healthy and be protected from harassment and bullying".

Rukhshana Sholapurwala, a special educator who works with the LD clinic in Sion said, "The need of the hour is more special educators who will work on the strengths of the children and fill the gaps in learning in an innovative way and hence enable the child to achieve mastery over his/her disability."

"Teachers of LD students should break learning into small steps, use diagrams, graphics and pictures while supplying regular, quality feedback," said Polly Bayrd, consultant with the Learning Disability Clinic, Minnesota, US.

The LD clinic in Sion assesses and certifies LD children. This enables LD children to avail of the special provisions provided by the ICSE, CBSE and SSC boards with respect to the school leaving certificate. The assessment is provided free. Parents who wish to pay can give a voluntary donation of Rs 100. The assessment takes approximately three to four weeks. Children and parents are provided counseling since many parents find it hard to cope with the knowledge that their

Investing in the sun

(Continued from page 25)

vatively? "We certainly don't hire from the IITs or IRMA. We hire anyone who can think differently and then they have a lot of unlearning to do," says Hande. His target is to expand to an additional 200,000 customers in the next four years. Selco also wants to expand their range of products. "We want to market three stove cookers. But we have to create a supply chain," he says.

Hande is a shrewd businessman with a neat understanding of what works at the grassroots. He grew up in Rourkela and took up energy engineering in IIT-Kharagpur. His seniors often tried to persuade him to change his subject. He would retort that if he did not get a job, he would start his own company. "IIT-Kharagpur closed down their energy division last year. Ironical isn't it? Now is the time when renewable energy expertise is needed most," he quips.

From IIT Kharagpur he went overseas to study. He was pursuing his PhD, and the topic was related to generating electricity from solar thermal, an extremely high-tech area; an idea which has now been revived and is getting funding from

mainstream Silicon Valley VCs like Kleiner Perkins.

In 1990, during his PhD he visited a solar project in the Dominican Republic where the poor paid for solar panels. That opened his eyes to the potential of solar energy and financing. He realised that it was time to stop looking at equations and changed his PhD topic from a cutting-edge technical subject to a social theme. "My mentor was very amenable but I was in a technical school and it drew flak from a lot of quarters" he says. He ended up finishing his PhD much later.

To understand how the poor actually lived, he stayed with a family in Sri Lanka where a friend had started a solar project. "I even questioned myself on whether electricity was really necessary for sustainable living," explains Hande. He had to leave Sri Lanka because of the LTTE trouble in 1993. He spent the next 15 to 18 months in Indian villages. "I had a bet going with a friend on who could live with the least money," Hande says.

In 1996, two years after the company was founded, Selco got a conditional loan of Rs 50 lakh from Winrock and succeeded in paying it back. They raised a \$1 million loan from IFC and paid that back, too. "We have had ethical investors invest in us. This includes a \$200,000 investment by Philip LaRacco who started E+Co," he says. Selco's destiny looks sunny and bright.

Ration cards, PDS go online

Vidya Viswanathan
New Delhi

Most pilot experiments to set up rural kiosks to deliver government and private services have failed. But Bangalore-based Comat Services has, through rural kiosks, created IT infrastructure that delivers services to rural areas. Comat made a turnover of Rs 50 crore last year, and expects a turnover of about Rs 100 crore by end 2007.

Comat has been in the business of delivering citizens' services since 2000 when it created the *Bhoomi* application for the Karnataka government by digitising land records. Each rural centre is set up at Comat's own cost. The company is going places. It features in Deloitte's fastest growing 50 technology companies in the India list. In March 2007, Comat raised \$4 million from Intel's venture capital fund, and another \$10 million from Avigo Partners in November the same year.

Civil Society spoke to Comat president, **Sriram Raghavan**.

How different is your model from the Common Services Centre (CSC) model, or Drishtee and n-logue?

The CSC model that the government is implementing was inspired by the STD/PCO model where a rural entrepreneur would own a kiosk and earn money by creating services. He took a bank loan for the computer and infrastructure. The entrepreneur earns Rs 3,000 to 4,000 after having worked for more than 10 hours a day, and the return on capital is not worth talking about. Also, he is not conversant enough to create new services. There are independent assessments of this model. ICICI has stopped giving loans to kiosk owners. The services or the channel are not standardised either to deliver different services.

What is your model?

We own all our centres. Two years ago we told the Karnataka government that we would set these up, and now we have 800 centres (district-27, taluka-176, and revenue block-600) in Karnataka, up and running. Our centres have sophisticated infrastructure with power backup.

After we enabled *Bhoomi*, we told other departments that we would digitise their processes at our cost. In our system, birth, caste, income, death and domicile certificates are digitised. They are signed electronically with a finger print of the local tehsildar, and are assigned a validity number which will be printed. If you key in this validity number in the system, the record can be verified. No signatures are required after that. The citizen is not affected. We charge a transaction cost of Rs 15. We have so far done the revenue, social welfare and food departments, and we are looking at elections too.

You have computerised the public distribution system (PDS) and ration cards?

Yes. The government carried out an independent social survey of all citizens through questionnaires. People were not told what it was for and it was done through school students. We helped with that. In Karnataka we found that for 1.1 crore families there were 1.5 crore ration cards -- meaning over 35 lakh bogus cards. There were migrants holding multiple cards, a husband and wife each holding cards, and so on, which was eliminated.

Then we divided APL (above poverty line) and BPL (below poverty line) families. The government has rules for categorising. We got remarkable results. People with tractors had BPL cards...

Has your system eliminated bogus cards?

Our system has pictures and fingerprints of everyone over 12 in a family. So if a person has a ration card, he cannot go to another place and get another one in his or his spouse's name unless the old one is cancelled.

What about ration shops?

We don't have computers in each ration shop. There is no alternate manual



A Comat centre in Karnataka

system. An individual computer in a shop would not be practical as the shopkeeper could say his computer is down or there is no power.

So he goes to our centre and gets a transparency each month. The transparency has a scrambled image which when superimposed on the image in a ration card allocates a certain code like 84 or A1 to each person. The shopkeeper has to circle that code in his sheet and paste the coupon that the customer gives.

At the end of the month he brings the sheet to the shop for a scan from which we can make out whether entries are bogus or genuine. The ration card holders also have coupons having bar codes that have the amount of grain and the customer number. These are actually currency units that they hand over to the shop. So we can trap the amount given and the customer in the system. However, what cannot be trapped is if instead of 15 kilos he gives the customer only 14.5 kilos. The next month's allocation to the ration shop is based on what is disbursed.

Has your programme made a significant difference?

The Poverty Action Lab has economists who have researched the impact. Hopefully it will be published in another six months.

All our centres are VSAT-enabled. We have 4,500 contractual employees earning commissions based on sales, and 500 permanent employees. We train our employees regularly using our VSAT network and live broadcasts from our studio.

What other services do you offer?

We offer a variety of services, including insurance. Education is big business. We teach English live from a studio and broadcast it through VSAT to classrooms in our centres. We have 200 or 300 students in each spoken English class.

We have classes for engineering entrance exams, the AIEEE, for Karnataka. We have computer courses. We will get the country's best teacher to come on live and teach any subject and pay him Rs 10,000 an hour. He doesn't even have to leave his location. We charge very little because of the volumes. The engineering entrance course costs Rs 16,000 for two years. We have a course for Rs 4,000 on how to crack the Class X exams, which has offline and online components.

How does the rural BPO fit in?

At night we use the same centres to enter data. We now have 80 people across 40 locations. We get images of cheques from a US bank and do data entry. We do form processing for a large Indian telecom company. We pay Rs 7,000 per person and there is no ferrying, partying or attrition. But our telco cost is high and so on a fully loaded basis we will be 60 per cent cheaper.



Sriram Raghavan

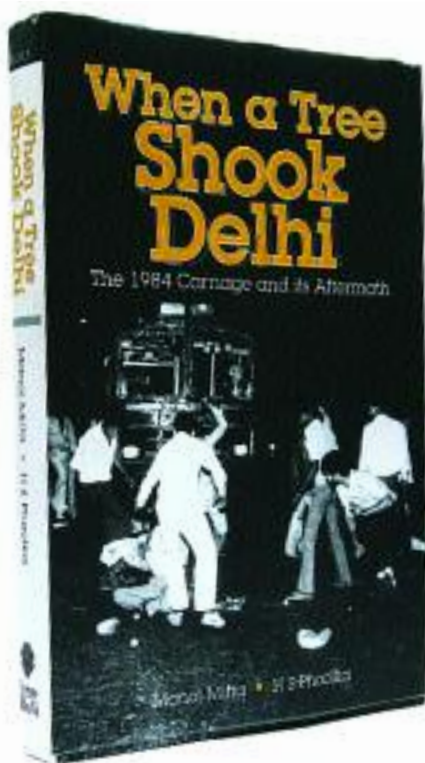
Our system has pictures and fingerprints. So if a person has a ration card, he cannot go to another place and get another one unless the old one is cancelled.

