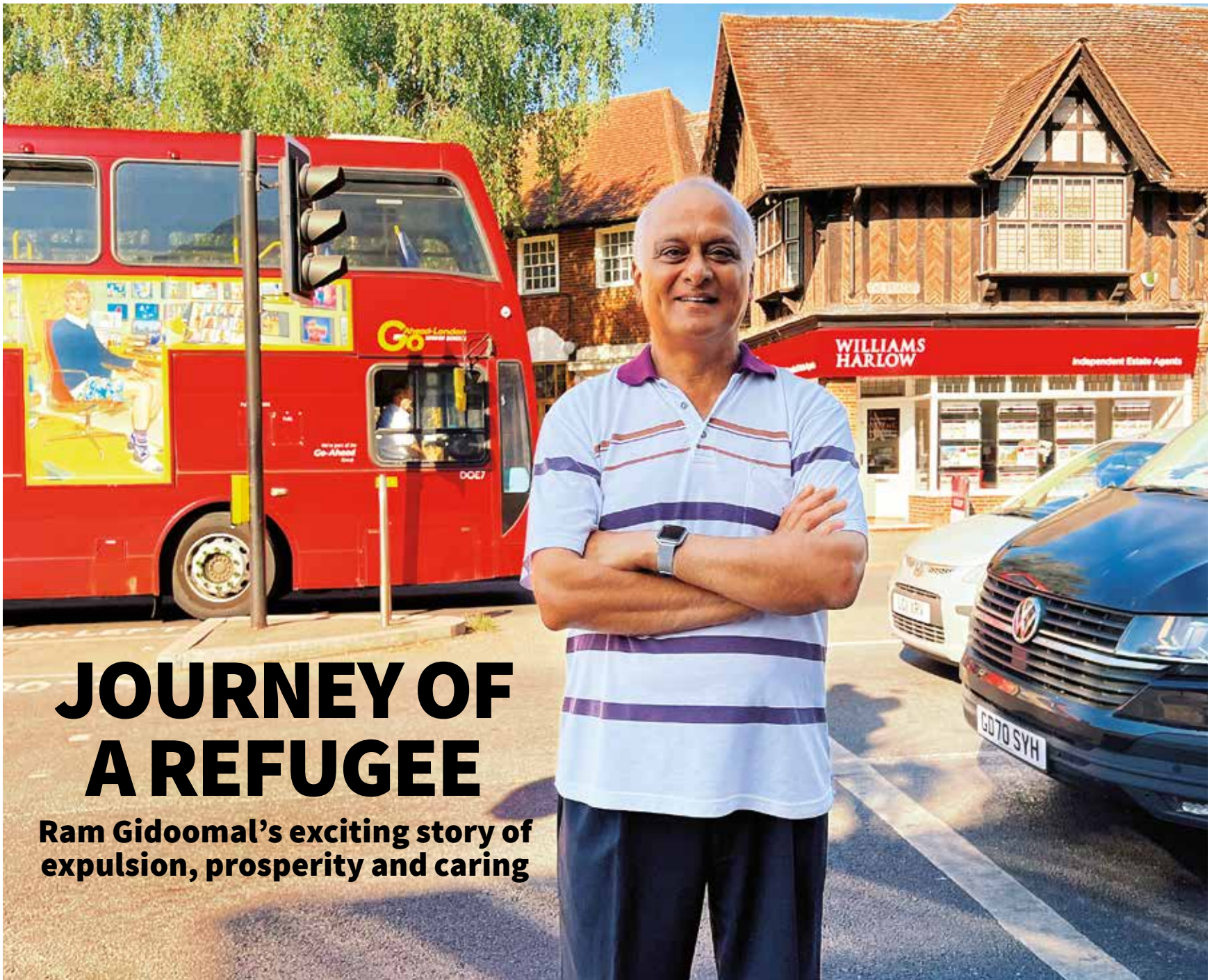


# Civil Society



## JOURNEY OF A REFUGEE

Ram Gidoomal's exciting story of expulsion, prosperity and caring

### GET TOP CANCER ADVICE

Page 8 .....

### REWA'S DYING SUPARI ART

Page 11 .....

### THE PRICE OF FREE POWER

Page 12 .....

### INTERVIEW

### 'CHEETAHS ARE JUST FOR TOURISM'

RAVI CHELLAM SAYS THEY WILL DO NOTHING FOR CONSERVATION

Page 6

### 75-YEAR MILESTONE

Page 20 .....

### ON A DIGITAL HIGH

Page 21 .....

### WONDERFUL TOYS

Page 24 .....

# IN CIVIL SOCIETY EVERYONE IS SOMEONE



**Civil Society**  
READ US. WE READ YOU.

**For 19 years,  
month after  
month.  
Thousands  
of original  
stories.  
Faces on our  
covers you  
would not  
otherwise  
have seen.**

IN THE LIGHT

SAMITA RATHOR



LETTERS



Plant talk

I enjoyed reading your cover story, 'Ganesh Babu's secret life in the wilds'. It was very different and so full of knowledge, it made me want to plan a trip to meet Ganesh Babu. I like most of your articles. Keep up the good writing and keep informing the world of such gems.

Nimesh

Wow. Amazing inspiration and learning from the Plant Whisperer, Dr N.M. Ganesh Babu. Keep spreading such wonderful information to the world about Mother Nature.

Mona S.

I was delighted to read about Ganesh Babu's relationship with plants. The piece convinces me all the more to keep chanting my Diksha Mantra when I water my plants in the morning.

Debasis Ray

This is such a sweet article! I began reading it and then I had to pause. I kept wondering what Ganesh Babu said to the plant to make it thrive. I had to know before going to sleep. Anyway, my 10-year-old niece talks to my sister's plants so I told her about the Plant Whisperer. She wants to read the rest of the article.

Deepti Kharod

Vibrant rivers

I read Venkatesh Dutta's column, 'River as a person with rights'. It's a great concept, but it is ongoing already. All that is needed is for each region to emphasize which river feeds us water. All educational institutions need to educate everyone. A few conservation practices need to be

done. Urban local bodies, gram panchayats and so on should also take up the responsibility of maintaining and conserving water resources.

Ajit Seshadri

Childcare is vital

I would agree with Kabir Vajpeyi that we have not understood the value of child development. He may recall the Nizamuddin project where he helped us transform the MCD school.

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is one of the oldest programmes that we have and looks at several aspects of child development — if only it were implemented in letter and spirit. For instance, one problem that we have constantly

faced in Nizamuddin is that anganwadis in urban areas receive such limited space and the rent that the government offers, even after the increase, is just not enough to rent a dignified space. The option of having the anganwadi in the primary school space is often not implementable for a variety of reasons.

It is well established that the brain develops to the maximum in the first five years of life. We really don't need further research on the importance of early childhood care and development. We just need to put our heads down and do it.

Jyotsna Lall

Dogs and wildlife

Your article, 'Wildlife is attacked by roving dogs in sanctuaries', is worrisome. Deer and other gentle creatures must be protected against the wild dogs in whichever region or Protected Area they are in.

Deepak Singh

It is appalling that our precious wildlife is being threatened by dogs. They are having a free run of our sanctuaries and they must be evicted immediately.

Simran

Forest food

The Vanvadi initiative is really excellent. I hope everyone enjoyed the forest food festival.

Vilas Gharat

Letters should be sent to response@civilsocietyonline.com

**Civil Society**  
READ US. WE READ YOU.

**One year Print + Digital**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
₹1400	\$50
Individual	International

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!**  
BECAUSE EVERYONE IS SOMEONE

**One year Digital**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
₹1000	\$12
India	International

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....State:.....Pincode:.....

Phone:.....Mobile:.....Email:.....

Cheque to: **Content Services and Publishing Pvt. Ltd.**  
 Mail to: The Publisher, Civil Society, A-16, (West Side), 1st Floor, South Extension - 2, New Delhi - 110049.  
 Phone: 011-46033825, 9811787772 E-mail to: response@civilsocietyonline.com  
 Visit us at www.civilsocietyonline.com



COVER STORY

JOURNEY OF A REFUGEE

Ram Gidoomal's autobiographical book, *My Silk Road*, tells his story from landing up in Britain as a refugee from Mombasa to business successes, philanthropy and politics.

16

The price of free power.....12

A step up for new learners.....14

On a digital high.....21

Animal rights vs welfare.....22

Don't link rivers.....23

Toys you can trust.....24-25

Lose yourself in Valparai.....26-27

Volunteer & Donate.....28-29

Products.....30

Contact Civil Society at:  
response@civilsocietyonline.com  
The magazine does not undertake to respond to unsolicited contributions sent to the editor for publication.



Living for others

WE met Ram Gidoomal in the early years of our magazine and so it has been a long time since we have known him. Back then, we had opened a stall to showcase *Civil Society* at an event at the Habitat Centre in New Delhi and among the many people who noticed us was Ram.

That he should have been drawn to a magazine called *Civil Society* speaks for his values and concerns. He is a successful businessman and every bit an entrepreneurial Sindhi, but his heart beats for the poor and excluded. He knows what it is like to be a refugee, having become one in childhood after his wealthy family was evicted from Mombasa and lost all their wealth overnight.

His autobiographical book *My Silk Road* comes at an interesting time in British politics. The extract we have chosen is about Ram contesting twice for the post of Mayor of London, raising issues that had other candidates scrambling to catch up and bringing him more votes than anyone had expected.

Do we need cheetahs from Africa to bring back grasslands and save the Great Indian Bustard? No matter what the answer, the cheetahs are on their way and are to be settled in the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. Fenced enclosures are being created with elaborate plans for providing them prey. What does this say for wildlife policy in India? To get a professional and well-informed perspective, we spoke to Ravi Chellam, a leading wildlife expert. Chellam is not just concerned that the cheetahs are diverting attention from the much more pressing task of settling lions into Kuno, he is also worried about the whimsical way in which key wildlife decisions are being taken and court orders ignored.

Political freebies have also been the subject of much controversy. Subsidies given to power consumers are particularly worrisome with state governments not paying distribution companies and they, in turn, delaying the payments of power producers. What long-term effect does this have on the power sector and where does it leave the process of reforms? Prayas is an NGO which has looked closely at these issues and we bring you a detailed story based on our interview with Ann Josey and Shantanu Dixit of Prayas' Energy Group. Their message: greater reforms and competition.

Even when it is completely curable, cancer becomes a death sentence of sorts. Treatment facilities are lacking. Patients also need counselling and attention. Often, when a second opinion is needed on a diagnosis there is really nowhere to go with ease and dignity. As the number of cases keeps rising, the challenges get yet more difficult. In this issue we connect you with Navya, an outfit based in the US which, among other services, helps get a credible opinion and treatment plan quickly from a network of the right physicians.

<p><b>Publisher</b> Umesh Anand</p> <p><b>Editor</b> Rita Anand</p> <p><b>News Network</b> Shree Padre, Saibal Chatterjee, Derek Almeida, Jehangir Rashid, Susheela Nair, Kavita Charanji</p> <p><b>Desk &amp; Reporting</b> Surmayi Khatana</p>	<p><b>Layout &amp; Design</b> Virender Chauhan</p> <p><b>Cartoonist</b> Samita Rathor</p> <p><b>Write to Civil Society at:</b> A-16 (West Side), 1st Floor, South Extension Part 2, New Delhi - 110049. Phone: 011-46033825, 9811787772 Printed and published by Umesh Anand on behalf of Rita Anand, owner of the title, from A-53 D, First Floor,</p>	<p>Panchsheel Vihar, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi - 110017. Printed at Samrat Offset Pvt. Ltd., B-88, Okhla Phase II, New Delhi - 110020</p> <p>Postal Registration No. DL(S)-17/3255/2021-23. Registered to post without pre-payment U(SE)-10/2021-23 at Lodi Road HPO New Delhi - 110003 RNI No.: DELENG/2003/11607 Total no of pages: 32</p>	<p><b>Advisory Board</b></p> <p>R. A. MASHELKAR</p> <p>ARUNA ROY</p> <p>NASSER MUNJEE</p> <p>ARUN MAIRA</p> <p>DARSHAN SHANKAR</p> <p>HARIVANSH</p> <p>JUG SURAIYA</p> <p>UPENDRA KAUL</p>
--	---	---	--

Get your copy of **Civil Society**

Have **Civil Society** delivered to you or your friends. Write to us for current and back issues at response@civilsocietyonline.com.

Also track us online, register and get newsletters

www.civilsocietyonline.com

## Ravi Chellam says it is a vanity project with no benefits

## ‘Cheetahs are for tourism. Not conservation’

Civil Society News

New Delhi

THE Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh was meant to receive the growing number of Asiatic lions from Gir in Gujarat. The plan was to have a second population of the Asiatic lion. But, with African cheetahs now being flown in, it appears that the transfer of lions from Gir will be deferred for several years till the cheetahs settle down.

The decision to bring in African cheetahs has been mired in controversy. Keeping them in fenced enclosures in Kuno will be costly and difficult. The claim that they will bring back grasslands and boost the endangered Great Indian Bustard is being questioned.