Reviewer

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

THE FINE PRINT

A book to shake up Delhi



When a Tree Shook Delhi

Manoj Mitta and H.S. Phoolka

Rs 395

Roli Books

Perhaps our unwillingness to face the truth about 1984 has resulted in not having in place the democratic safeguards that could have prevented the carnage that we witnessed in Gujarat and recently in Nandigram.

Manoj Mitta and HS Phoolka pursue a story that the whole country should read

Rita and Umesh Anand
New Delhi

AMIDST all the journalistic churning that takes place in India, rarely do we stop and say here is something truly remarkable. *When a Tree Shook Delhi* by Manoj Mitta and HS Phoolka is one such special offering that turned up on our desks at *Civil Society* for review.

In fact, so taken were we that we did a long interview with Mitta and then decided to ask him to do a piece on why they wrote the book. His piece with pictures appears on the next two pages.

Mitta is a journalist known for his integrity. Phoolka is a lawyer with the heart of a crusader. Together they have put together the first seriously independent account of the investigations into the 1984 riots against Sikhs after Indira Gandhi's assassination.

The title of the book comes from Rajiv Gandhi's famous remark on the riots that when a tree falls the earth shakes.

It takes a lot of hard work and even more courage to expose the Indian establishment. In this case, attempts by successive inquiries to absolve the Rajiv Gandhi government and several senior Congressmen of all responsibility have been probed by Mitta and Phoolka with the best skills of the two professions that they come from.

It is important for us as a nation to know the grounds on which Kamal Nath, the present Commerce Minister, was let off. Or how H.L.K. Bhagat, Dharam Dass Shastri and Sajjan Kumar benefited from the investigations and the lumbering confusions of the judicial process that has followed.

The book holds nothing back on these men. It is also courageous in documenting the role played by senior police officers like Amod Kant and Nikhil Kumar. These officers should feel embarrassed by the revelations, particularly because the authors have been clinical and dispassionate. They merely report the facts.

Mitta and Phoolka aren't given to sweeping statements. They don't indulge in wholesale condemnation of the police or any particular community. Where an officer performed he is shown as doing so. For instance, Maxwell Pereira comes out as the no-non-

sense professional policeman that he is known to be. Pereira applied the law, faced the mob, stood by the hunted. In that defining moment for the police and the administration, he stood out while so many other officers seem to have found enough reason to be remiss.

The book's detailed accounts of massacres such as the one at Trilokpuri show how thousands of lives could have been saved had people in positions of administrative importance merely done their job.

An honest book on the 1984 riots is important because they took place here in the capital of India, under the nose of Union government and all the power that it has at its command.

If this can happen in Delhi with politicians of the ruling party leading the mob violence and the law and order machinery holding itself back, what expectations can Indians have in other parts of the country?

Mitta says he had all but given up hope of doing the book when he was again emboldened by Dr Manmohan Singh's public apology for the riots and his assertion not once but twice that the full truth had not come out.

We asked Mitta why he thought the Prime Minister did not choose to hide behind official reports. Was it his well known personal integrity alone or also the fact that he is a Sikh?

Or was it because his daughter in America is a human rights activist?

There is no answer to these questions, but the Prime Minister's willingness to admit that the truth had not been fully told spurred on Mitta to complete a project that had been close to his heart for many years.

Perhaps our unwillingness to come to terms with the truth about 1984 has resulted in not having in place the democratic safeguards that could have prevented the carnage that we witnessed five years ago in Gujarat and recently in Nandigram in West Bengal. Our silence on 1984 has prepared the ground for further acts of inhumanity by the very people responsible for fair governance and the security of citizens.

This is a book for all to read. We should present it to our children so that they learn to look for the truth and idolise the impartial rectitude of Mitta and Phoolka.

'I was captivated by the whitewash'

Manoj Mitta on why and how he and Phoolka wrote the book

IN that fateful year of 1984, I was still a student in my hometown Hyderabad. Although I did not witness the carnage or know anybody affected by it, I somehow could not get over the fact that such a massacre had taken place at all, that too right in the capital. The idea of writing a book on 1984 occurred to me, though, about three years later. The seed of the book was planted in 1987 by a story I broke, as a rookie reporter in *The Times of India*, on the first ever indictment by an official probe of a Congress leader in connection with the slaughter of Sikhs. I found myself sucked into the issue as I became privy over the next few years to a series of subtle and not-so-subtle counter-efforts by state players, including senior judges, to shield Sajjan Kumar.

The nature and extent of the cover-up indicated that the stakes went way beyond the fate of a solitary Congress MP. The ruling party seemed taken aback by Sajjan Kumar's indictment, especially since it figured in the first set of cases recommended by an administrative probe conducted by one Jain-Banerjee committee. Given that many more cases were on the anvil, the independence displayed by the Jain-Banerjee committee threatened to undo the 'gains' from a judicial inquiry conducted by a very compliant Supreme Court judge, Ranganath Misra, who gave a clean chit to the Congress party and its leaders as well as the Rajiv Gandhi government. Apart from the struggle for seeking justice to carnage victims, I was captivated, as a student of law, by the glaring evidence of the Supreme Court judge misusing the credibility of his office to do a whitewash. I would read and re-read the evidence recorded by the Misra Commission and the report it came up with. Given the moral pretensions of judges, I could not cease to marvel at the fact that Misra could get away with such crude obfuscations and half-truths.

The subversive thought of bringing out all that drama in a book gripped me so much that, in those early days of the IT revolution, I hired a PC and even took a break from journalism in 1989. But I had bitten off more than I could chew. As the administrative inquiries into the complicity of the police and the lapses in the registration or investigation of carnage cases were still going on, in a follow-up to the Misra report, it was rather premature to attempt the kind of book I had in mind. There was hardly an aspect of the carnage I could write about at that stage with a degree of finality. Nor did I have such academic or activist grounding in human rights that would have instinctively helped me get a perspective. But then, at 25, I wasn't mature enough to prevent my passion from clouding my objectivity. As my living expenses ate into my meagre savings, I returned the PC after a few weeks without being able to do much with it for all my efforts.

Adding to my stress, it was also the time I married my childhood sweetheart Renu Rao who had just returned from a two-year Masters course in the US, with great expectations of our life together. The trauma of finding me instead obsessed with some book project just when she looked forward to seeing me in honeymoon mode left a permanent scar on our relationship. Let me give a small example of my madness (or insensitivity). It did not even occur to me to remove a gory picture I had pasted next to our bed of a mother holding in one hand an ID card of her son killed in the carnage and, in the other, a remnant of his roasted skull. That I could not deliver the book then after all the damage I had inflicted on our marriage for its sake made Renu even more bitter. She often complained, "That book is a wall between us." For her, it was always "that" book. So much so that when I did fulfil my dream project long years later, Renu could not get her-

self to read the book despite all the response it evoked, in the media and otherwise. Every time she tried to read it, she would lapse into a psychological pain as if it reopened an old wound. All this from a person who is otherwise very warm and sensitive. My own need to hold on to the book dream, regardless of the problems within and without, has disabled my wife from relating to it normally.

But I am jumping ahead of the story. Following the failure of my maiden shot

at writing a book, I resumed my journalistic career and in the course of it changed jobs and even shifted to Hyderabad for a while. I kept up with my interest, though, in the 1984 carnage, gathering more material as I wrote articles seeking to blow the cover on further attempts in the nineties to shield political culprits such as Sajjan Kumar and H K L Bhagat.

Yes, I also sought to revive the book project when all the official inquiries into the 1984 carnage had concluded and no further material was likely to be generated. Or so it seemed till, in a sudden and unprecedented development, the Atal Behari Vajpayee government at the beginning of 2000 appointed a fresh judicial inquiry into the 1984 carnage. The tacit purpose of setting up the Justice G T Nanavati Commission, on the strength of an all-party consensus in Parliament, was to undo the whitewash by the previous judicial inquiry conducted by the Misra Commission. It was a happy augury for the long-pending book project. Since it had anyway been delayed so long, the book could well wait for the outcome of the Nanavati probe.

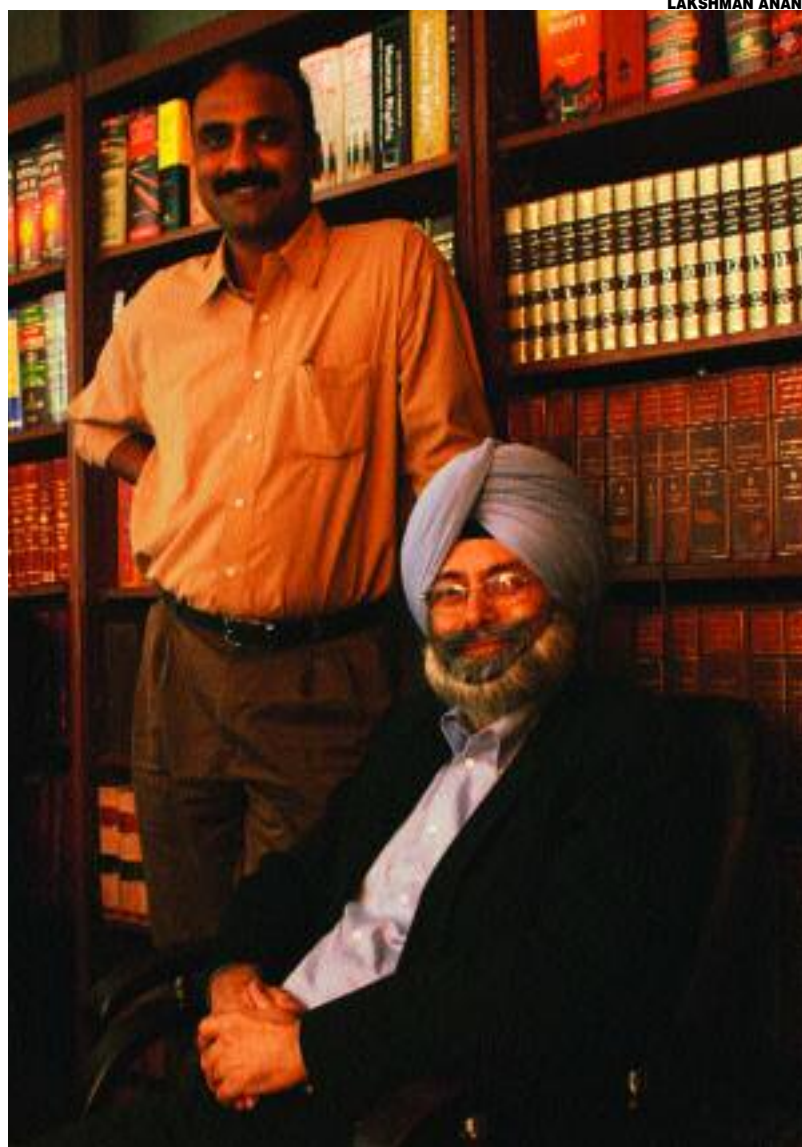
Things did not quite turn out so smoothly, thanks to the pro-activity displayed by my co-author, senior advocate H S Phoolka, in a bid to make up for lost time. He came on board soon after I shifted back to Delhi in the middle of 2000, carrying two cartons of papers connected with the book. A lot of that material had in fact been given to me by Phoolka, who had

not only been spearheading the campaign for justice but had also been instrumental in mooted the proposal of having a fresh judicial inquiry into the carnage. At our first meeting on my return to Delhi, I discovered that my key source for the book had meanwhile developed an ambition of authoring one himself. Phoolka said that he was under pressure from Sikhs around the world to do a book on the carnage. And since he didn't have the writing skills to attempt it, and since we have been comrades-in-arms, who better than me, he asked, to ghost a book for him or, alternatively, to co-author it?

Frankly, I was startled at the implication of his proposition: writing off my own independent project, he was asking me to do something in which he too would have a say. My fear was not so much about sharing credit as about losing control over the interpretation of the material. Given my struggle with the book over the years to "get it right," I was concerned about surrendering or even diluting my autonomy just when the gaps in the material were set to be filled, presuming that the Nanavati Commission was bound to conduct a more transparent inquiry than its discredited predecessor.

Despite our tried and tested association in pursuing matters related to the carnage, I feared a conflict of interest when it came to writing a book together - between my role as an observer and Phoolka's role as a central participant. Much as a 1984 carnage book bearing his name might promise a lot more insight, can it also pretend to have the necessary detachment? As a journalist, I interacted all through not only with the side of the victims but also with those alleged to have engineered the violence (leaders like H K L Bhagat, Sajjan Kumar

(Continued on page 30)



Manoj Mitta and HS Phoolka

LAKSHMAN ANAND

'I was captivated by the whitewash'

(Continued from page 29)

and Dharam Dass Shastri) or facilitated it (the then lieutenant governor of Delhi, P G Gavai, and senior police officers in charge of the worst affected areas). On the other hand, Phoolka, as a lawyer advancing the cause of the victims, was accustomed – and, indeed, professionally entitled – to seeing things only from their viewpoint. There was every danger of a book authored or even co-authored by him turning out to be – if not just appearing to be – no more than a summary of his elaborate written arguments before the two inquiry commissions. Such a book too might have its own value but I wasn't sure if I wanted the one I had been agonising over for so long to end up having a sectarian appeal and falling short of the rigours of human rights and the rule of law.

For all such fears, I am, in retrospect, glad that I took the risk of having Phoolka as a co-author. It turned out to be a case of converting adversity into opportunity. Within its limited framework of seeking the truth about the 1984 carnage on the basis of official records themselves, I doubt if the book could have been as good without Phoolka's involvement as a co-author. Being a practising

was around 4,000. Whatever its shortcomings, the Misra report, it must be conceded, gave a specific finding that Phoolka's figure was inflated allegedly because of a repetition of names. The subsequent official survey happened to vindicate Misra's estimate. In the circumstances, I insisted in keeping with my conscious detachment that we had no option but to go by the official death toll unless we were in a position to demonstrate major flaws in the methodology of its enumeration. To his credit, Phoolka yielded to my reasoning on this and other key issues on which the book deviated from the account he had presented before the last judicial inquiry on behalf of the victims.

I am also grateful to him for agreeing to be objective about the Akali Dal despite all the help rendered by that party in the fight for justice. The book exposes the irony of two Akali Dal members inducing a riot widow to backtrack on her testimony in the court against one of the alleged organisers of the carnage, Congress leader Bhagat. Referring to the manner in which those two members thrived in the party despite that public scandal, the book said that it

Lest we forget...



Showroom owned by a Sikh gutted in Regal building, CP.



The violence left innumerable houses destroyed. Families had nowhere to go.



A Sikh mother shows a remnant of her son's body.



Four Sikh owners were burnt alive in their shop.



Mobs burnt bodies to destroy evidence.

lawyer, Phoolka went out of his way to ensure that we didn't focus mainly on the harm done by judges to the cause of justice. The book is both fairer and richer for putting in context the activism displayed by the Delhi high court to find a way, for instance, for holding the executive to higher standards of compensation for the mass murders that had taken place right in the capital. Equally important, the collaboration provided a rare opportunity to record a first person account of Phoolka's struggle for justice against all odds, a stirring example of the difference made by a callow lawyer from rustic Punjab through sheer tenacity. It was indeed an honour for me to be the medium through which Phoolka's inside stories came to be told with corroborative evidence in the second of the two parts of the book.

This is, however, not to suggest that my misgivings about having him as a co-author were entirely misplaced. The 'detachment' of an observer and the 'inherent bias' of a participant did have their clashes on a range of issues figuring in the book. A case in point is something as basic as the question of the death toll of the carnage in Delhi alone. I preferred to go by the official figure, 2,733, and take the liberty at the most of rounding it off as 3,000. Reason: As evident from the last chapter of the book, we did have representative instances of killings that had not been taken into account for want of documents when the official enumeration had been done about three years after the carnage. Thus, from my point of view, we were already leaning towards the higher side when we took the death toll in Delhi as 3,000. But, from Phoolka's point of view, even that was a gross underestimate! For, he had all through maintained on the basis of a survey done by his team before the Misra Commission that the death toll in Delhi

had sent out a cynical message that the Akali Dal's association with the carnage issue had "more to do with politics than any genuine concern to secure justice." Since he had extensively dealt with that party in the course of the struggle and otherwise, Phoolka had reservations on whether we could cast aspersions on the Akali Dal's commitment to the cause just on the basis of the Bhagat episode. But as a journalist, I did not want us to pull our punches on anybody. It was an article of faith with me to be as severe on the Akali Dal (and the BJP, for Gujarat 2002) as we were on the Congress party and the Rajiv Gandhi regime.