We spoke to Ravi Chellam, one of India's leading experts on wildlife, on the cheetah project and its implications:

**What is your opinion of this plan to introduce African cheetahs to India? What do you make of it?**

I have variously called it a vanity project and a glorified safari park. Why the rush? I mean, the monsoon is not the right time to be moving large mammals through our national parks.

The underfoot conditions are not great. Heavy vehicles churn up the earth at this time. These are not your national highways through which you need to move animals. Most national parks in north India are closed to tourists during the monsoon months.

While they try to make it sound scientific and give it a veneer of conservation respectability, I go by the facts. We have the National Wildlife Action Plan. This is supposed to be the guiding document for all conservation action. It is a 15-year plan so there will naturally be some exceptions. The most recent plan was written for the period 2017 to 2031. It does not mention a 'c' of cheetahs. It is not a national priority, assuming that the plan does set national priorities. I see this disconnect.

**So how have cheetahs suddenly become a national priority?**

I can share an article in *The Signal*. It basically says this is driven by the need to leave a legacy. At another level, this is the 75th year of our independence and it is going to get a lot of media attention. But there are insidious implications. It effectively, at the very minimum, delays the translocation of (Asiatic) lions from Gujarat to Kuno which was ordered by the Supreme Court in April 2013.

I first encountered this in court when I was present as an expert adviser in 2012. The counsel for Gujarat stood up and said, We hear the Government of India is going to introduce cheetahs from Africa. Ecology tells us lions are more powerful than cheetahs. Let the cheetahs come and settle down. Once they are settled, we can begin the discussion on translocation of lions from Gujarat. The court saw through that. In extremely clear terms, the judgment quashed the order of the Government of India to introduce African cheetahs in Kuno.

In 2013 it was a complete no to introduce African cheetahs to Kuno. In 2016 the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) filed an appeal



Ravi Chellam: 'The translocation of lions to Kuno was ordered by the Supreme Court'

or a review petition on the plea that while the court's order focused on Kuno it was being interpreted as a blanket ban on getting cheetahs into India. It sought permission to survey additional sites. Eventually the court passed an order on January 28, 2020, and we all know what is happening since then.

The 2013 order had very clearly said that translocation of Asiatic lions to Kuno has to take priority over introduction of African cheetahs. While hearing the NTCA petition the court observed that the NTCA had sought permission to survey additional sites and permitted these surveys. The court sought reports every four months and also directed that the matter should be listed after four months, that is, in late May 2020. After January 28, 2020, this matter has not been listed or heard. I have information suggesting some reports were submitted. But the key thing is that they surveyed six sites, I think, in 12 days out of which Kuno took four days. So, the other five sites got eight days in total. To me, it's like a *fait accompli*. It looks like it was already decided it's going to be Kuno.

If the NTCA was to be consistent with its review petition, which sought permission to survey other sites, the court does not seem to be keeping track of this. And it is also on record saying it will not affect the translocation of lions. Now the Action Plan says after the cheetahs have settled, we can bring the lions. And as per the Action Plan the most optimistic time frame is 15 years for the cheetahs to settle down.

In 2012, this was the plea the Gujarat government brought which was struck down by the Supreme Court and look at where we are 10 years down the line.

People ask me questions about ecology and conservation. But to me, fundamentally, this is a rule of law issue.

**But Indira Gandhi also wanted to bring cheetahs from Iran.**

Look, if you really think you can make it work, then make it work. But why Kuno? Why subvert a standing order of the Supreme Court? Why

continue to stall lion translocation? Why divert attention from much more urgent conservation issues? Why waste scarce conservation resources? The South Africans are advocating a completely different model of conservation. They are advocating the fencing of sites where cheetahs are to be introduced to improve the chances of success. There is a lobby saying that there should be no wildlife outside Protected Areas.

That means literally doing away with many endangered species including tigers, lions and elephants from areas outside our Protected Areas — 30 to 40 percent of the populations of these species at least use if not being resident in these areas. Such an approach will sever genetic connectivity and greatly increase the risk of isolation and the resultant inbreeding.

The minute an area is fenced, it becomes even smaller. Then there is no movement and no genetic connectivity. It's extremely expensive and, in India, try fencing anything to keep people out. Barriers have failed miserably. We are willing to spend several crores of rupees for one kilometre of fencing. Imagine if we had invested that in the welfare of the local community.

Cheetahs are for tourism. Conservation is a smokescreen. No cheetah is going to save the grasslands of India. Great Indian Bustards are critically endangered. The cheetah is not going to the habitat of the bustard. How is it going to save the bustard? India has a very diverse set of grasslands spread right across the country.

After introducing 50 cheetahs we will end up with 21 cheetahs after 15 years, according to the official best-case scenario. And with 21 cheetahs will we be able to save grasslands all over India? Where is the science or logic in this? Thirdly, why are we again messing with lion translocation?

**Are you saying the Kuno National Park is not suitable for the cheetahs?**

No, I never said that. For habitat assessment you need four parameters assessed: habitat structure, area available, prey availability, level of protection or level of risk.

I don't think there is a habitat structure problem. I think there is a problem with the prey not just in terms of density. These are African cheetahs and they are not used to deer. I don't know how easily they will adapt to the additional complication of a fairly high density of the leopard population in Kuno. They are focusing on a national park that is only 748 sq. km. It is set in a larger matrix of forest that does not have an adequate prey base. Cheetahs, by their normal ecology, exist in low densities. A tiger or a lion can exist in a density of some five to 10 animals per 100 sq. km. Cheetahs normally exist in one to two per 100 sq. km.

Cheetahs need much larger areas to survive, it could be up to 10 times the area needed by other large cats. Where are such areas available in India today? It is impossible to find suitable habitat extending into thousands of sq. km. That's the prevailing reality.

To me the question is not of habitat structure but of area, prey, protection from things like dogs, they can get disease and get into conflict. If you are going to keep them in 750 sq. km, how are they going to play this larger role of being an apex predator? If the full complement of large carnivores is present, the cheetah is not the top predator. It is way down the totem pole — after the lion, the tiger and the leopard. That's ecology, not a personal opinion.

**But won't this focus on cheetahs improve our national parks?**

How many national parks are the cheetahs going to be in? Do we lack in charismatic animals that we need an African animal to raise the conservation profile of our wildlife and their habitats? What prevents us from focusing on our national parks today? Look at the money we are going to be spending and will have to continue to spend. These animals will have to be treated like they are constantly in an ICU, needing constant and intense attention.

**You are saying conceptually it makes no sense.**

Yes. We are not focusing on, say, the Great Indian Bustard. We all know its status. Do we need a cheetah to focus on it? Grasslands are even today

categorized as wastelands in India. If we want to save grasslands, first we should change the category. We will then show a more positive attitude towards it.

Nature can take care of itself if left alone. The problem is, we say grasslands are useless and grow trees and place all our massive solar projects on them. Those are the problems we need to address.

The Supreme Court passed an order in April 2021 which said that a significant cause of the mortality of the Great Indian Bustard was that they are colliding with overhead power lines and to please bury the power lines in one or two key areas for the bustard. Till April 2022 no action was taken. The court asked for a report. The government then said, It's expensive, we don't have the money. Where did the money come from introducing African cheetahs?

You say the cheetah will save the Great Indian Bustard which is getting killed by overhead power lines. You have money to bring cheetahs, but not to bury the power lines. So, how is it going to be saved?

**What will the cost per cheetah be?**

I don't know if there is an actual financial cost in purchasing the cheetahs. The MoU India has signed with Namibia may have the details of what we have committed to Namibia to get these animals. Namibia wanted us to support them in removing the CITES ban on the ivory trade.

**‘Look at the money we are going to be spending and will have to continue to spend. These animals will have to be treated like they are constantly in an ICU.’**

South Africa is on record saying it has not as yet (early August) signed the MoU while (their) conservationists are saying the cheetahs will leave mid-August.

This cuts across political parties. The justification given is that the cheetah is the only large mammal that's gone extinct since Independence. There is very limited science here, definitely no conservation, and we are also in breach of the law.

**Can you tell us about fencing?**

In India all kinds of barriers have been tried and most have failed. This is a rather special form of fencing. It is fenced habitat in the heart of the national park. It is not a barrier abutting human settlements and wildlife habitat. This is a small area, 10 sq. km or so, in the heart of the national park.

The other challenge with fencing is water courses. How do you fence a river? I hope they have avoided streams. Fencing is extremely capital intensive. They have done it but now they are facing a peculiar challenge — leopards have come in. Cheetahs will be badly affected by leopards in an enclosed space. They are trying to catch the leopards, but it's proving to be very challenging.

**They don't want any animal to come in or go out. But that's like a zoo.**

No, that is good practice. Cats have homing behaviour. When you move them artificially, they have an innate ability to go in the general direction from where they were brought.

As per best practices, they are localized in a largish habitat between four to six weeks, not a typical zoo-size cage. You need to manage them carefully so that they don't get imprinted on people because you want them to maintain fear of people so that they don't walk up to people and treat them with familiarity.

At the same time, you have to feed them. In Africa they shoot wild prey and the whole carcass is dropped through a hook and pulley system.

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

The animal does not see human beings and connect them with food. In India they are saying they will stock the enclosure with prey. Before the cheetah arrives, they will release deer into the fenced enclosure.

It means the cheetah will have a tremendous advantage. Cats learn quickly that you can run your prey into the fence. The prey is only worried about the predator chasing it. It doesn't look ahead into the fence. Even if it does, what can it do?

**What about people living in villages around the park?**

The cheetah is not so much of a problem. They are not known generally to attack people. Livestock is a problem. We are told they have an efficient compensation mechanism.

**You are saying this is illegal. What is the state of the policy for wildlife conservation in India?**

You have the National Wildlife Action Plan which doesn't mention the cheetah. It mentions lions and it says the project (for translocation) was to start in 2018 and finish by 2021. We all know what has happened with respect to the lions. The animal which is not mentioned is going to show up in Kuno. The Great Indian Bustard is high priority, so are grasslands which are still categorized as wastelands. This is a reflection of the prevailing policy contradictions.

**What is the process of decision-making for wildlife conservation? How do these decisions get made?**

I wish I knew. Then there would be some accountability and we could fix responsibility. The Wildlife Institute of India is definitely party to all of this as well as to the translocation of lions. I was part of the institute when recommendations for lion reintroduction were made.

**It's a mystery how we are taking some decisions in wildlife.**

It is not a mystery. You have to read between the lines and come to your own conclusions. Clearly, on the cheetah, the Government of India filed a review petition so the NTCA deliberately went for a petition in 2016 for a 2013 order, followed it up for four years till they got the order in 2020 and then implemented it in a manner which was not consistent with their original review petition where they said allow us permission to survey other sites. The two sites mentioned were Nauradehi in Madhya Pradesh and Sathyamangalam in Tamil Nadu.

**Wildlife sanctuaries are also degraded and corridors don't exist...**

We have to understand that wildlife corridors cannot be built. Corridors are an artefact of human destruction, in most cases. There were extensive contiguous wildlife habitats but we nibbled away and made it narrow and it then became a corridor. Unless it is extremely undulating or flooded habitat, where wildlife corridors will be narrow strips which are more amenable for animal movement. Otherwise, you are dealing with the contraction of wildlife habitat — taking the shape of a corridor.

Almost no Protected Area is large enough to hold viable populations of large mammals like tigers, elephants and bears in the long term. Some of the finest scientists are in India and they have done this research. You can't say it happens in America, but it will not happen in India.

Till the 2018 canine distemper virus struck the Gir lions, they said it's an African problem, it won't happen to our lions. The tenure for forest officers is short in each posting, on an average three years and may be up to five years. Many officers don't want complications during their tenure. They rarely think long-term and deal in that manner.

Fencing is expensive and against our normal way of functioning. It will put local communities and a lot of our wildlife at risk because they will be isolated. They will then say we will helicopter animals in and out, because they don't move anymore. This is an unsuitable model for us.

No other country has 1.5 billion people and all this wonderful wildlife. There is much to celebrate and learn from what we have been doing well rather than merely adopt models from other countries. ■

# His thumb was amputated but it saved his life

With cancer, getting the right doctor matters. Navya has 300 experts on tap

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

THERE are nine fingers that SC has now. The thumb of his right hand was removed to save him from sarcoma, a form of cancer that affects joints and tissues. Amputation is required to remove the affected part and save the rest of the body.

In SC's case, it was done just in time. When he looks back on the call that he made to fly out to America and undergo surgery, he realizes how close it all was.

The problem began with the thumb beginning to swell. At first, he didn't bother about it. A slight inflammation was no big deal. He had been a TV anchor and spent more than two decades as a journalist. Caught up in the hurly-burly of headlines, one tends not to think about one's health. The days fly by in a blur. There is a blissful invincibility in a life of daily deadlines.

But SC's thumb continued to enlarge, prompting him to visit a doctor. The first opinion was that it was an orthopaedic problem. Something to do with the bone. Next was the diagnosis that it was a tumour.