There was a personal angle to my being so assertive about presenting facts as they were. Surely, I did not strain my marital life to make compromises when I actually got down to writing the book. It is because I am still as "possessed" as before that I have been able to muster the will to complete the book, taking advantage of the wealth of material that became public post-2000 in the course of the Nanavati inquiry.

The book seemed worth all the pain and sacrifice that had gone into its making when I received a feedback from its first ever reader, Sagarika Ghose of CNN IBN, who had been sent a proof by the publisher, Roli Books. Sagarika's SMS read: "Can't stop reading your book. It's absolutely gripping, bone-chilling..." In an extraordinary gesture, she went on to do a special prime time programme on the book, effectively launching it. The book seems to have struck a chord despite being out of synch with the prevailing "feel-good" in the country. At a function marking the publication of the book, political scientist Yogendra Yadav likened it to Gandhi's style of introspection. One thing I surely have in common with Gandhi is that I haven't been entirely fair to my wife.

Perspectives

CATCHING TRENDS

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

Norwegian medicine for Vedanta

KAVALJIT SINGH

ON 19 November, the Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi received some unusual visitors. Even the police and security personnel stationed in the heavily-guarded Chanakyapuri area of Delhi where the Norwegian and other embassies are located could not figure out the purpose of these visitors. Though they were Indian citizens, ethnically they belong to a distinct tribal minority group called Dongria Kondh. Dressed in their traditional attire, these tribal representatives came all the way from the remote Niyamgiri hills of Orissa to express gratitude to the Norwegian government for removing UK-based Vedanta Resources Plc from its investment portfolio. What was even more perplexing was that instead of protesting with placards and banners, the tribal representatives quietly met officials at the Norwegian Embassy and handed over a letter of thanks besides gifting them two photographs depicting the natural beauty of their habitat. So, in many ways, their visit was unusual.

Officially considered 'primitive,' the Dongria Kondhs are the original inhabitants of Niyamgiri hilly region which extends to Rayagada, Koraput and Kalahandi districts of south Orissa. They largely rely on hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation in the Niyamgiri hills for survival. Given the lopsided nature of state-run developmental projects and schemes in Orissa, Dongria Kondhs have remained isolated and social outcasts for decades.

As per the Constitution, Niyamgiri is a Schedule V area which means that tribal lands cannot be taken over by non-tribal individuals and corporate houses. Further, gram sabhas have been empowered to manage natural resources including land, water and forest resources and their approval is required for all developmental projects in the area. Unfortunately, such legal protective measures have largely remained on paper as evident from the large-scale forced eviction of tribal communities for big developmental projects.

After decades of seclusion, Dongria Kondhs came into public notice some four years back when they resisted the upcoming \$850 million aluminium refinery and bauxite mining project at Lanjigarh in Kalahandi district. The work on the refinery has been completed and full commercial production is expected from early 2008. Whereas the bauxite mining project has not received environmental clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The entire project belongs to Vedanta Alumina Limited, a subsidiary of

Vedanta Resources Plc. Though the parent company is registered and listed in the UK, most of its business activities linked to mining and production of copper, aluminium and zinc are located in India. With revenues in excess of \$6.5 billion, the company owns a significant market share in several metals and minerals. The main promoter of Vedanta Resources is India-born business tycoon, Anil Agarwal, who nowadays proclaims to be the "brand ambassador of Rajasthan in the world." His is a rags-to-riches story. Starting business as a scrap metal dealer in the late 1970s, Mr Agarwal has always been in the centre of

many controversies. The accusations against him range from throwing a digital diary at his senior employee in the UK to buying state-owned mining company, BALCO, in India at a throwaway price through corrupt means. Of late, Mr Agarwal has also become visible in charity and corporate social responsibility circles. He recently announced an ambitious plan to set up Vedanta University in Orissa on the lines of Stanford and Harvard universities.

The tribal community is opposed to the project as they fear loss of their livelihoods and traditional culture due to displacement by the mining of bauxite in the Niyamgiri hills. The mining project would lead to displacement of thousands of tribal people and destroy biodiversity and water sources. Niyamgiri hills are the source of the Vamshadhara river and major tributaries of the Nagaveli rivers – sacred to the Khonds. A large number of wildlife species including tiger, leopards, elephant and mouse deer also abode in the Niyamgiri hills. Many of these species are endangered. In the past, efforts have been made by various governmental

and non-governmental bodies to declare Niyamgiri hills as a sanctuary or a reserve area to protect its pristine natural habitat.

The initial local resistance against the project started when the land acquisition process began. But because of the poor economic and political clout of Dongria Kondhs, their voices and concerns were ignored by local and state authorities. This is hardly surprising given the Orissa government's thrust on 'accelerating economic development' by handing over rich natural resources to big private companies, both domestic and foreign, for a pittance.

However, the power dynamics changed when campaigners, NGOs, documentary filmmakers, human rights groups, advocacy and support groups from India



An area devastated by mining in Orissa's Kalinganagar region.

Dressed in their traditional attire, the Dongria Kodh tribals came all the way to Delhi from the remote Niyamgiri hills of Orissa to express gratitude to the Norwegian government.

(Continued on page 32)

Norwegian medicine for Vedanta

(Continued from page 31)

joined hands with the local tribal community to oppose the project. As a result, greater awareness about the pitfalls of the project was generated in other parts of the country. Later on, several petitions were filed before the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) appointed by the Supreme Court. In these petitions, local people and their supporters had highlighted various violations of environmental laws by the company. After visiting the area, the CEC informed the Supreme Court about the negative consequences of this project on the people and environment. In its September 2005 report, the CEC declared that the refinery was illegally constructed and should not be allowed to proceed.

At the international level, the protest action received momentum with the support of well-known mining critic and activist, Roger Moody, as well as Actionaid and others. In alliance with Indian activists and groups, Moody and his colleagues at Partizans, a UK-based campaign group, initiated the campaign against the project at the international level. They also released a report titled, "Ravages Through India", in August 2005. The report highlighted evidence of serious violations of human rights and environment laws by the Indian subsidiaries of Vedanta Resources. They were instrumental in informing and activating the shareholders and lenders of Vedanta Resources about the disastrous consequences of the project on the tribal community and natural environment.

It is in this context that Norway's sovereign wealth fund, Government Pension Fund- Global, came into the picture. The Fund had invested around \$14 million in Vedanta Resources Plc, amounting to an equity ownership of 0.16 per cent.

With \$370 billion under management, Government Pension Fund – Global is the second largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, next to Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. It has invested in nearly 7,000 companies globally. Sovereign wealth funds are owned by state agencies such as central banks, state investment companies, state pension funds, and oil stabilisation funds. These funds are usually long-term investors and invest in stocks, bonds, infrastructure and real estate.

Unlike other sovereign wealth funds, Norway's Fund follows the best disclosure and ethical standards related to its investment portfolio. In 2004, the Council on Ethics was established to regularly evaluate the investment portfolio of the Fund to ensure that investments in specified companies are consistent with the established ethical guidelines adopted in 2005. The ethical guidelines bar the exclusion of companies if there are serious violations of human rights, labour exploitation, corruption or severe environmental damages. Though the Council can only make recommendations, the final decision to exclude companies from the Fund's investment portfolio rests with Norway's Ministry of Finance. In the past, the Fund had sold its stake in several transnational corporations such as Wal-Mart Stores, Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc., DRD Gold Limited, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin Corporation and many others because of their unethical business practices. What is interesting to note is that despite boycotting over 20 major transnational corporations from its investment portfolio, the financial performance of the Fund has not deteriorated.

In response to the international campaign, the Council on Ethics decided to evaluate the investments in Vedanta Resources Plc in October 2006, particularly from the point of human rights violations and environmental damage. Since the parent company, Vedanta Resources Plc, holds a majority share in four Indian subsidiaries namely Sterlite Industries (India) Limited, Madras Aluminium Company Limited, Bharat Aluminium Company Limited and Vedanta Alumina Limited, the Council investigated all of them. The Council commissioned studies and reports by experts and consultants and relied upon reports and documents from governmental and non-governmental sources. Once investigations were over, the Council invited Vedanta Resources for comments on its findings. But Vedanta resources refused to comment despite extension of deadline by the Council.

On May 15, 2007, the Council recommended to the Ministry of Finance to sell off its stake in Vedanta Resources. In its scathing report, the Council severely criticised Vedanta Resources for its connivance in human rights violations and environmental damage in its four subsidiaries. In the words of the Council's report, "The allegations levelled at the company regarding environmental damage and complicity in human rights violations, including abuse and forced eviction of tribal peoples, are well founded. In the Council's view the company seems to be lacking the interest and will to do anything about the severe and lasting damage that its activities inflict on people and the environ-

ment... the violations against the environment and human rights that have been revealed are recurrent at all the subsidiaries subject to investigation and have taken place over many years. In the Council's view, they indicate a pattern in the company's practices where such violations are accepted and make up an established part of its business activities. Such a pattern of conduct constitutes an unacceptable risk that the company's unethical practices will continue in the future."

Perhaps this is the first time that such activism has taken place in an investment project located in a 'democratic' regime and therefore is being watched closely.

Even the critics had not expected such a sharp indictment of business practices of Vedanta Resources from the Council. On 28 August, the Finance Ministry ordered the Fund to sell off its stake by October 2007. On 6 November, the Ministry made the decision public on its website. For Vedanta Resources, Norway's sell off decision came at a bad time. The sell off decision was cited in the ruling of the Supreme Court issued on 23 November, 2007. The Court denied permission to its subsidiary, Vedanta Alumina Limited (which is not listed in Indian stock markets) to mine bauxite at Niyamgiri Hills. But there is a catch. The Court allowed Vedanta's other subsidiary Sterlite Industries (which is listed in Indian stock markets) to submit a fresh proposal after setting up a joint special purpose vehicle with Orissa Mining Corporation. The Court also attached new terms and conditions on income sharing, rehabilitation of displaced people and environmental protection in order to enhance Vedanta's responsibility and accountability in India.

It remains to be seen how Vedanta Resources responds to these new developments. So far, it has maintained a complete silence.

Undoubtedly, the Norwegian decision has boosted the morale of the local communities and their supporters against the project. All their concerns and objections which were completely ignored by state authorities and company officials stand vindicated by the international community.

Should one welcome the decision by the Norwegian sovereign fund to sell off its stake in Vedanta Resources? The answer is an affirmative 'Yes'. If globalisation can facilitate the movement of capital, goods and services across borders, the same instrument could also be used to build alliances and solidarity with like-minded groups across borders to resist destructive projects and investment flows. This episode has shown the potential influence of shareholder activism in punishing bad corporations. It has opened up new avenues for grassroots activists and groups to influence corporate behaviour. The shareholder boycott strategy has been extensively used to put pressure on repressive regimes such as South Africa's apartheid regime in the past and Sudan and Burma nowadays. Perhaps this is the first time that such activism took place in an investment project located in a 'democratic' regime and therefore being watched closely.

Should such action by the international community be the only way to fight destructive development projects? The answer is 'No' for three main reasons.

First, the real political battle remains with local and national authorities which invite such investment projects. The unequal power relations underlying such investment decisions needs to be altered by domestic political mobilisation and democratisation process. A formal 'democratic' regime where regular elections take place gives no guarantee that investment decisions are always taken in the interest of people at large. In the present times, establishing democratic accountability in decision-making processes may appear a difficult task but is not impossible. At the same time, another big battle has to be fought at the intellectual level where 'development' is narrowly construed in purely financial returns.

Second, on a pure financial basis, Norway's sale of equity (a miniscule 0.16 per cent of the total equity) had no major negative impact on the share price and market capitalisation of Vedanta Resources. The shares sold by the Fund were subsequently bought by some one else (though the identity is unknown) in the financial markets. However, the bad publicity generated by this process may affect the future business prospects of Vedanta Resources.

It needs to be acknowledged here that Norway's sovereign fund is an exception in the global financial markets in terms of its higher governance and ethical standards. No other big international funds follow similar standards and mechanisms. So this strategy has its own limitations.

Lastly, it is very likely that both the state government and Vedanta Resources would pursue this project with new conditions and mechanisms as directed by the Supreme Court. So the local community's struggle against the project per se is far from over.

Nevertheless, it is a major moral victory which cannot be measured in financial or other terms. A moral victory, albeit a limited one, raises new hopes and aspirations for collective action in the future.

What is interesting is that despite boycotting over 20 transnational corporations from its investment portfolio, the financial performance of Norway's Fund has not deteriorated.

Fishing in troubled waters

MILINDO CHAKRABARTI

SUBAL Patra has a son studying in Class V. Arjun Patra sends his daughters to an English medium school. Khoka Mandal, Rabin Mandal, Suman Bej, Jagannath Patra, Shyamal Das, Hara Prasad Manna and Ashoke Mandal are also making all possible efforts to send their children to school. Some of these children are going to college as well and look forward to a bright future.

Khoka, Arjun, Rabin and Jagannath were not so fortunate. Their parents could not support their education. Most of them are now in their early forties, some are well past fifty. They passed through a turbulent childhood, forced to earn their livelihood quite early in life. Their forefathers were engaged in fishing along the river Damodar, with no ownership control over agricultural land. Loss of fishing opportunities made them leave the Amta region of Howrah district and come to fish around the wetlands on the outskirts of Kolkata in 1932. Around 72 hectares of wetlands were leased from Calcutta Port Trust. These families cleared weeds infesting the wetlands and pisciculture began in right earnest. Since then the community of fishermen have been fighting all odds to eke out a modest livelihood. The Damocles' Sword of being denied the right to fish always hangs over their head, because the ownership rights on the water body does not belong to them. In legal parlance, the land belongs to the Kolkata Port Trust (KPT) and they are 'encroachers'. A legal battle to displace the fishermen has been on for quite some time in the Calcutta High Court.

The KPT authorities were not interested in this property as long as it was unusable for economic purposes. Polluted effluents from the nearby industrial units were dumped into the water body and local goons used it not only as a safe refuge but also to carry out unlawful activities. The Mudyaly Fishermen's Cooperative that was formed in the early 1960s with 100 members gradually got into action. Fisheries activities carried out by them ensured that the pollution level of the water flowing into the river Ganges was much lower than the level observed at the inlet through which polluted water gets in. Several natural measures, including growing water hyacinth close to the inlets and introducing particular species of fish that feed on the pollutants, ensure considerable cleaning of the polluted water at the outlet point.

However, the legal battle went on. Injunctions have been issued by the High Court and vacated adding to the uncertainty facing these fishermen. Police were sent to take control of the properties but collective resistance by the fishermen prevailed. They are still in control and are selling around 400-500 kg of fish every day. The members are getting assured employment all through the year at a rate of Rs 110 daily. Non-members are also employed, but at a lower wage. In 2005-06, the society sold fish worth more than Rs 60 lakh, realising an undistributed profit of Rs 72,649. The society also arranges for support to the members to meet their medical expenses. The cost incurred in education of children is also borne by the members.

In the meantime, the cooperative leadership also got involved in developing a Nature Park around the water body. Several hundred trees have been planted. Studies revealed that a good number of migratory birds collect here during the

winter months. The droppings of the birds reduce the cost of applying lime to the water body to a large extent. An eco-tourism enterprise is in the process of taking shape. Given the lack of greenery and fresh air in Kolkata, people come from all over the city and even beyond to relax and enjoy nature. This has resulted in a gross earning of more than Rs 32 lakhs during 2005-06. It is gradually becoming popular as an outdoor site for shooting Bengali films.

Some forest department officials in West Bengal have also shown an interest in bringing this nature park under the department's purview, citing the existence of enormous biodiversity. All attempts by forest officials in the country to protect forest cover and the biodiversity have met with failure. Their demand to take over this park as a biosphere reserve becomes even more ironic as the forest department played no role in terms of providing resources and effort to create it.

Now that the area has been cleansed of all sorts of pollution - both environmental and social- and also generates considerable amount of business and livelihood, the water body maintained by the Mudyaly Fishermen's Cooperative has attracted the attention of many resourceful organisations. The area has become lucrative to real estate developers.

The experience gathered by the Mudyaly fishermen is also coming handy in de-polluting sewage water in nearby localities. They are involved in carrying out pisciculture, beautification of the surroundings and providing security to a sewage water treatment plant set up under the Ganga Action Plan near Batanagar. They are also paying a hefty annual rent for cleaning the polluted water. Of course, they are raising a good amount of fish there and have the right to catch and sell them.

These efforts at cleaning domestic sewage water are much more cost effective than the sophisticated, mechanical methods of cleaning polluted waters.

The area around the water body is also being used to grow vegetables, maintain poultry and goats. The members benefit as they buy these products at rates that are much lower than the market price. Mutton sells at Rs 50 a kg. The Consumer Cooperative at the settlement of the fishermen, located at Jejepara about 3 km from the water body, provides consumer goods to members at reasonable prices.

Perhaps it will be difficult for the powers that be to displace these fishermen from their source of livelihood. The difficulties multiply, given the political implications of forced ouster in Singur and a failed attempt at Nandigram. However, a question remains. If at all there is pressure on the fishermen to withdraw from this property, are we ready to hold their hands in solidarity?