Tests followed which included an MRI for which SC was expected to hold his thumb in a single position for an hour. Then came a biopsy with the declaration that he didn't have cancer.

On the verge of going ahead with an orthopaedic intervention, SC remembered that he had an old school friend based in Boston who was a cancer specialist.

He had a chat with him and sent his reports across. Back came the opinion that this was sarcoma, a cancer that affects tissues and bones, and that amputation was the only answer.

His Boston friend connected him to the best person in the field at the Mayo Clinics in the US. The same biopsy samples that had been cleared for cancer were flown surreptitiously to the US and the result this time was it was indeed cancer.

SC had a sarcoma which required amputation of the thumb. Tinkering with it, as had been suggested, would have sent the cancer cells scurrying through his body and into his lungs.

Removing the thumb was the only way to stop the cancer from spreading. There was a date available for conducting the operation, but SC would have to fly down to the Mayo Clinics without delay. It was a crazy and lonely decision for him and his wife to have to take.

But, the diagnosis made, they also had a precedent to go by. SC wasn't alone. SC's colleague, actually his boss, let's call him RB, had lost his right leg in much the same way to amputation to save him from sarcoma many years earlier in his youth.

The leg was diagnosed by specialists in the US as being afflicted by sarcoma even as doctors in India couldn't decide on a path of action.

RB told SC not to waste any time but to fly out to the Mayo Clinics and have the surgery done. Money was not an issue and it was what he finally did. It saved his life.

**RISING INCIDENCE**

As the incidence of cancer rises in India, so does the need for accurate diagnosis and treatment facilities. Vast swathes of the country don't have the specialists or the hospitals that should be



A rising tide of cases: Crowds outside the Chittaranjan Cancer Hospital in Kolkata. There is a growing need for better diagnosis and treatment facilities

available for a rising tide of cases.

The most unnerving stages in a cancer patient's journey are diagnosis and the choice of treatment. Cancer is a complex disease and the right specialist is needed for each kind of cancer.

The sarcoma in SC's thumb wasn't being diagnosed because he was going to physicians who didn't have the expertise to do so for this particular cancer. The day he got to the right specialist, and he was lucky that he did, everything became clear.

SC was empowered, well-off and fortunate. Millions of poor patients don't even know where to begin. The very mention of cancer is like a death sentence because of the cost of treatment and the complete lack of knowledge about the disease.

**NAVYA'S READY ACCESS**

It would have been much easier for SC if he had known of Navya. It was precisely to deal with the kind of problems that cancer patients like SC face that Navya, a company, was launched 10 years ago. Based in Boston in the US, it currently serves about 1,400 patients a month.

Navya relies on an online process to take a diagnosis to the specific experts who should be consulted. It has 300 specialists on tap across the world. A treatment pathway is provided to the patient within 24 to 48 hours with the odd delay.

The cancer patients Navya serves are mostly poor and from India. They either connect with Navya directly or through NGOs and hospitals that are in a loop it has fashioned.



Navya's founders: Dr Naresh Ramarajan and Gitika Srivastava

Navya takes a one-time fee of ₹8,500 which comes to ₹10,000 when you add GST. The fee covers advice from experts, interactions to explain the treatment in the patient's preferred language and invariably multiple hours of counselling.

Speaking to *Civil Society* from Boston, Gitika Srivastava, one of Navya's founders, is eager to clarify that Navya only involves itself from the stage at which a diagnosis has already been done. It provides a treatment plan based on the best advice available

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

which it knows to access reliably.

“When you talk about diagnosis it means that you are looking at primary data. You are looking at biopsy slides, or looking at an image. That is not what we do. We essentially start once you have a confirmed diagnosis. Or you at least have enough information to tell the patient that you need to get these four other tests done to have a confirmed diagnosis because that is step one,” Srivastava says.

“Once you have that information you have to figure out what to do with that diagnosis. What is the right treatment pathway. That is where Navya comes in end to end,” she explains.

Consulting the right experts for a particular kind of cancer is important and there are “only a few of them”, she points out. Past outcomes on patients are also invaluable at the time of treatment and experts come with that experience and knowledge.

“So, you might start off with chemotherapy and figure out that the patient is not responding to it. Then you want to be able to know what the experts did for those five cases or 10 cases or 50 cases in which the patient was not responding,” she elaborates.

Treatment decisions determine outcomes and costs and getting informed advice is important because “cancer is complex and no two patients are the same, no tumours are the same”, as she puts it.

“The cost of radiation is only relevant if you should get radiated and if you get radiated then what type of radiation and when is it going to make the impact maximize. The right treatment option is what determines your outcome and what you spend for. I want to spare my tongue; I want to be able to speak even if it means I am going to pass away like one year sooner. Those decisions are what impact your quality of life, etc. So that is where Navya basically plays a role,” she says.

Navya is a company which has the verve of a voluntary organization. It has two arms to it. The main entity is in the US and the core IP data model and algorithms are owned by it. There is also an Indian subsidiary.

In India it started by working with the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) which is “our flagship partner in India, because we are so well aligned in mission, vision, principles”.

They began with just offering expert opinions and then that expanded to what is called the National Cancer Grid, which is a programme of the TMC supported by the government but involving both private as well as public cancer centres.

Srivastava has a bachelor’s in computer science from Harvard and an MBA from MIT. She has over 17 years of experience as an entrepreneur and investor in technology and healthcare. She holds patents in distributed networking, databases, search technologies and automated decision-making.

Dr Naresh Ramarajan, who is the other founder of Navya, graduated from Harvard College and Stanford Medical College. He leads Navya’s

research and development as their chief medical officer. He holds patents in medical search technologies and has multiple publications on medical decision-making.

“About 80 percent of the patients who come to Navya are low-income patients and so we work with NGOs who basically bring us the patients. It is tough to offer free care to people who cannot afford to pay because you don’t know how to reach them. Our challenge is how do you get people to be aware that we exist for them to use us,” says Srivastava.

What do they do with a diagnosis they do not agree with? “The process is to build consensus. And two things are extremely clear — the final treatment decision is a joint conversation between the patient and the family and the treating physician because we cannot dominate and dictate,” says Srivastava.

How many experts are there currently in the National Cancer Grid? “About 300 or so because all TMC experts are a part of our panel and you have 200 or so cancer centres in the National Cancer Grid. We work

with specialists who are at Max or AIIMS or Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Hospital or the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER),” she says.

“The objective is the same for all of us. There is one mission which we are all after, which is to standardize evidence-based, expert-backed cancer care and so our job is to scale up that access to as many patients as possible across the country.”

“There is no discrimination if you can’t afford something or don’t understand oncology or English or whatever. Whether you live in Patna or Mumbai it should be the same access to care. And you should be able to understand it and so the singular mission is to standardize care. And we use technology, people, experts to do it,” she says, explaining the need to reach a vast base of people who need better care.

In healthcare there is an asymmetry of knowledge between the doctor and the patient. When dealing with people who are poor and lacking in basic education, the gap is

even greater. How does Navya deal with it?

“I would say that it is a fundamental premise of Navya which is to convert patient-speak to physician-speak, which means condensing a patient’s concerns in a way that experts can quickly follow and provide their opinion in like five minutes,” says Srivastava. “Then to convert physician-speak back to patient-speak, to basically explain this in layman’s language. It is the whole value addition of Navya. Our reports are meant to be understood by seventh graders.”

Navya speaks to patients in languages they understand. It could be Bengali, Hindi, Odia or Tamil. It ensures they understand what they are going to do. For low-income patients, an NGO with a local presence does the job.

“I would say low-income patients are driven to get the best care for themselves or their families. They will find a way to send you reports, be available on call and so on. They are very collaborative,” says Srivastava. ■



Photo: Civil Society/P. Anil Kumar

Getting it right: This children’s cancer ward was in the Civil Society Hall of Fame in 2015

**‘About 80 percent of the patients who come to Navya are low-income patients and so we work with NGOs who bring us the patients. There is one mission we are all after, which is to standardize evidence-based, expert-backed cancer care.’**

# Ganesh, kangaroos and the Taj

## Supari art is unique but dying

Shree Padre

Kasaragod

IN 1942 the King of Rewa asked Ram Siya Kunder, a toy maker, to peel away the thin outer layer of his *supari* or areca nut, to make it easier for him to chew on. Ram Siya had the tools to carry out this job. While scraping the nut, its intricate patterns caught his eye. “Why don’t I craft a few products with this design,” he thought.

He set to work and made three products out of areca nuts or betel nuts as they are also known: a tea set, a kangaroo and a *mandir*. Sometime later he began crafting idols of gods and found that they attracted buyers. Slowly he built up a repertoire of 40 products. That’s how ‘*supari* art’ took root in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh. Ram Siya was given an award by the President of India for his beautiful products. He passed away in 1993.

Three members of Ram Siya’s family continue this hereditary craft in Rewa town, which is 700 km from Indore and 500 km from Bhopal. One of them is 50-year-old Durgesh Kunder, the youngest of Ram Siya’s five sons. He lives on Fort Road in his century-old home-cum-office. Abhishek and Rakesh Kunder, Durgesh’s nephews, are the other two artisans who earn a livelihood from *supari* art.

Durgesh’s shop, Supari Kala Kendra, has dozens of handicrafts made from betel nut — from tiny *kumkum* boxes to *shivlings* to big idols. Prices range from ₹2,000 to ₹10,000. He also has walking sticks which cost ₹3,100.

His most popular item is the Ganesh idol which he always keeps in stock. There are 10 models of Lord Ganesh and the biggest demand is for the smallest one which measures 2.5 inches in height. Depending on size and work, prices vary from ₹140 to ₹500. Their star attraction is the *panchmukhi* or five-headed Ganesh. Two-foot-long *lathis* which are locally called ‘*rule*’ have takers too. Durgesh gets orders for rules from the Rewa Sainik school.

“When I started making such art pieces, bedside lamps were in heavy demand. Day in and day out, I was producing table lamps. I must have sold more than 1,000. But once plastic table lamps started arriving in the market, demand for our lamps reduced drastically,” recalls Durgesh.

Another lovely product they used to make were facsimilia of kangaroos. But they needed a particular tree stem to make the neck

and legs of the kangaroo. Since the wood was not easily available, they stopped making kangaroo replicas.

Though the three *supari* artists make more than three dozen handicrafts, only about a dozen are now in demand. Most products are made to order. When you approach any of them, you are shown the same old photographs of products. “All these are old photos,” admits



Durgesh Kunder and his wife, Savita, crafting idols



A Taj Mahal made with areca nut

Durgesh, “Most of them are not in demand today. But if someone places an order, we can make it.”

Durgesh bags most of the orders from Madhya Pradesh itself. This form of artwork is unknown elsewhere. Some orders trickle in from people in other states who get to know of *supari* art products from their friends and relatives. Durgesh has started a Facebook page named Supari Kala Kendra, after his shop. He gets a few orders from other parts of India.

When Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh, Durgesh received a huge order for 400 walking sticks. “It was a time-

bound order. I requested 20 carpenters to join hands with me. We worked together and delivered the products in two weeks,” he recalls. Similarly, he received an order to craft an over bridge when a new over bridge was being inaugurated in Rewa.

Durgesh is a graduate. He has been practising this traditional art for the past three decades. Thirty-year-old Abhishek has been in the profession for 15 years. The Kunder family has three artists. “Idols of Radha-Krishna and Lord Ganesh are the most popular nowadays,” says Abhishek. They get orders on the phone or from walk-in customers.

Panchmukhi Ganesh, their most popular item, is priced at ₹1,600 and requires three hours of work. The Kunders can make three such idols in a day. Abhishek says they have only five artisans in the three families who can undertake this work, out of whom two are very aged.

Half their products are bought for gifting, during weddings, birthdays and even when someone wins elections. They use areca nuts of the *mora* variety. These

are large handpicked nuts which cost ₹750 per kg. The nuts come to Rewa from Karnataka and elsewhere. *Supari* artisans have, over the years, learnt to pre-treat the areca nuts with chemicals to protect them from being damaged by insects.

They have a few techniques of their own to make a neat product. For example, the walking stick has an iron rod in the centre. To make a replica of the Taj Mahal, they stick cross sections of *suparis* on to a wooden base which they join together to fashion the product.

The lathe is their main professional equipment. They also have 10 to 15 simple iron tools especially made for them by the local blacksmith. “Our lathes have to be operated in a sitting position. If only we got lathes of the type used by the toy makers of Channapatna in Karnataka, we could have performed better,” says Durgesh. This is because long hours of squatting and working makes them tired.

“I think this craft will end with us,” says Durgesh. “We get work for only half the month,” says Abhishek. “And we sit idle for the remaining days.”

Areca nut is grown on millions of acres in our country. It is used just for chewing and spitting out. But artisans in Madhya Pradesh convert the areca nut into a collector’s items and lend it eternal life. ■

Contact: Durgesh Kunder – 99938 99177; Abhishek Kunder – 88784 76560

# HAS THE FREE POWER POLL PROMISE GONE TOO FAR?

## Distribution choices can bring down costs

Civil Society News  
New Delhi

FREEBIES have been in the news. Political parties outdo one another in offering concessions to voters. High on the list of promises has been free electricity.