Mudyaly fishermen transfer their shares to their sons or daughters as they retire. However, they are firm on one thing -- that such shares would never ever be transferred in the names of their sons-in-law. The favoured sons-in-law of the socio-political regime of the land are hell-bent on acquiring control over this productive piece of land. Will the Mudyaly fishermen be forced to change their stand and transfer all their shares to such larger than life sons-in-law?

Milindo Chakrabarti is director of CREATE (Centre for Studies in Rural Economy, Appropriate Technology and Environment) E-mail: milindo62@gmail.com



The Damocles Sword of being denied the right to fish always hangs over their heads because the ownership rights on the water body do not belong to them. In legal parlance they are 'encroachers'.

Doctor with a mission

Dr S K BASU

THERE are very few individuals who by their achievements and contribution to society leave an indelible imprint on one's mind. Their absence is always felt and the dictum 'no one is indispensable' loses its logical connotation.

Dr NH Antia FRCS, FACS (Honorary), founder, Director and Trustee of the Foundation for Medical Research, Foundation for Research in Community Health, Founder member and past president of Association of Plastic surgeons of India and Association of Rural Surgeons of India (ARSI) was one such rare and endearing soul.

Apart from his brilliant scholastic and academic career he was a skilled surgeon, a surgical innovator, a great teacher, founder of multiple institutions, a guide-friend-philosopher for many. He was an inspiration for his deserving juniors. These are just a few dimensions of his multifaceted personality.

He started his illustrious career with innovative surgical procedures on leprosy patients at Kandhwa and went on to establish a reputed department of plastic surgery at Grant Medical College and Sir JJ Group of Hospitals. His role as an inspiring teacher is evinced in the cadres of senior plastic surgeons spread all over the world who are carrying the science and art of his discipline forward. The Foundation of Medical Research at Mumbai, set up by Dr Antia in 1975, is an internationally recognised institute today and its research capabilities in the field of leprosy are acclaimed worldwide.

Dr Antia has more than 300 publications to his credit, nationally and internationally besides being the author of five books. His extraordinary achievements in various spheres have won him innumerable awards, acclaim and accolades. To name a few: Hunterian Professorship of Royal College of Surgeons of England, Fellow of American College of Surgeons, Padmashree, the G D Birla International Award for Humanism and the Karma Yogi Award. He was also a member secretary of a path breaking ICSSR/ICMR report, "Health for All, An Alternative Strategy."

A great proponent of Panchayati Raj, Dr Antia was of the belief that people should have the right to decide and control what is best for them rather than have policies thrust upon them by a power centre which is completely oblivious to their socio-economic and cultural background.

He firmly believed "a new India can re-emerge only from the villages of Bharat whom we have neglected at our own peril." He felt that India's present urban problems are a manifestation of this neglect. The ever increasing cost of healthcare along with over use of technology that put undue pressure on poor

patients, troubled him immensely and actually made him question the direction in which the healthcare system was heading. As a step towards making healthcare affordable to all, he set up the Foundation of Research in Community Health with its present headquarters in Pune.

His work with rural communities brought him closer to the harsh realities of healthcare prevailing in rural India. The plight of individuals living in sheer deprivation and their struggle to survive against overwhelming odds caused him acute distress.

The realisation of this stark reality led him to start the rural surgery movement and he formed the Association of Rural Surgeons of India (ARSI) with some likeminded surgeons in 1993. The objective was to take appropriate surgery to the doorsteps of the rural population at an affordable cost, with ease of access and deliver it in a humane manner within their socio-economic and cultural milieu.

A proponent of Panchayati Raj, Dr Antia believed that people should have the right to decide what is best for them.

Today ARSI is a formidable force. It provides a common platform to surgeons from varied specialties such as obstetrics, gynecology, orthopedics, ENT, ophthalmology and anesthesia. All of them are working in tandem in remote parts and in urban slums towards fulfilling Dr Antia's vision of making modern surgical care accessible to the community and demystifying medicine with Dr Antia's philosophy "elegance

lies in making the complicated simple and appropriate."

Dr Antia not only nurtured this association in every possible manner for its growth and for propagating the message of rural surgery, he silenced its critics forever by saying: "ARSI does not represent an association of second rate surgeons who provide second rate surgery to second rate citizens in second rate rural India or urban slums. It represents those who despite the training and values inculcated in our medical colleges have retained human values and courage to swim against the popular tide which has engulfed many of our profession.Those who state that surgery and its techniques cannot be different in urban or rural areas are unaware of the entirely different socio-economic, cultural and many other differences in the problems as well as facilities of these two nations namely India and Bharat, that live cheek by jowl in the same subcontinent."

Dr NH Antia was an embodiment of courage and strength of character. His life and illustrious career showed us that under all conditions goodness is desirable, feasible and practical. He also showed us how to be good without being great and therein lies the greatness of Dr Antia.

Dr S K Basu is Editor, Rural Surgery.



Dr NH Antia

EVERYONE IS SOMEONE

Rs 600 for 1 year; Rs 950 for 2 years;
Rs 1,300 for 3 years; 1 Year International \$50

RATE FOR INSTITUTIONS

One year subscription for Rs 1,000

Civil Society

READ US. WE READ YOU.

Name: Mr/Ms/Institution

Designation:

Institution: Department/Class:

Area of Interest:

Address: Office Residence

City:

State: Country:

Pincode:

Phone: Office Residence Fax:

E-mail:

Tick appropriate: 1 year (Rs. 600) 2 years (Rs. 950) 3 years (Rs. 1,300) 1 Year International (\$50) 1 year for Institutions (Rs. 1,000)

I wish to pay by Cash / MO Cheque / Demand Draft (add Rs 65 for outstation / non-Delhi cheque)

Cheque / Demand Draft No. Dated Payable to Content Services & Publishing Pvt. Ltd. Mail it to: E2144, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017.

Living

BODY & SOUL

Be different, look within. There is always more to life. Reach out to alternatives. Heritage, eco-tourism, green cures, traditional foods, buy from NGOs, spiritual talk, organic counter, where to donate, where to volunteer, web watch.

Kareem's dark and deep forest

Susheela Nair
Kasargode (Kerala)

If one drives to the nondescript hamlet of Puliyaikulam, 30 km on the NH-7 between Kasargode and Payyanur, near Parappa in northern Kerala, one cannot miss Kareem's Forest Park. The genesis of the 32-acre botanical park can be traced to 1977. This oasis of greenery is the result of the solitary effort, patience, perseverance and grit of Abdul Kareem who spent three decades transforming a wasteland into a beautiful forest park of high botanical value. It has 300 varieties of trees, herbs, medicinal plants, creepers and rare fruits and also plays host to myriad insects, butterflies and birds fluttering around tufts of wild flowers blooming in a clearing.

After working in Mumbai dockyard and later at a travel and placement agency in the UAE, Kareem returned to Nileswaram, his native village in Kerala in the 70s. Recalling his earlier forays in afforestation, Kareem said: "During one of my meanderings around the area, I found this rocky terrain which pained me. I have always yearned to resurrect a *Kaavu*, a sacred grove that every village in Kerala had once upon a time. So, on an impulse, I bought five acres of barren wasteland in a desolate place, 16 km from Nileswaram at a throwaway price since the owners of the craggy terrain didn't have much use for the land. When I bought this arid land which used to be inhabited by tribals, I became the laughing stock of everybody. But what inspired me were the sacred groves. The greening of deserts in Gulf countries also ignited my desire to recreate an oasis of greenery."

Kareem began to plant saplings of wild trees in spaces between the laterite rocks. Though he nurtured them with water ferried from afar in containers slung on either side of his bike, the saplings dried up and withered in no time. The local villagers were baffled when he bought another 27 acres of arid land adjacent to the plot. Undeterred by his initial failure, he dug deeper into the rocky terrain and planted selected saplings, ferrying water from miles away. The impact of humus on the hard laterite rock was astounding. It accelerated the disintegration of hard laterite into small gravel and slowly to fine soil enriched by tons of decaying leaf litter, rich with humus. In the third year, his patience and persistence bore fruit. A few saplings showed signs of life. To his astonishment, he found water seeping into his derelict well. As the forest trees grew, the water



Abdul Kareem in his forest

Environmentalists, botanists and nature-lovers have flocked to the forest to understand how Kareem transformed a denuded, rocky terrain into a lush jungle.

source improved. The once parched wells in the surrounding environs also became bountiful and overflowed for weeks after the monsoon subsided.