Leading the way has been the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which has highlighted among its successes the 300 units of electricity a month it has been giving free in Delhi.

Free power, however, has decades-old precedents. Farmers have been getting free power across states. And in Punjab, much before AAP's recent victory, free power was being given not just to farmers but also to urban and industrial consumers.

The bills have been adding up. Huge sums are owed to distributors and power producers across the country. Power sector reforms were meant to usher in accountability and rational practices. The architecture envisaged was of regulator, consumer, distributor and producer being in a synchronous arrangement. Political largesse to voters disturbs such an alignment.

Generous subsidies and non-paying consumers come in the way of having rational tariffs, regular investments in infrastructure and ultimately better quality of service.

Also, when they get power free, consumers tend to not opt for other more forward looking subsidies such as for solar power.

"Under the Electricity Act, a state government is at liberty to give concessions or free power as long as it compensates the distribution companies," says Shantanu Dixit, a founding member of the Energy Group of Prayas, a Pune-based NGO which seeks to protect public interest and empower the disadvantaged.

"Unfortunately, there are many instances where the subsidy that needs to be transferred by the state government to the distribution companies is not transferred on time. Punjab is a classic case, and so is Tamil Nadu," says Dixit.

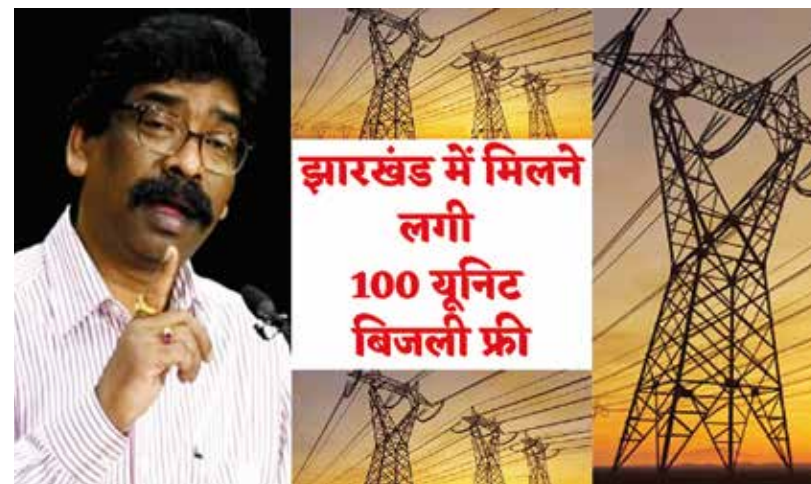
Since the distributor has to remain financially viable to provide the standard of service stipulated by the regulator, not being paid on time has a cascading effect.

"Free power or the sponsoring of free power did not start with Delhi. It has been longstanding in the agricultural sector," explains Ann Josey, a Prayas Fellow whose work relates to policy, regulation and the financial viability of distributors.

"With free power, a culture sets in where expecting payment for the electricity consumed becomes challenging. So does metering," she says. "The distribution companies then have a structural disincentive to supply to these consumers because, on the one hand, there is no monitoring of the quality of service provided and, on the other, there is no revenue recovery from those consumers because money comes from the state government."

"In agriculture we have seen this play out in very different ways across many states. In the domestic sector many of those challenges could be inherited," she cautions.

Providing free power to urban consumers has the risk of rural supply being neglected even more than it is today because distribution companies are already cash-strapped and trying to balance many



priorities. "Delhi is not new in providing free power in the domestic segment. Punjab has been giving free power of 200 units since 2008. They have that precedent before them," points out Josey.

"In Punjab it started with BPL or below poverty line consumers. It was expanded to include anyone with an SC/ST caste certificate and then to all consumers. The ambit increased gradually with every passing election," she adds.

Prayas, as an NGO, believes that professional knowledge, information and skills are needed to deal with the problems of

disadvantaged sections of society.

Dixit, who is an electrical engineer and MBA, points out that subsidies are needed to help the very poor reap the benefits of electrification. The question is who should benefit and how much.

It makes sense to give 30 units free to the very poor and using that as a base recover the cost of supply through higher slabs. To give away 300 units, however, is to be generous with consumers who don't need the subsidy.

"In the past four or five years, state governments are stepping in and saying they will give higher concessions and compensate whatever tariff is determined by the commission," explains Dixit, about how the situation has deteriorated.

"But it is crucial to have a debate and clarity about which consumers should be subsidized. People who consume 200 and 300 units aren't the ones who need support because it means they are using appliances and can afford to pay," says Dixit.

With rapidly increasing urbanization and the rising demand for power, it is important that there be clear goals. The shift to solar power, for instance, is an objective that needs to be met, but can get derailed.

"If you have free power or subsidy which is badly designed, it also compromises some of the other policy goals the government might have. For example, if you give 300 units of power per consumer, it's very likely your rooftop solar initiative won't pick up in the domestic segment because there is no incentive to set up a rooftop solar system or energy efficient measures," says Josey.

Adds Dixit: "There are states like Punjab where even industries are being subsidized. Someone has to finally pay for this cost."

The unpaid arrears of state governments relate not just to subsidies, but the bills of their own departments and services. They amount to ₹1.4 lakh crore nationally. Interestingly, what state governments owe distributors is almost exactly what distributors owe producers.

Many gains have accrued from privatization of distribution. But Dixit points out that it is not just a question of ownership in distribution. All the stakeholders in the sector need to be accountable.

"The accountability of consumers is in facilitating correct metering, billing and paying bills on time. The state government should ensure that the subsidy is well targeted and that discoms are paid on time. Distribution companies need to be accountable for the quality of supply and efficiency of cost management and regulators need to oversee this. Just an ownership change won't be sufficient," he emphasizes.

Pointing out that "in the past five years the sector has undergone a sea change", Dixit says that there is a need now to look for greater efficiencies — such as retail competition that allows the consumer to buy power from multiple sources.

"Here I am not suggesting tariff separation or allowing multiple distribution licensing in the same area because in our opinion those are highly complex mechanisms and I don't think we have thought of the technical aspects and legal complexities which come from such models," he clarifies.

But with technological changes the economics of the sector has changed. The cost of renewable energy like solar and wind has come down as have metering costs.

"As we deepen and broaden our retail competition and give choice to consumers who can have their own supplier based on an open access regime, the role of distribution companies will be limited to supplying really small consumers and maintaining wires. That should be our priority: how do we bring a competitive structure in place rather than focusing on transferring a public monopoly

**It makes sense to give 30 units free to the very poor and using that as a base recover the cost of supply through higher slabs. To give away 300 units, however, is to be generous with consumers who don't need the subsidy.**

to a private monopoly," Dixit elaborates.

The criticism of an open-access system is that it won't be able to serve small consumers. But Dixit envisages a system in which a regulated rate system serves small consumers and those at higher levels of consumption avail of open access.

"To clarify, when I say competition in the retail sector, I am not saying every small consumer needs to have that choice. We need to look at techno-economic viability. We are saying over the next three to four

years, all consumers who are above 20 KW load can economically move to a more competitive structure. Smaller consumers, those who are staying in apartments or *jhuggi-jhopris*, can very well continue with the distribution company as a regulated consumer base. It becomes the distributor's job to supply power in a cost-effective manner at regulated rates fixed by the state regulatory commission," he says.

Josey points out that currently distributors work on a cost-plus norm and over and above that they are ensured a 16 percent return on equity. There isn't the incentive to strive for greater efficiencies under such norms. Anything regarded as a "prudent" cost is passed on to the consumer.

Says Josey: "If there is competition, the true cost of service can be brought out to some extent. Secondly, there has to be more stringent regulatory accountability and efficiency parameters should also be looked at."

"Right now, the focus of regulatory commissions is to look at tariff and cost. There is hardly any focus on quality of service or supply. We are talking about a regulatory framework that can ensure efficiency. It's not just about tariffs. We have tariff hearings but what about hearings for supply and service quality?"

Adds Dixit: "One of the recent moves by the central government under the green open access rules actually takes a step in this direction because they mandate that the reason for those rules is to lower the eligibility for

open access to 100 KV and that will allow a lot more consumers to have their own supply, their own choices and contracts. So, there is already some move in this direction which is positive."

The consumer will be able to get the power through the wires of the local distribution company. Then comes how much should be charged for the power, transmission and so on, for which Dixit says mechanisms are well established.

Under the Electricity Act, since 2003 any consumer as per defined thresholds of consumption can sign a contract with any supplier of power.

"The only thing that is changing is eligibility. It used to be 1 MW, and now it is going to be 100 KW, and maybe in another few years it will become 20 KW. The ambit of consumers who can avail of such choice is increasing. The framework remains the same," he says.

The idea should be to bring in relatively smaller consumers so that the competitiveness and efficiency that the model provides benefits the system in a significant way. ■



Shantanu Dixit



Ann Josey

# A step up for new learners

Mithila Naik-Satam  
Mumbai

TWENTY-eight-year-old Raju Kendre comes from a nomadic tribe in rural Vidarbha, a region infamous for farmer distress and suicides. His parents are farmers, but they did all they could to ensure Kendre and his brother went to college and didn't start working after finishing school.

Kendre is now studying developmental studies on a fully funded Chevening Scholarship at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He also runs a non-profit, Eklavya, which he started in 2017 in Yavatmal in Maharashtra. Its mission is to help first-generation learners from underprivileged communities pursue higher education in the development sector.

"After my master's at the Tata Institute of Social Studies (TISS) in Tuljapur, the chief minister's fellowship took me to Yavatmal where I started teaching in a college. Alongside, I started mentoring students and decided to work towards a more accessible higher education path for them," he says. "When I first moved to Pune back in 2009 for higher studies, I had to opt for distance learning just because I could not find hostel accommodation in time."

In the past four years, Eklavya has managed to help nearly 350 students gain admission into reputed universities, with the alumni often helping to mentor the next batch. "The students I helped could see my struggle, how I had worked and studied, and what I had achieved. I explained to their families how education is their children's 'capital' if

they want to get ahead in life," says Kendre with a smile.

It's an issue he is passionate about which is why on Ambedkar Jayanti (April 14), he launched the Global Scholars Programme — a mentorship programme for first-generation learners and students from marginalized communities to create global leaders who share a vision of empathy and social justice.

"Even in a progressive institution like SOAS where education is democratized, our historically backward sections — SCs/STs/OBCs — do not make up even 10 percent of



Raju Kendre with his parents



Kendre at the SOAS, University of London

the admissions. Almost 90 percent of people come from privileged backgrounds who speak about even their grandfathers studying in the same institution as them. All we want is for the numbers to increase with more students from historically backward sections applying and getting admitted into premier institutions overseas."

The biggest obstacles faced by such students is lack of funding. There is a limited number of scholarships for students from marginalized backgrounds. "Even after securing admission to prestigious institutions, students are either forced to withdraw or appeal to the central government to help them out," says Kendre.

The Global Scholars Programme will offer a year-long 1:1 mentorship for first-generation learners from marginalized communities and facilitate training for postgraduate study in UK and European universities. The major focus is on providing guidance for scholarship applications for overseas education. This year, the focus is on courses in humanities, law and media with an aim to expand to finance, data science, STEM and PhDs in the next two years.

Kendre says that marginalized communities don't think of sending their children for higher education because historically they have been kept away and thus lack access. Which is why students from such communities form the majority of first-generation learners.

"Upper-caste members of our society may not have an abundance of agricultural resources, but they ensure that they hold all the positions of authority in the knowledge sectors. We need our people to become professors in IITs and IIMs, to be leaders in journalism, media, arts, culture, business, to be flourishing lawyers and judges. This can only be achieved through education," says Kendre. ■

Mithila Naik-Satam is a development worker from Maharashtra. Share your feedback on features@charkha.org

## Samita's World

by SAMITA RATHOR



# DCB BANK

## DCB Savings Account

Here's something of high interest to you!

Earn upto

6.75 % p.a.\*

Savings Account Balance Range	Interest Rate (p.a.)
Upto ₹1 Lakh	2.50%
More than ₹1 Lakh to less than ₹2 Lakh	4.50%
₹2 Lakh to less than ₹10 Lakh	5.00%
₹10 Lakh to less than ₹25 Lakh	6.25%
₹25 Lakh to less than ₹50 Lakh	6.50%
₹50 Lakh to less than ₹2 Crore	6.75%

DCB Customer Care: Call 022 68997777 ■ 040 68157777  
Email [customer@dcbbank.com](mailto:customer@dcbbank.com) Web [www.dcbbank.com](http://www.dcbbank.com)

Terms and conditions apply. These Savings Account interest rates are w.e.f. 7th February, 2022 and subject to change without prior notice. Interest will be calculated on progressive balances in each interest rate slab as applicable. Visit [www.dcbbank.com](http://www.dcbbank.com) for applicable interest rates for all amount slabs. \*Earn 6.75% p.a. on balance from ₹50 Lakh to less than ₹2 Crore.