Kareem embarked on a planting spree. A variety of plants -- herbal, medicinal, selected exotic varieties and rare botanical specimens were planted. A few years later, his plants grew to a certain height heralding the arrival of birds which dropped more seeds, initiating a cyclical process. "Nature took charge. Weeds, rare herbs and medicinal plants sprouted. Hare, jungle fowl and beehives started colonising the nascent man-made forest. I was a mute spectator watching nature at work," says Kareem.

After consulting experts about conservation, he dug rainwater catch pits, set up embankments to store rainwater and raised walls with rock pieces across the slopes to retain topsoil otherwise carried away by flowing rain water. Word spread about his grit, and his commendable achievement. The same villagers who laughed about his initial attempts at conservation flocked to Kareem's nascent 'forest'. Today, three decades later, the woods are lovely, dark and deep. Sunlight scarcely penetrates through the thick green canopy overhead. As one wends one's way through the painstakingly developed man-made forest, the

(Continued on page 36)

Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR

For a better sounding voice

Ask Dr GG



Dr GG Gangadharan is one of India's best known Ayurvedic physicians. Currently, he is deputy director of the Foundation for the Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) in Bangalore. In this column, Dr GG, as he is popularly known, answers queries from readers seeking effective alternative remedies.

I am a 45-year-old female. I have varicose veins on my legs. At times the veins get swollen and very painful. I do not have any other serious health problem. Please advice.

Varicose veins are a very common problem among females with a fat body, especially below the knees. If your

veins are getting swollen and painful, then it means that there is a slight block in the vein by fat tissues. Weight reduction is one way of reducing this problem. External massage with warm kottenchukkadi thailam mixed with a little salt is very useful. Internally, you should take Panchakola Choorana 2.5 gms, Gulgulu Panchapala choorna 2.5 gms, roasted and powdered horse gram 2.5 gms all together mixed with honey for 41 days in the morning on an empty stomach and at night. Two Kanchanara Gulgulu tablets with Lodrasavam (30 ml) should be taken at night after food.

If you have a history of bleeding piles or any pitha diseases, you should not take these medicines without consulting an Ayurvedic physician. All these conditions need the regular advice of an Ayurvedic physician.

My son is 16-year-old. He is a normal boy. He attends a good school and has above average results. Six months ago his voice changed to a high-pitched tone - very much like a female voice. Tests of his vocal chords show them to be normal with slight congestion. All ENT check ups are normal too. Please could you help us with advice?

If the sound of his voice has become hoarse, one thing you can try is gargling with Vachadi Thailam. Also, for two weeks take Mridweegadi rasayanam mixed with Thriphala choornam. Apply Bharangadi thailam on his head half an hour before his bath everyday.

I am a 50-year-old male. My voice has become hoarse. I have phlegm in my throat, which troubles me when I wish to speak. This has been there for the last two years. All medical check ups are clear. I do not have a cold. I wish to try Ayurvedic medicine.

Gargle with Pippalyadi thailam. Apply Thriphaladi thailam on your head

half an hour before bath. Try this for a few days. Otherwise, consult a physician. Try to check your prakruti, agni etc., and also something to clear the phlegm from your body.

I am a 65-year-old male and in good health. My only problem is a failing memory. I tend to forget names of people and even where I put my personal belongings like my spectacles. Is there any hope for me at my age?

This problem is very common among ageing people. If it is very excessive to the extent of forgetting the names of one's own siblings and near ones, then only do we need to worry. However, if you can get hold of Bhrahmi (Baccopa monnieri), make a paste of it of the size of a gooseberry and take it in the morning on an empty stomach. If you have no blood pressure problem, cholesterol or sugar, no other medicine can be advised. Without knowing these details nothing more can be prescribed.



Baccopa monnieri

in size and colour, better to ignore it. Or you can apply Avalgubeejadi choornam mixed with cow's urine for one year. Internally, you can take leaf paste of yellow flowered Bringaraj (eclipta alba) on an empty stomach in the morning with buttermilk. All white patches need not be leucoderma. Due to some exposure to chemicals, local skin changes can occur.

My daughter is 12-year-old. She has good health but has a hearing problem for which she wears hearing aids. Since the last few months I have noticed that her hair is turning grey. Is there a treatment for early greying?

The first and second part of your question have no connection. The hearing problem can be due to many reasons. Was she born with the problem or did she acquire it? If it was acquired later, was there some infection? Unless one knows these details, your question cannot be answered.

The greying of hair may be due to many reasons. It can be caused by malnourishment or excessive exposure to sun or dust. However, it is good to use Amalaki juice everyday internally and apply Prapundareekadi thailam, half an hour before her bath, which will be available in all Ayurvedic shops. Make sure that she covers her head with a cap or cloth while going out.

E-mail: vaidya.ganga@frrht.org

Kareem's dark and deep forest

(Continued from page 35)

drop in temperature is perceptible and the perennial chirping of birds and sounds of insects can be heard in the dimness of the forest. During the long, wet months of the Kerala monsoon, mushrooms and moss are a common sight.

Kareem's feat has few parallels in the country. Environmentalists, botanists and nature-lovers have flocked to the forest to understand how Kareem transformed a denuded, rocky terrain into a lush forest. Researchers working on wasteland management visit his forest to study the 'Kareem Model.' His saga of sweat, toil and struggle has been featured in school textbooks. As his story spread far and wide, rewards and accolades came pouring in. Environment awards came from NGOs and corporates. Forest research institutes and Panchayats conferred honours on him. When the father of India's Green Revolution, M S Swaminathan, once stopped by, he was bowled over by Kareem's work. Since then, he is a frequent visitor. In 2005, Indian Oil Corporation released a full page newspaper advertisement in its 'India Inspired' series extolling his efforts.

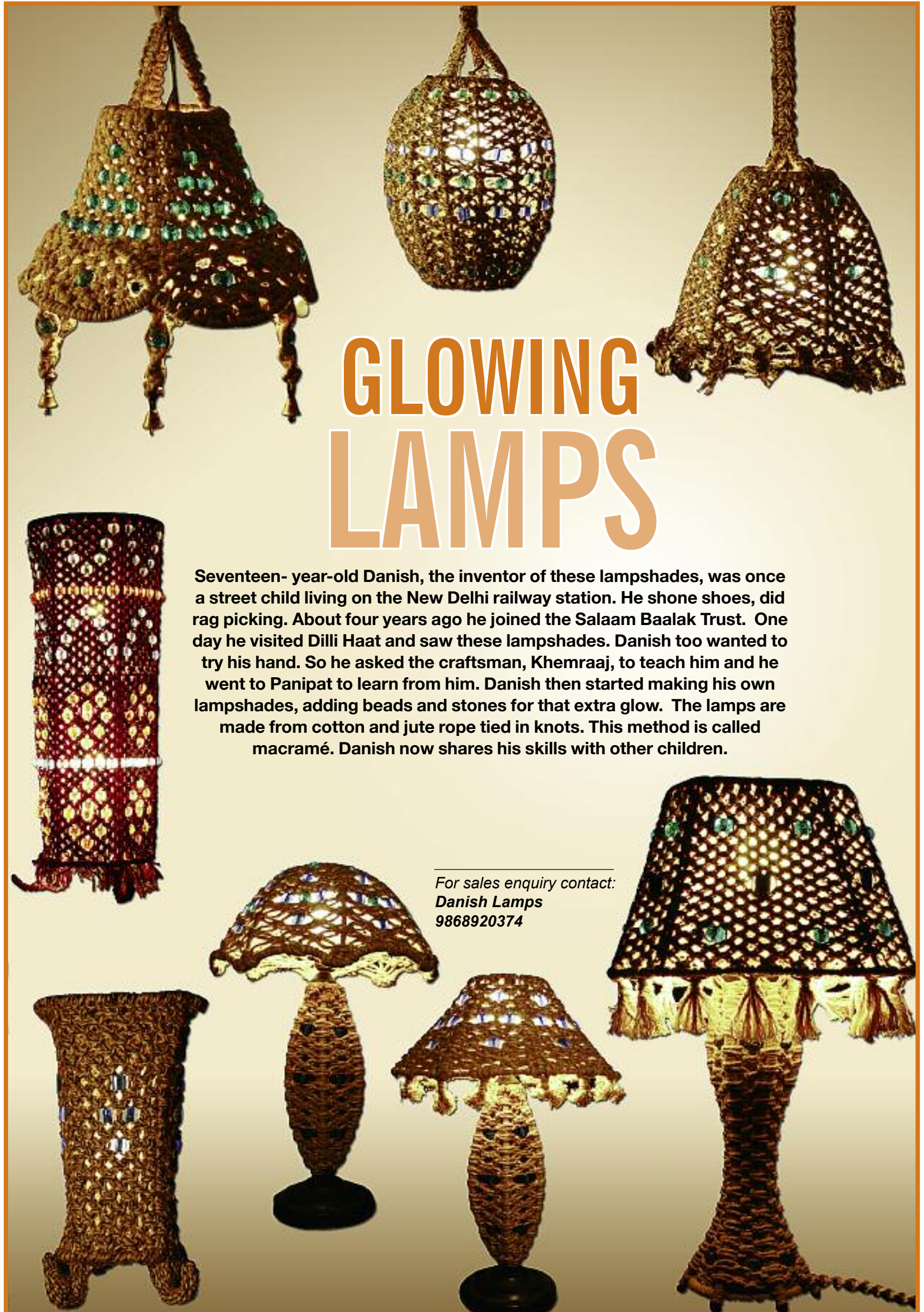


Appreciated and adopted as the 'Kareem Model' by research organisations including the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Kareem's man-made forest is also an eco-tourism destination. Kareem now lives in a cottage deep inside the forest, with his wife and children. To cater to increasing visitors who want to see the forest he has made, Kareem rents out a few cottages at reasonable rates.