*In the early 2000s, Ram Gidoomal contested twice for the Mayor of London. His message of compassion and inclusion set the agenda for other candidates in much the way the city needed. Though a rank outsider in politics, voters placed him fourth as the candidate of the Christian Peoples Alliance. He brought in more votes than anyone had expected. His promise to speak for 'the homeless, the jobless and the carless' clearly resonated widely with people.*

*Gidoomal's slogan came from the heart. He had arrived in London as a refugee, his wealthy family having been evicted whimsically overnight from Mombasa in Kenya.*

*Gidoomal's autobiography, My Silk Road, distributed by Penguin Random House in India, captures his exciting journey. And the extract we are carrying alongside details his foray into politics as a candidate for mayor. It is particularly interesting in the Rishi Sunak season of British politics.*

*For us in this magazine, Ram was a columnist roughly the time he stood for mayor. His Through NReyes was a great read in much the same way as this book is.*

## AN OUTSIDER IN POLITICS

**An extract from *My Silk Road* on setting an inclusive agenda in the election for Mayor of London**

By Ram Gidoomal

WHAT on earth was I doing here? Winter sun streamed in through the windows of Toynbee Hall's meeting room. I stole a glance along the platform at my competitors. We had been seated in order of our parties' importance. On my left sat people like Frank Dobson, Stephen Norris, Glenda Jackson and Ken Livingstone, all big heavyweight names with their heads held high. And then there was me. The fifteenth candidate. The last in line.

In front of us, the oak panelled room was packed with interested spectators, journalists ready with their questions, and photographers homing in on the other, more famous, candidates. How did I end up at these hustings? It certainly wasn't my idea. Politics was one game I had never intended to play. Yes, my public appointments had begun to bring me into contact with politicians — something I always found interesting — but it wasn't a sphere in which I saw myself working.

My contribution to the Better Regulation Task Force involved advising on policy making and was an amazing experience — like being a minister without being a minister. You had all the influence without being elected. This was how I liked it. I was happy to give business input, but to be a politician? No, thank you. I simply didn't need it.

Being at the heart of government for the Task Force already brought me the kind of opportunities I'd only dreamt of previously: newspaper articles, Radio 4 interviews, television. There were meetings at 11 Downing Street, the Old Admiralty Building, and the Cabinet Office at 70 Whitehall, not to mention dinner at the banqueting hall.

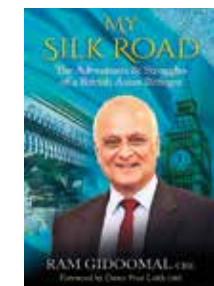
Then, when Peter Mandelson asked me to serve on the Department of Trade and Industry's National Competitiveness Advisory Committee, I even found myself invited to a breakfast meeting at 10 Downing Street.

Walking into a magnificent dining room with about 20 others, I found my place at the table, nodding to my companions — all well-known business leaders. I held back a gasp as I studied my personalized seating plan and realised I would be sipping tea and munching bacon and eggs just a couple of seats away from Tony Blair. It meant that I was able to speak up for small businesses, complaining about how they were treated by the larger companies, many of whom were represented at the breakfast. Later that day, two Permanent Secretaries I knew called me to say they'd seen my name in Dispatches. I'd managed to make my voice heard.

But it was after another television interview that I met someone who would set me on a new course. I had been interviewed for a BBC South Asia report and was just leaving White City TV studios when I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Ram, great interview! I've just seen it." David Campanale caught up with me. "By the way, have you heard about this mayoral race? They're looking for candidates."

"Oh, interesting," I smiled at him. "I'll mull it over and send you some ideas."



The alternative voice: Ram Gidoomal in front of one of his billboards during the election for mayor

Later, true to my word, I sent him a list of half a dozen names, a mixture of people who were speaking up against violence and injustice, plus some business leaders. Blair had made it clear he was interested in people like these. Having sent David the list, I felt I had done my bit and thought no more of it, until a couple of weeks later when he called me up.

"Thanks for the suggestions, Ram. Good to have a list of names, but, er...we've been discussing this as a committee and we think you would be an ideal candidate."

I was momentarily speechless. It was flattering to be suggested, of course — especially as I knew this was a group of young people, millennials who were concerned about their city, and needed a spokesperson. I shouldn't have been surprised: it was youth-led. It was always young people, with their fresh take on issues, their keen eyes seeing right through inequality and discrimination. Young people who had not yet been ground down by the 'cannots' of this world, instead able to see the genuine needs and the possibility to act on them. Once again, they were showing me my own mandate: Don't let what you cannot do stop you from doing what you can.

But a mayoral race? That was the last thing on my mind. All the career advice I had ever had back during my Kenyan teens guided me towards worthy professions such as medicine or law, possibly business. But not politics. Never politics.

Partly to buy some time and partly to avoid being immediately negative, I told him I would go home and talk to Sunita about it. I was pretty convinced she would agree with me and then I could just go back to David and say, "So sorry, the wife says no."

But she didn't say no. What she said was, "Well, don't we usually pray about these things?"

I sighed. "Okay, then." What I was actually thinking was, "You pray your way and I'll pray God says no." So we prayed and we waited. There was no lightning bolt, no immediate certainty either way, but over the following weeks, the more I looked around London, the more I saw injustice. Around the same time, I was at a business board meeting for

the Training Enterprise Council and a consultant we had engaged showed a map of London from 100 years ago, comparing it with a current one. Both maps were colour-coded to show areas of wealth and poverty. There were a hundred years between the two maps, and those colour-coded areas had not changed. To satisfy my disbelief, I delved into the statistics. It was true. Even then, in the year 1999, a baby born in Hackney had six years less life expectancy than a baby born in Westminster.

London is my city. I came here as a refugee and, despite some hard times initially, it has been amazing to me. But this map, these statistics, I couldn't believe this was the same city. What could I do to help change this?

Of course, I hoped I was already making a difference through my many public appointments. I was speaking up for the underprivileged and the disadvantaged. The Better Regulation Task Force, where I served as a small business representative, was chaired by Lord Haskins and was overseen by the Cabinet Office, and through this I was made chairman of the Anti-Discrimination Legislation subgroup, a UK-wide initiative. Labour had just come to power, and I found myself regularly called upon by Downing Street advisors. Many of the ministers were just cutting their teeth in their new roles. However, because of the number of ministers in charge of different kinds of discrimination, my work was becoming a challenge. Lord Haskins stepped in and said, "Don't worry, we'll talk to Jack Cunningham."

Rumour had it that Jack Cunningham was the one who wore size 12 boots. He was Tony Blair's cabinet enforcer. With him on our side, the task became much more straightforward. He gathered any minister with anything to do with discrimination under one roof for me, giving me the opportunity to share ideas and consult with them and their advisors all at once on this crucial topic.

I certainly didn't feel compelled to take on another challenge just yet. But, as time went on, it occurred to me that maybe there was something more I could do. Maybe I could make more of a difference to the inequality in my city. The Biblical values upon which the country had been founded

were being side-lined and while I, more than anyone, understood we lived in a multi-cultural society, the core principles themselves had served us well and were being undermined for no good reason.

Perhaps what really qualified me was that my burning desire for truth was always stronger than my need to stay safely quiet on issues. On seeing discrimination or injustice, I have to speak up. For example, during a meeting at the Old Admiralty Building for the Competitiveness Advisory Panel, I was shocked when the chairman of a successful company commented, "We've got to watch these shady Asian countries and shady Asian businessmen. They behave in ways that are not quite ethical and then we have problems competing."

I looked around the room at the press, political leaders, well-known chief executives, waiting for someone to condemn this statement. A large majority of those present had recently signed a public document confirming they would speak up against racism but now there was silence. Eventually, I put my hand up.

"May I please remind the gentleman on my right that he's forgetting what took place in our very own Parliament where we had cash in brown paper bags exchanging hands between MPs so that questions would be asked in Parliament. Is that ethical or unethical? Please, let us be careful before we point fingers at these countries and communities."

Again, deadly silence. I moved on, knowing at least that I had spoken up, but a few weeks later I happened to meet a Downing Street transcriber at a Bank of England lunch. Recognising my voice from the meeting's recording, he praised me for speaking up, having felt horrified at the racism he'd heard. A couple of weeks after that, I received a call from Robert Peston, wanting to include this story in the *Financial Times*. Sadly, it was blocked. It was impossible to get the transcript from Downing Street, which would have served as the necessary evidence.

I still had no interest in becoming Mayor of London, but I began to feel convinced I could contribute positively to the London Assembly. However, in order to gain one of the 25 seats there, a goal I had assessed as achievable, you had to have profile. You had to have some traction. You had to run for Mayor.

So I joined the Christian Peoples Alliance and was elected leader. We created a manifesto around their six principles of Social Justice, Respect for Life, Reconciliation, Active Compassion, Stewardship of Resources and Empowerment. The point was that although these are indeed Christian principles, the genuine life-enhancing goodness they aim to achieve is universally recognised. They are based on giving fair opportunities to all, and on narrowing the rich-poor divide. Although these six principles are solidly Biblical, they are also honoured by men and women of goodwill everywhere. In short, you don't have to be Christian to support Christian principles. For me, having 'Christian' in the party name was not a sign that we were against other faiths, but a guarantee that we ourselves would respect them. In fact, much of my support did not come from Christians at all but from other minority groups.

Even while I was still deciding whether to proceed, we were totting up the costs: £10,000 to register, another £10,000 for your name to appear in the booklet, then money for a team, office, and staff. That's a tall order. It was looking like £100,000 just to wash your face and say, "I'm running."

However, I knew that, with the contest for an Assembly seat calculated on proportional representation, if I even got 4% of the vote, I would have a seat. I looked at the Christian population of London and I looked at all the other contacts backing me and thought, "Why not try?"

The support I received from the Asian community was huge encouragement. One of Sunita's cousins was quick to get out his cheque book and pay the £10,000 registration fee, then funds began arriving from others to meet the remaining costs. Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, and agnostics put their hands in their pockets to support me financially, as well as rallying all their friends and staff to vote for me.

The BBC refused to give us a political broadcast. I went to plead with the director herself, asking, "Where's democracy? We've paid our £10,000 but we're not getting an equal say." It's impossible to visit every home in London, but these other parties would appear in everyone's living room



Gidoomal with Nelson Mandela



With students in the refectory of Queen Mary University

on TV. However, she would not budge. I left the meeting in tears. What chance did I have?

The *Times*, however, found me a little more appealing. Breaking the embargo on the press release, they jumped in with the headline, "Former refugee throws his hat in the ring."

That did the job! Refugees began to believe this was their city too, and when it came to that first hustings at Toynbee Hall, it seemed that half the immigrant population of London had turned out for it.

I looked down the row of accomplished political faces once more, reminding myself exactly why I was among them. As the meeting got underway, the speaker turned to the line of candidates and asked us,

"What would you do for London?"

Three minutes. That's how long each of us had to put forward our case. As I listened to the slick long-timers talking suavely about transport, housing and crime I began to panic. At the end of each three-minute spiel, the house filled with applause. If there had been a clapometer, they'd have been up there with six, seven or eight out of ten. I breathed deeply. What should I say? I thought about what Jesus would do. Why are you running? I asked myself. You came as a refugee, you know the refugee world well. You've got to speak up for the disadvantaged.

So I did. I spoke for three minutes and said, "If I'm elected, I will work for the homeless, the jobless, and the carless."

The place erupted in cheers and applause, the Richter scale going up to 12, 13, 14 out of ten. The other candidates stared in astonishment as if seeing me for the first time and wondering, "Who is this man? Who is this upstart who's just made the place explode?"

I went home, feeling a lot better. Just as we were about to go to bed, BBC Radio London news came on.

"Let's have a quick listen," I said to Sunita.

The interviewer was talking to the favourite candidate about his manifesto.

"What do you see as the three biggest issues for London?" "Well," he began confidently, "I would say the homeless, the jobless, and the carless."



Finally a chance to make his pitch on the BBC Radio 4 Today Programme

**Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, and agnostics put their hands in their pockets to support me financially, as well as rallying all their friends and staff to vote for me.**

We looked at each other and burst into surprised laughter. "How wonderful," I thought. "If, in one meeting, I have switched the agenda of the London election so that everyone's focusing on the homeless, jobless, and carless, then my work here is done. I don't have to be Mayor of London. They can do it for me."

At the time, Dame Rennie Fritchie (now Baroness Fritchie) was the Chief of the Independent Public Appointments Office. She made a point of commenting to me, "Ram, I loved your intervention at the debate, I thought it was very good." Simon Jenkins also quoted it in his piece in *The Evening Standard*, adding "The Conservatives should beg Gidoomal to join them!"

So, although I struggled to get backing from some people, others exceeded all my expectations. For example, Lady Susie Sainsbury and Viscountess Gill Brentford wrote a joint letter to *The Telegraph* publicly affirming and recommending me. This was in addition to one that Prue Leith had written to *The Evening Standard*. Once again, I felt the tremendous power of female support and was moved that they would make such efforts for me.

Meanwhile, another tremendous boost was coming. The *New Statesman* ran a blind web-poll called *Fantasymayor.com*. They put up six manifestos: Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, Greens, Ken Livingstone (running independently), and mine. When people were initially asked to vote by their party preference, I didn't do very well. Around 56% said Ken Livingstone. A mere 3.5% went for me.

Next, however, voters had to answer 15 policy questions asking what they wanted from their mayor on a range of issues. This time they voted 'blind', purely on the policies, without knowing whose they were. The website then matched their aspirations with the policies of the candidates. The results were incredible. I came out top and beat Ken Livingstone by a substantial majority.

The voters were no doubt surprised to see who they had voted for. Many would not have wanted to be associated with the word 'Christian'. But these were not 'Christian values' in some impersonal, abstract sense. These were 'people values' because Jesus came to live among people and to help them. As the art historian Hans Rookmaaker said, "Christ did not come to make us truly Christian but to make us truly human."

Unsurprisingly, the Fantasy Mayor story caused quite a stir and was even picked up by *Time* magazine in the States. Every national paper here also admitted, "If this election were on policies alone, Gidoomal would win by a landslide."

But alas, elections are not won simply on policies but on personalities

and profile. I knew that. Still, it was a huge affirmation to find I was so in tune with the people of London. The fact that my policies were the most closely matched to the aspirations of Londoners was a profound statement. More importantly, it spoke volumes about what people really wanted. Everything in my manifesto had Biblical values at its roots. For me, the only obvious conclusion to draw was that people wanted and needed such Biblical values, but just didn't know it.

When the actual election came around on 4th May, of course, I didn't win. It had never been my main goal or expectation. Unsurprisingly, Ken Livingstone stole that particular show. I did, however, save my deposit, because even with no track record and very little media coverage, we managed to gain nearly 100,000 first and second preference votes, coming fourth out of the political parties. Much as I love the Green Party, I was incredulous and rather proud to learn that I had come out higher than them, despite their 25 years of history.

Although I thought that my 4% of the vote was fairly meagre, I was surprised by the number of people who got in touch to congratulate me, assuring me that in political circles, that's quite an achievement. Suddenly I realised everyone was talking about me, in the House of Commons, the House of Lords... everywhere was the murmur of "Who is this man?"

Even if my result was no landslide, I had theoretically secured enough votes to win the 25th seat, under the D'Hondt Rule.

When I wrote my book, *How would Jesus Vote?* with David Porter in 2001, I made the following point: "If in your local constituency, a Muslim has the policies that fit your aspirations the best then I would say vote for the Muslim." Christians are sometimes shocked by this, but we cannot just vote for a Christian candidate simply because the label is right. The policy and content must be genuinely in line with what we believe to be best for our community. In the political sphere we can work together with others for the common good, respecting other people's freedom either to practice their own religion or to be atheist.

The same point was made in a rather more comical way during the book's launch, when Nicky Campbell interviewed me on BBC Radio 5 Live. Someone called in and said, "So Mr Gidoomal, this book is about how Jesus would vote?"

"Yes..."

"Well, didn't Jesus walk on the water? So that makes him a 'floating voter', doesn't it?" "Exactly!" I laughed.

That was the point of the book. Be floating voters. Don't let your vote be taken for granted by any party. Check them out, scrutinize them. See what difference they will make on a national level. Then cast your precious vote.

Another caller commented that my six principles would not come cheap. "True," I replied. "But what is the cost of not doing them?"

To take one example, I wanted to improve access to work for those with disabilities. The cost of those people not being able to work was much greater, both for them personally and for the wider community, than the cost of enabling them.

I appreciated this chance to have a voice. Of course, there would always be some people who wanted to look for the negatives. The day after the first election, the media were quick to contact me.

"So, Mr Gidoomal, you didn't win."

"Yes," I agreed. "And 11 others didn't either."

I didn't win, yet I knew that I had managed to get my points and ideas across. I didn't win but I knew I had pushed some worthy issues higher up the political agenda. I didn't win but the idea in my manifesto for creating a Boost Bond for East London (inspired by Michael Schluter who first set up such a bond in Sheffield) became a reality and has now issued £1 billion of bonds for social impact across the UK. I didn't win, but I didn't need to. Good things still came out of the time, energy and money that had been invested.

As before, when I had had the impact of a minister without actually being a minister, I realised that sometimes the secret of changing the world is to have influence without power. It's the art of letting other people have your way. ■

## India at 75



IN quick succession, between 1896 and 1906, Swami Vivekananda, Jamsetji Tata, Rabindranath Tagore and the engineer, Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, who founded the Institution of Engineers, returned from visits to Japan convinced that India should follow Japan's path to modernize and industrialize. Visvesvaraya gave a clarion call to fellow Indians in 1898, "Industrialize or perish!" Three years later, in 1901, Dadabhai Naoroji estimated the 'drain of wealth' as a consequence of British rule and attributed colonial India's backwardness to this fact in his book, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*. These ideas laid the intellectual foundations for the economic argument against colonial rule.

A generation of bright young Indians and Europeans studied the ill-effects of colonialism and feudalism on the social and economic welfare of Indians. This awareness fuelled Indian nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century with Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and others launching a movement to promote *swadeshi*. Mahatma Gandhi further empowered the concept by defining *swadeshi* as being at the heart of his call for *swaraj*.

These 'homespun' ideas were also greatly influenced by the development and industrialization experience of the Soviet Union which had emerged by the 1940s as a great industrial and military power. Thus two grand ideas began to shape Indian political thinking on economic policy by the middle of the 20th century — one, the ideas espoused by Gandhiji and Gandhians who believed in the preservation and promotion of *gram swaraj*, cottage and village industry and small-scale industry; second, the views of Indian business

and political leadership who pushed for large-scale and modern industrialization, mimicking the Soviet model. We shall look at each of these ideas and how they shaped policy.

India and other newly industrializing economies have been usually referred to by Western economic and business analysts as 'emerging economies'. Surely most of them are 'emerging' from long years of colonial rule and the underdevelopment this imposed on them. But the term 'emerging' hides the fact that some developing economies, especially China and India, are in fact 're-emerging' rather than



Visvesvaraya's clarion call was, 'Industrialize or perish!'

merely emerging. They have 're-emerged' from two to three centuries of colonial rule imposed on them by European colonizers.

Through his historical and statistical work, British historian Angus Maddison estimated that in 1700 China and India together accounted for half of the world's national income and that by 1950 their combined share was down to less than 10 percent. Even though the Indian sub-continent had been conquered over the centuries by successive waves of invaders, the fact is that by 1700 the Indian sub-continent, stretching from what is now Afghanistan to what is now Myanmar and from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean, was home to vibrant agrarian and trading economies. India's economic footprint spanned the Eurasian landmass and the Indian Ocean, reaching as far as the Mediterranean in the west and Vietnam in the east. The Mughal Empire and various other kingdoms outside it were reasonably prosperous and linked to the global economy.

European colonialism disrupted these links and impoverished the economy, imposing an economic system that shrank these economies. It is in response to the pain and poverty this imposed on the people of the sub-continent that a national movement emerged, demanding *swaraj* or self-rule and 'freedom'. In 1947 India declared herself a sovereign, democratic republic and adopted a Constitution that created 'India, that is Bharat' as a 'Union of States'. The first government of independent India soon settled down to the business of promoting national economic development.

My recently published book, *Journey of a Nation: The Economy at 75* (Rupa Publications) offers a glimpse of that history.

The 1950s were momentous and were defined by the ascendance of ideas that favoured industrialization. The 1960s was a decade of crisis in which the economy became more insular and government regulation and control became more pervasive and detrimental to the growth of Indian enterprise. A gradual change in thinking was evident in the 1970s but its impact began to be felt more in the 1980s. The Green Revolution in agriculture took root in the 1970s and created a politically influential

rural rich class in the 1980s. Over the 30 years from 1950 to 1980, India's gross domestic product (GDP), or national income, grew at an annual average of 3.5 percent; and in the following two decades, 1980-2000, it grew at 5.5 percent. In 2000-2015, the economy grew at an annual average of 7.5 percent, with the so-called 'golden years of growth', 2003-2008, recording close to 9.0 percent growth. Since 2015 the economy has slowed down, recording an average of below 7.0 percent growth.

Through these decades, the regional pattern of development first noticed in the first half of the 20th century became reinforced by the regionally differentiated impact of the Green Revolution. Thus, western and large parts of north-western and peninsular India, including states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, became the more developed states. While West Bengal was also classified as a developed state, it became far too dependent

Continued on page 23

## On a digital high



ECONOMIES around the world are going through a major transition. In some, this has been slow and incremental, evolving over decades; a few are seeing revolutionary change. As Lenin said, "There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen." In India, not just decades, but for two centuries before Independence, nothing happened: the economy was stagnant, even regressing now and again. The British made sure that commodity exports were under-priced and, with the Industrial Revolution bypassing us, all manufactured goods were imported. Agriculture, the primary occupation of an overwhelming majority, was at subsistence levels and millions eked out a living just above destitution.

Independent India embarked on a process of planned economic development, but growth was painfully slow for decades. The year 1991 saw, for the first time, radical reforms which laid the base for accelerated growth, especially in the first dozen years of the new millennium. Between 2004 and 2011, the number of absolute poor declined by a massive 138 million; more importantly, according to a UNDP report, as many as 271 million were lifted out of "multi-dimensional poverty" (considered a better and more comprehensive measure than just income) in 10 years from 2005.

The last few years have witnessed sluggish economic growth. However, other changes have been dramatic, especially in the area of digital technology. Though not weeks, it's been the years in which "decades happen". The digital economy is yet only a small part, almost a veneer in the overall structure; however, the speed of change is amazing. One proof of this is the spread of mobile telephones — in a few years, we went from 100 million to a billion. Simultaneously, the process of moving from 2G to 3G to 4G saw steady acceleration, and now we should see 5G services being launched this year. Each new generation has brought faster data speeds and lower costs.

More importantly, new technology has enabled new services. These have been triggered by two developments. The first is the development of digital public infrastructure: not only connectivity but, more importantly, public platforms. The former, initiated through Bharat Net (which aims to take broadband fibre to over 250,000 panchayats), has now been expanded to cover all villages in the country, enabling any smartphone user to access the net. Meanwhile, open-source public platforms (like UPI, for payments, which works with Aadhaar) have spurred innovative apps. These utilize the public platforms to provide a vast array of services at, literally, the tips of one's fingers.

The second development is innovative business models and strategies. These helped expand the mobile telecom networks, and have made costs of devices and services (including



The spread of digital technology in India has been stupendous

data) amongst the lowest in the world. As a result, the average Indian user, driven by hunger for content and aided by low costs, is consuming more data than those in most other countries. The comfort and understanding of using a mobile have provided a ready user base to new apps, beginning with those for payments. Apps in a wide range of other areas are leading the digital transformation of the economy.

Initially, it did seem that because of constraints on access, affordability, and ability, digital technology would touch only the upper echelons of India's economic pyramid. However, in addition to lower costs, it is now clear that peer and self-learning about using digital devices is extremely high, falsifying assumptions about minimum levels of education required for such access. Thus, for example, use of WhatsApp for chats, messages and sending videos is now commonplace even amongst those with little schooling.

Importantly, it has become a business tool, widely used even by the poor self-employed for product or service promotion and for accepting orders, as also for receiving payments. Familiarity with payments apps became a necessity following demonetisation, especially for small vendors and hawkers. Constraints on physical interaction, and the resulting use of online means during the pandemic, served to add impetus to such business use. Clearly, digital technology is transforming the economy even at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

At the other end, "digital transformation" is now an essential part of the strategy for big corporates — and, increasingly, even for smaller ones. The advent of 5G technology, with high data speeds and minimum delays (latency), supplemented by near-instantaneous machine-to-machine communication (Internet of Things), alongside artificial intelligence and data analytics, opens up exciting opportunities. These will often require changes in processes, while enabling new services and business models.

All this will accelerate the move towards a gig economy, going beyond gig work, which is already in vogue — often out of compulsion, but increasingly as a lifestyle choice. The new economy, driven by the immense new avenues catalyzed by digital technology, will be based on less owning and more hiring or pay-per-use. This is already happening in many areas — from cars to clothes — but is set to extend to a wider

range of personal as well as industrial assets. Homes, furniture, industrial machinery: all these and so much more will be on a pay-per-use model. Banks, long used to making money by lending for and against (as collateral) assets, will have to invent new business models; so also others.

The new economy — based on bits, rather than atoms — will have sharing, and not possession, at its core. The economy of atoms (physical objects) was based on ownership, an item being either with me or you. Bits (data), on the other hand, can be given or shared, and yet simultaneously be with both. Sometimes, its value increases with sharing, as with network effects. This is a radical departure from centuries of asset possessiveness. Digital technology demands a new conceptual frame and immense innovation. Prepare for a revolutionary new world! ■

Kiran Karnik is a public policy analyst and author. His most recent book is *Decisive Decade: India 2030*, Gazelle or Hippo.

# Animal rights vs welfare

MEGHNA UNIYAL

**A**NIMAL rights and animal welfare are opposing philosophies, and policies driven by animal rights have had disastrous results globally.