Ambling through thickets and branches, under the canopy of cool, shady trees and amid the towering trees and the chirping of birds, one cannot but feel that "God is in His Heaven and all is well with the world". According to the green evangelist, "Greenery is the only venture that dares the law of depreciation. As years roll by, the value of this expanse of forest will only keep escalating." His 30-year old tryst with nature has taught him that there is a religious bond between man and nature. "Success cannot be measured in terms of materialistic wealth. My rewards are the highly mineralised, herbal water, the fresh, fragrant air, the daily rambles through the woods, a healthy life and peace of mind," explains a contented Kareem.

If you would like to visit Kareem's forest please contact him at:

**P Abdul Kareem, Kareem's Forest Park
Puliyamkulam, Parappa PO, Kasargod
District - 671533, Kerala
Tel: 0467-225 4233, 225 4283**



GLOWING LAMPS

Seventeen- year-old Danish, the inventor of these lampshades, was once a street child living on the New Delhi railway station. He shone shoes, did rag picking. About four years ago he joined the Salaam Baalak Trust. One day he visited Dilli Haat and saw these lampshades. Danish too wanted to try his hand. So he asked the craftsman, Khemraaj, to teach him and he went to Panipat to learn from him. Danish then started making his own lampshades, adding beads and stones for that extra glow. The lamps are made from cotton and jute rope tied in knots. This method is called macramé. Danish now shares his skills with other children.

For sales enquiry contact:
Danish Lamps
 9868920374

Fast for inner peace, strength

Samita Rathor
New Delhi

From food all beings are born and they will grow by food. Food is eaten by all beings and it also eats them--Tattiriya Upanishad Chapter 2.1

ACCORDING to Swami Sivananda and the scriptures it is very important for every human being to be involved in some sort of spiritual practice for the realisation of God. To achieve this, a healthy mind and body are important.

Fasting helps a great deal to keep the body and mind healthy and is recommended by all religions as one of the prime steps to come closer to one's self.

Fasting is a moment of self analysis, reflection into one's mind and body. It is not just a physical act. According to yogic teachings, diet and fasting brings inner peace and tranquility and encourages spiritual growth.

Benefits of fasting: A few days of fasting is good for any kind of disease. Animals when ill fast naturally. It's an innate way of healing and giving the body system a break. A fast is a quick fix for many ailments. Not only does it give a rest to the stomach, it also eliminates toxins from the body. Internal cleansing takes place and more vital energy or prana is produced. Concentration increases, the bowels are given a rest.

Physically, the system gets a complete internal servicing. Mentally, resistance is built up and the ability to withstand physical disturbances, illness, fatigue and disease increases. On an intellectual level fasting provides a clear insight. A person who fasts regularly develops self-expression and clear cut ideas and becomes more open minded.

Along with fasting it is a good idea to maintain a calm attitude. Some time spent in solitude and silence will help. Unnecessary conversation could lead to an unpleasant frame of mind or memories and should be avoided. This could cause stress on the digestive system. Introspection and self-analysis is also recommended.

A fast can begin with taking juice of two or three fruits with a reasonable quantity of water throughout the day. This will eliminate weakness. Avoid solid foods or fleshy fruits like bananas and avocados. You can fast for a day to begin with. The next day you can fast completely, drinking only water. Fasting longer than two days should only be done under the guidance of a doctor or a teacher

well versed in yogic knowledge.

It is important to break a fast gradually with a fruit diet for the first few days as fruits are easily digestible. Vegetable soups and coconut water can be taken. After breaking a fast there is a tendency to be constipated, but it will gradually disappear. Do not break the fast with milk as it is heavy.

There may be a craving for more food but do not give in. If the fast is not broken properly and the stomach is overfed it may lead to a bloated feeling. Do not break the fast with food that is too hot or too cold. Always respect the food you break your fast with and be grateful for it.

There are three food qualities or gunas according to our scriptures and the Bhagwad Gita. Try as far as possible to stick to simple foods, especially when you break your fast.

SOUL VALUE

Sattvic foods: Foods that increase life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are savory and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to sattvic people--*Bhagwad Gita Chapter XVII.8*

Sattvic foods may include grains such as barley, wheat, unpolished rice, oats, pulses, nuts, leafy green vegetables, fruits, honey, milk, butter, cheese and curd.

Rajasic foods: Foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning are productive of pain, grief and disease--*Bhagwad Gita Chapter XVII.9*

These include foods that over stimulate the body causing mental imbalance. Onions, garlic, radishes, coffee, tea, tobacco, alcohol, packaged foods, pungent spices, refined white sugar are foods which increase lust, anger, greed, selfishness and egoism.

Tamasic foods: That which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten and impure refuse, is the food liked by the tamasic--*Bhagwad Gita Chapter XVII.10*

This kind of food makes a person dull and lazy. Meat, fish, alcohol, drugs, deep fried foods, etc belong to this category. It also includes food that is stale, unclean, as well as overripe and unripe fruits.

Fasting is a good remedy, but one should not expect it to cure the impossible. It cannot cure diseases that emanate from lack of nutrition, congenital defects and serious organic disorders. Avoid long fasts if you are anaemic, pregnant or suffering from tuberculosis.

E-mail: samitarathor@gmail.com

WHERE TO VOLUNTEER

CanSupport India

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

Rahi

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

Association for India's Development (AID) - Delhi Chapter

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

Youthreach

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

Deepalaya

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

Mobile Crèches

Mobile Crèches pioneered intervention into the lives of migrant construction workers by introducing the mobile crèche where working parents can leave their children. They work in the following areas: health, education, community outreach, networking and advocacy, resource mobilisation and communication. You can volunteer by filling out a simple form online.

Contact: DIZ Area, Raja Bazaar, Sector IV
New Delhi - 110001
Phone: 91-11-23347635 / 23363271
Website: www.mobilecreches.org

The Arpana Trust

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

MTNL,

Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-57.
Phone: (Office) 26151136 and (Resi) 26154964

HelpAge India

HelpAge India needs volunteers from doctors to lay people in all our locations. Older people love to talk to younger people and need emotional support.

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

iVolunteer

iVolunteer is a non-profit promoting volunteerism since 2001. We have a presence in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. We welcome individuals who wish to volunteer. We assess organisations that need volunteers. We match the skills of volunteers with the right organisation so that both benefit.

Contact: Jamal or Seema, D-134, East of Kailash, New Delhi-65, Phone: 01126217460
E-mail: delhi@ivolunteer.org.in

WHERE TO DONATE

Indian Red Cross Society

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

Child Relief and You (CRY)

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

Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP)

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

HelpAge India

HelpAge India is involved in the care of the poor and disadvantaged elderly in 55 locations across the country. They organise primary health care at village and slum level through 53 mobile medical vans, care of the destitute elderly through Adopt a Gran programme with 222 voluntary agencies, Helplines and income generation for the elderly. Their recent programmes are in the tsunami affected regions and in Kashmir for the rehabilitation of the elderly affected by the earthquake disaster. HelpAge serve more than a million elderly in India. If you wish to donate or adopt a granny, please donate online on our site www.helpageindia.org or send an email to

helpage@nde.vsnl.net.in

Address: HelpAge India, C-14 Qutub Institutional Area, New Delhi- 110016
Chief Executive: Mathew Cherian - mathew.cherian@helpageindia.org

Bharatiya Academy

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

Smile Foundation

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