Animal rights is an ideology that believes that man has no right to use animals for his own benefit in any way, that animals must be given the same basic rights as humans, and that all animals should be 'liberated'. This is in direct contradiction to the 'animal welfare' philosophy that accepts that animals provide useful benefits to humankind and calls for, as far as possible, the humane usage of animals. Genuine animal welfare oversees man's civilized standards in the treatment of the animals he owns, uses and manages.

Acclaimed animal welfarist Rukmini Devi Arundale authored and introduced the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act in 1960. At a time when even the West was struggling to legally define and address animal cruelty, the PCA Act was ahead of its time.

The PCA Act is an animal welfare-based legislation, founded on the idea of ownership, that requires citizens to protect animals from "unnecessary suffering". Thus, the Indian Constitution follows the welfare perspective towards animals as usage of animals is intertwined with the exercise of fundamental rights via food, livelihood, culture, human health and safety. It does not envisage the extension of rights to animals but rather, vests with citizens the duty to protect them.

Amongst other far-sighted provisions, the PCA Act mandated the removal and euthanasia of stray dogs, recognizing the suffering faced by unowned domestic animals like dogs on the streets as well as the risks they pose to human society.

India has over 60 million stray dogs that kill about 25,000 people via rabies (an underestimate according to the WHO), injure millions of citizens annually, and are decimating wildlife across the country. They also deposit approximately 30,000 tons of toxic faeces on our streets daily, much of which is washed into water systems, contributing to India being a world leader in related infections.

Ostensibly, to address this public health and safety issue, in 2001 the Ministry of Culture (that has nothing to do with animals, public health or disease control), under animal rights

activist Maneka Gandhi, passed the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules for stray dog population management. These rules which are subordinate to the PCA Act, effectively prevent removal and euthanasia of stray dogs and have made redundant the PCA Act with regard to stray dog control.

While the PCA Act mandates sheltering and/or euthanasia for stray dogs, the ABC Rules, in direct opposition, have created a new entity called "street dogs" and forces their maintenance in public places, where nobody can be held responsible for dogs suffering due to homelessness or be held culpable for human injury and death caused by such dogs. The policy has legalized the straying of dogs, leading to huge increases in dog bites and related hazards in public places.



Rules for dogs override municipal laws

**Animal rights groups like PETA euthanize about 97 percent of dogs in their care in the US where stray dogs are not allowed.**

The results of the ABC Rules over 20 years have been disastrous from an animal welfare perspective. The primary aim of an animal welfare policy is to foster positive attitudes towards animals. The ABC Rules seem to have failed in this regard, resulting in keeping dogs homeless, exploding stray dog populations and perpetuating conflict between people and dogs. The ABC Rules don't even allow euthanasia of suspected rabid dogs which are instead left to die in agony over days. The ABC policy, which mandates release of unowned

dogs back onto streets to live miserable lives, has defeated the most important objective of the PCA Act — preventing the unnecessary suffering of animals.

In India, the intrinsically flawed ABC policy pushes an animal rights agenda of 'no kill' and 'animal liberation' over any practical agenda to manage stray populations, promote the welfare of homeless dogs or safeguard human lives. It exists in opposition to the citizen's fundamental rights and animal welfare principles, public nuisance laws and even its parent PCA Act.

The rules seem to override municipal laws and IPC sections that mandate the removal, confinement and euthanasia of biting and dangerous dogs. While even Schedule I species of wildlife can be put down when they are a threat to human life and property, the ABC policy requires stray dogs that have attacked citizens to be maintained in public places!

The ABC policy is perhaps a textbook case for policy that is *ultra vires* (beyond its power or legal authority) on all counts. Apart from contravening its parent Act, Municipal Acts and IPC sections regarding animals, it also goes against Article 21, that ensures citizens the Right to Life, a disease-free and healthy environment and safety.

The foundational document for the ABC policy, the 'Revised ABC Module', cherry picks extracts from research papers and actively misrepresents the WHO guidelines

for dog population management that promote responsible ownership and zero tolerance for free-roaming dogs or their feeding in public places. Interestingly, the ABC policy is promoted in India by animal rights organizations like PETA, that themselves euthanize about 97 percent of the dogs in their care in the US and do not push for a similar policy in their home country, where stray dogs are not allowed in any public areas.

India must not allow harmful policies like the ABC Rules to destroy human lives, create conflict between people and dogs and inflict unnecessary suffering on dogs under the mask of 'animal rights'. There is no compassion, tolerance or kindness in having homeless dogs wander on our streets. As Mahatma Gandhi wrote 100 years ago, "We are wrapped up in deep darkness as is evident from our cattle, paupers and other animals. They are eloquent of our irreligion rather than our religion." ■

Meghna Uniyal is director of Humane Foundation for People and Animals (HFFPA) and is based in Gurugram

# Don't link rivers

BHARAT DOGRA

**I**NDIA has 18 percent of the world's population but only 4 percent of freshwater resources. While a significant part of the country suffers from water scarcity, during the rainy season vast areas are flooded. Keeping this in view India has to be very careful in water management and planning, placing a lot of emphasis on water harvesting during heavy rains and careful use of water during the lean summer season.

Fortunately, India has witnessed several successful initiatives in recent times in water conservation. These have built on and added to the invaluable reservoir of traditional wisdom in water conservation and careful use of water in India. This is the way forward for India during times of climate change.

But India has also embarked on questionable projects which are not only very costly but also involve a lot of displacement as well as environmental problems. Their benefits and viability are highly suspect.

It appears that India has not yet learnt from its Tehri Dam and Narmada Dam experiences. If, out of ₹100, ₹30 is spent on really good conservation work but ₹70 is spent on wasteful projects then the cause of good water management is not helped.

Hence, the government should not hesitate to reconsider those highly expensive projects whose merits have been repeatedly questioned by several independent experts.

Perhaps the most questionable among such projects is the Inter-Linking of Rivers (ILR) Project, one of the most gigantic water-transfer projects ever envisaged in the world. This involves about 30 links of 37 rivers all over the country. Its cost was officially

projected at ₹11 lakh crore in 2016, but this is likely to have increased considerably since then.

This project was more or less given up in the UPA years due to many-sided criticism and its increasingly visible adverse impacts. However, it was revived soon after the NDA government came to power in 2014. In a 2016 interview, Uma Bharti, the then water resources minister, spoke about creating 31 new rivers and completing the entire project within a span of two decades!

The sub-projects are in the range of 29 to 32, depending on whether components of two projects are counted separately or not. There are about 16 projects involving peninsular

**The main reason for water scarcity in Bundelkhand is deforestation and river linking will just destroy more trees.**

rivers and about 14 involving Himalayan ones. The feasibility report of most of these projects has been completed and in the case of a few projects the Detailed Project Report has also been completed. In the case of others, the pre-feasibility report has been prepared.

Those projects on which more initial work has been done include the Par-Tapi-Narmada link and the Ken-Betwa link. The first was so widely opposed, particularly by tribal communities threatened with displacement and other adverse impacts, that its implementation had to be suspended recently, although of course it can be re-started later.

since the 1960s but, more importantly, 1991 marked a break from the regime of what some have called 'bureaucratic socialism', with its array of regulations and controls. The policies introduced in 1991 have been continued and taken forward by successive governments of different political hues.

While the first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed significant transformation of the economy, with a reduction in poverty, spread of urbanisation and the establishment of a globally competent services economy, and self-sufficiency in agricultural production, the manufacturing sector remained a laggard, despite the launch of a new 'manufacturing strategy' by the

The Ken-Betwa link project has been trashed by many independent experts, not the least because it involves the axing of 2.3 million trees to start with. Recent estimates mention a figure closer to three million trees.

Several experts have pointed out that there is not enough surplus water in the Ken to make this a viable project. In fact, the Ken has been much depleted during the lean season by indiscriminate sand mining. As both the Ken and the Betwa flow in the same region and experience similar weather conditions, where is the prospect of surplus water transfer?

While this project is aimed at solving the water scarcity in the Bundelkhand region, deforestation has been mentioned in reputed studies as a major cause of water scarcity in Bundelkhand and this project involves the axing of between two to three million trees! It is for such a highly dubious project that a massive budget of ₹45,000 crore has been committed by the government.

If all the sub-projects of the interlinking of rivers are considered together, displacement and ecological costs are likely to be terribly high. Displacement has to be seen in the context of not just dams but also a vast network of canals. Water transfer over vast areas can also involve negotiating heights which will involve very heavy energy costs of lifting water.

Before the limited resources for development of water resources are pledged to an enormous extent in this extremely costly project, there should be wider consultation with all stakeholders and independent experts. The option of still withdrawing entirely from this very high risk and equally costly project is still available to us. ■

The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Planet in Peril, Man over Machine and A Day in 2071.

Manmohan Singh government in 2012 that was subsequently modified and re-launched as the Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat programme by the Narendra Modi government.

India entered the 75th year of independence still carrying grave concerns about poverty, unemployment, inflation and loss of global competitiveness. Despite these setbacks, in terms of purchasing power parity, India is the world's third largest economy behind the United States and China. In dollar terms, it is now the world's sixth largest economy, behind the US, China, Japan, Germany and UK. ■

Sanjaya Baru is a writer and Distinguished Fellow at the United Service Institution of India.

## Toys you can trust

### Eco-friendly creations are on offer

**SURMAYI KHATANA**

THE landscape for toys is changing rapidly. A number of e-commerce sites invent and sell toys and games that are educational, fun, easy to handle and tuned to early childhood learning. What's more, the new toys are eco-friendly and made of biodegradable material, unlike mainstream options made of plastic. Attractive and colourful, the games and toys are designed to develop age appropriate skills in children and are passionately child-friendly.

Another advantage of such homegrown brands of toys is that they take care that their creations are culturally relevant to the child. Many of the games are gender-neutral and do not fall into the trap of separating types of toys by gender. Some of these companies are run by new parents themselves while some have been started by designers.

When Meeta Sharma Gupta returned to India from the US in 2012 she began looking for toys for her young boys. She realized that the toys available in the market were either made from plastic or had electric components. An alumna of IIT Delhi and Harvard, she founded Shumee in 2014 after watching her two boys play with simple wooden toys.

Shumee's toys are designed with the idea that the child can play with the toy or game multiple times in different ways and yet not get bored. Another important factor going into design is whether the toy allows the child to be creative and imaginative. The toy design should also encourage both independent as well as collaborative play.

All of Shumee's materials are eco-friendly, and most of their toys are made of wood. Other materials like cotton are used. None of the toys contains batteries, plastic, or electronic parts. All the toys and games are child-safe

and use only water-based paints and beeswax for polish. They are designed by in-house designers and handcrafted by local artisans. Shumee's toys are ASTM-certified (American Society for Testing and Materials) for safety.

Shumee's wooden fruit lacing and threading set is the perfect way to introduce a toddler to a needle and thread set. The game is designed to hone motor skills and help hand-eye coordination as children learn to hold and move the needle and thread. It also introduces the child to sewing and to how clothes are made.

The set includes two wooden colourful fruits, a pineapple and a strawberry with holes to pass yarn through. Two blunt wooden needles attached with soft yarn can be used to thread the fruits in different designs. It is a



Wooden Modular Playhouse: 12 pieces and 10 different houses



The Retro Car: Children can assemble and disassemble it

portable game and can hold toddler attention for long periods of time. The toy is priced at just ₹800.

The carnival-themed do it yourself (DIY) playset and colouring book combo works as a travel-friendly and creative game. The pop-out cutouts allow the children to create their own clowns, ballerinas, weightlifters, joker and to give them hula hoops, put them on a stage or on a seesaw. It requires no glue or scissors and is ideal for a no-mess arts and crafts session for the child.

An easy-to-follow manual comes with the game. The box in which the game arrives doubles as a background for the carnival. A colouring book with 20 carnival-themed pages and six organic crayons come in the combo. Placing all of the DIY pieces into thin slits helps with fine motor skills. The game also allows the child to be creative by putting the characters in different situations by switching their accessories. Fixing the paper cutouts together hones spatial awareness and logical reasoning. The game is priced at ₹2,000. Another DIY playset includes one on wild animals with paints instead of crayons, priced at ₹500.

Shumee also offers simple stack-up games like a wooden rainbow arch, a handcrafted Montessori toy that helps in understanding the colours of the rainbow. The pieces double as bridges for pretend play or as a hands-on stacking toy.

Also available is a Wooden Modular Playhouse, the parts for which are made from birch plywood and non-toxic paints. The 12 pieces fit together to make 10 different kinds of houses. The playhouse is a parent and child activity. It helps them build and bond together and then serves as a toy for the child to play with. The house comes with mini ladders and furniture pieces as well. It is a gender-neutral toy and takes away from the gendered stereotyped dollhouses and

instead converts it into a toy for any child to have sessions of pretend play and use their imagination. The game also has an eco-friendly muslin bag to store the furniture pieces and accessories.

The team at Shumee believes that teaching the child to build the playhouse themselves will instil healthy ownership and responsibility towards the toy. The game also builds fine motor skills. The open-ended design allows the child to build a completely different house every time they play. The game is for children aged three and above and requires parental supervision for the building. It is priced at ₹6,000. In similar building games, they offer castles with wooden blocks and characters or cities with cars.

The child can also build a chair. With pieces of beechwood and large colourful screws made from ivory wood pieces, children can create their own furniture. A child-safe hammer, spanner, screwdriver, along with colourful screws and nuts, are in the kit. The kit, for ₹2,800, also comes with extra planks to help your child create other furniture or add more to the chair. The chair can be used as a prop or as a shelf.

The building helps the child's fine motor skills as they handle the tools to build their own chair. Putting together different parts of the chair and screwing them in place can help to create problem-solving abilities. Child safety is a major concern for toys. Many of the toys have certifications and have gone through testing to ensure they are as safe as they claim. But with the large number of tests and standards, these certifications may be lost on the average consumer or confusing. If a toy has EN71 certification, it meets the European Union standards for toy safety. The ASTM certification is given by the American Society for Testing and Materials on child safety. The Bureau of Indian Standards has 10 standards to be met on safety for toys. The toys passing these tests bear the ISI mark.

On The Nestery website multiple manufacturers of safe and stimulating toys can be found. The founders, R. Vaishnavi, T.S. Vishwanathan and Aparna Vasudevan, started The Nestery in 2019. It was born out of personal need as Vaishnavi, a new parent, was trying to look for the right information and safe products. The Nestery is a website for



Memory games, puzzles and story books



A lacing and thread set and, right, the rainbow arch, a stacking toy for open-ended play

parents made by parents. There are listings of tried and tested toys that other parents recommend. Although many manufacturers are available and listed, you can buy directly from The Nestery's website and do not have to go to another website.

One of their listed toys is a Retro Car wooden busy board. Created by the people at The Funny Mind, the vintage car board is designed to keep children busy. They can take out parts and put them back in and rotate the wheels. The game allows the child to move parts of the car in a zigzag pattern or spin it. With the retro car they can play with gears, manage the mini driving wheel, ring a bell, and monitor the fuel sign. The Funny Mind has similar games



Making a chair with this kit is child's play

with rocket ships and aircraft. The game is light-weight and portable. The aim is sensory play. The boards range from ₹800 to ₹1,200.

The Nestery also has its own toys and games. The collaborative puzzle with Tulika Publishers is based on Ashok Rajagopalan's Gajapati Kulapati series, a story about an elephant that catches a cold. The puzzle allows the child to play with all the characters of the storybooks, the teacher, the flower-seller, the milk-man and the *pattamma*. The puzzle comes in one size for toddlers and another for older children. You can get both puzzles for ₹800.

Another outfit, FrogMag, sells folk, tribal and miniature art jigsaw puzzles. Shalini Ghosh, the founder, is a former student of National Institute of Design. She began FrogMag to promote Indian art styles through engaging games.

FrogMag's toddler puzzles come in a set of six and range from ₹500 to ₹600 and are available in Bhil art and Gond art. Their 63-piece puzzles for adults and adolescents are priced at ₹600. The puzzles are made with Santhal art, Kalighat Pat, and Madhubani, among others. All the games are designed by women folk artists who learnt the art forms from their families and tribes.

FrogMag offers memory-based games of mix and match. Their memory game, Goa Windows, helps appreciate the architecture and art of Goa while playing a matching game. All puzzles and games are beautifully painted and work to preserve art forms of India. The memory games are priced at ₹600. They also offer magnetic puzzles. ■

Photos: Civil Society/Susheela Nair



A glimpse of Aliyar reservoir from Ghat Road

# Lose yourself in Valparai

## Go for morning walks, sight wildlife and sip tea

**SUSHEELA NAIR**

LEAVING behind the scorching heat of the dusty plains of Coimbatore, it was a pleasant climb up to the tea country of Valparai. As our vehicle lumbered up the Ghat Road from Aliyar to Valparai, negotiating a series of 40 sharp, meandering hairpin bends, I could catch glimpses of the waters of the Aliyar mini-hydel dam project from above.

On the way, I sighted several Nilgiri tahr on the Ghat Road. I lingered awhile to click pictures of these mountain goats. I went on a clicking spree as this was my first sighting of mountain goats at such close quarters. The air got nippier as the cab tackled hairpin bends on the winding mountain road leading to this sylvan hideaway.

The change in scenery was palpable, giving way to mist-cloaked valleys and tea gardens carpeting the mountain slopes. At 3,474 ft, Valparai has all the features of a hill station but what makes it distinct is that it is sans busloads of tourists and pestering

vendors. Valparai (originally known as Poonachimalai) itself is a sprawling extended tea garden in the lap of the Annamalai range of the Western Ghats which offer untouched beauty and lush greenery. Thankfully, there are no regular tourist spots. But one can visit the tea factory, church, temple and waterfalls or simply enjoy the view of rolling hills, the cool weather, early morning walks and wildlife sightings.

I headed to Sinna Dorai Bungalow, a refurbished colonial heritage bungalow perched atop Iyerpadi hill in Parlai estate surrounded by the tea plantations of Parry Agro. The place offers a stunning view of the Valparai landscape and the rainforests of Vellamalai and Akkamalai in the Annamalai hills. In fact, 'Sinna Dorai' (*chhota sahib*) was the term used for the assistant manager.

Retaining the snugness and grandeur of colonial times, the stately bungalow allows one to experience "the unique pleasure of gracious living in the lap of nature". Built in the 1930s, colonial elegance pervades this imposing

heritage bungalow. Escorting me around, Meenu Nair, the manager, explained the history and nostalgia that is associated with the place. Plush suites with antique furniture, working fireplaces, an antique gramophone record player, an old typewriter, and other bric-a-brac ornament the premises.

One can lounge in the sprawling balcony, reading novels and reliving the lifestyle that the aristocratic planters enjoyed. Or indulge in indoor games like Scrabble or Ludo embedded in little game-tables in the balcony.

Valparai is a sight to behold when the monsoon unleashes its fury from June to October. Reclining in the balcony of Sinna Dorai Bungalow, sipping piping hot filter coffee between nibbles of *vada*, I soaked in the heavenly aromas of the tea plantation and withdrew my mind from the maddening world. The stunning views of the green canopy, the wilderness and tea plantations leave you feeling heady. I watched the pitter-patter of rain, drenching the pretty landscape with the mist parting occasionally to reveal the



Valparai town's colourful rooftops



Relive the lifestyle of aristocratic planters at the Sinna Dorai Bungalow, a colonial heritage property

undulating carpet of tea plantations in the distance in varying shades of green.

The best way to savour the magic of the monsoons in this glorious outdoors is to go on long, invigorating walks across the sprawling tea plantations with an umbrella and leeches for company. You can unwind and amble around at leisure, or drive up to the sights.

As we rambled around the plantation, we stumbled upon a sparkling waterfall hurtling down rocks, a check dam, and a mountain stream flowing through a property and also gushing streams and rivulets all around. The mélange of activities includes a drive to the sights nearby, walking the nature and birdwatching trails, taking a dip in a rivulet, and picnicking with a hamper by the stream on a private property. In the aftermath of the rains, the various reservoirs and tanks were full to the brim.

After bed tea, I strolled around the place



The Nilgiri tahr



Walk through tea plantations

orthodox tea factory, and picnicking by a perennial stream, we visited the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), which has documented the flora and fauna of the area. The NCF also maintains a little patch of forest where I was lucky to have a glimpse of lion-tailed macaques. Valparai is a biodiversity hotspot and numerous endemic and endangered species call this tropical rainforest home.

In the afternoon, I embarked on a trip to Sholayar Dam. The scenic road winding along the backwaters of the dam is fascinating. The ride to Malakkapara is a riot of green. The black-faced langurs greeted us while prancing effortlessly on treetops. Our guide pointed out not only the winged beauties of the area, but also other rare species with detailed information about each. We were hoping to sight the occasional panther known to tread the path. Instead, we sighted Malabar giant squirrels prancing from one tree to another. With an amazing variety of birds and plants, the forests are an ornithologist's delight.

A highlight of my trip was the prized sighting of the Great Indian Hornbill in the distance. While returning to the bungalow, I sighted a massive gaur grazing casually among the tea bushes, oblivious of the gawking admirers capturing moments for their Instagram. This face-to-face encounter with the gaur at close quarters was the climax of my Valparai sojourn. ■

### FACT FILE

**Getting there:** Valparai to Coimbatore is 112 km. **The nearest airport is Coimbatore.**  
**Accommodation:** Tea bungalows, homestays and hotels.

**The best way to savour the magic of the monsoons is to go on long walks across the sprawling tea plantations with an umbrella.**

which was aesthetically laid out with flowering shrubs and towering trees. The garden boasts of varieties of bloom, several species of trees, and perennials. I didn't feel the need for music as the place resonates with birdsong, orchestrated by hundreds of winged creatures especially the mellifluous song of the Malabar Whistling Thrush pervading the air.

After observing the working of the company's



## PRODUCTS

Small producers and artisans need help to reach out to sell their wonderful products. They can't advertise and they don't know to access retail networks. *Civil Society* happily provides information about what they have on offer, their skills and how you can get to them.

### Arty utensils



Anant Alok started My Mithila in March 2020 just before the lockdown. My Mithila has a team of 15 Madhubani artisans. They are based out of Deoghar, Jharkhand, and offer products made from bamboo, terracotta and Madhubani art. They offer all types of utensils made with terracotta including tumblers, bottles, *idli* makers, pressure cookers and lunch boxes. The terracotta products are in their natural colour. My Mithila's catalogue also has bamboo bottles, amplifiers, steamers and lamps. My Mithila's specialty is their products with hand-painted Madhubani designs. Clothes, fabric calendars, hangers, diaries, bedsheets, and cushion covers with colourful and detailed Madhubani art are available on their website.

**Contact:** Anant Alok  
Phone: +91 701-9442-280  
Email: [mymithila.official@gmail.com](mailto:mymithila.official@gmail.com)  
Website: <https://mymithila.com/>



### Rural specialties

Nature Mill is a 'source to shelf' company. Aditya and Piyush, the founders, travel to remote hamlets and farms to source ingredients for their unique products. They offer products made with almond and walnut oil sourced from Kashmir and cardamom from Kerala, among other things.

They have blended teas, oils and creams. They offer an aloe lavender and orange cream with aloe vera from Rajasthan priced at ₹450 for a tub. They offer many muesli blends including one made with dark chocolate and almonds and another with peanut butter. You can find the ingredient sources for all their products listed on their website.

**Contact:** Phone: 7657850477  
Email: [elf@thenaturemill.com](mailto:elf@thenaturemill.com)  
Website: <https://thenaturemill.com/>



### Natural soaps

Earthen Myrra offers natural and handmade skin-care products. Based in Bengaluru, they have soaps, scrubs and bath salts. Their soaps are unscented or carry the aroma of essential oils. Any colouring they have is natural or comes from natural clay or plant-based colourants. Some of their soaps are completely plant-based or vegan without any animal products. Other soaps that may include goat milk or honey are labelled as such. Their soaps are made in small batches, they offer pink clay and coffee soaps, lemongrass soaps, coconut milk soaps, and papaya soaps, all priced at ₹260. Madhushree Manjunath, the founder, started Earthen Myrra to create products that lead to no waste. Their packaging is reusable and biodegradable.

**Contact:** Madhushree Manjunath; Phone: +91 9880233163  
Email [info@earthenmyrra.in](mailto:info@earthenmyrra.in); Website: <https://www.earthenmyrra.in/>



### Upcycled décor



Get handpainted decor, stationery and items for festivities while supporting the women in the Ghazipur slum community. Gulmeher strives to provide an alternative and sustainable livelihood for the women waste pickers in Ghazipur by creating eco-friendly products using discarded flowers and recycled paper. Since 2013 they have trained 120 women as skilled artisans, given 35 women employment in their East Ghazipur centre, and skilled 20 women in embroidery and stitching. You can get stitched notebooks made with recycled paper, coasters made out of newspapers, wall hangings and fridge magnets. You can also get handmade bags, boxes and cards for gifting.

**Contact:** Phone: +91 9810293717  
Email: [gulmeher@gulmeher.com](mailto:gulmeher@gulmeher.com)  
Website: <https://gulmeher.com/shop/>



**Civil Society**  
EVERYONE IS SOMEONE

The magazine that goes places  
Now make your connections

Shimoga, Theni, Ooty, Leh, London, Tezu, Wakro, Nadia, Bundi, Chennai, Gangtok, Puri, Muzaffarnagar, Raigarh, Bengaluru, Atur, Erode, Yavatmal, Vapi, Kolkata, Gurdaspur, Gadag, Mulshi, Sirsi, Taluka, Farrukha, Rewa, Mumbai, New York, Mount Abu, Fort Blair, Jhargram, Jammu, Maida, Patna, Chembur, Idar, Indore, Dhenkanal, Varanasi, Barur, New Delhi, Kargil, Shimla, Panchgani, Ajmer, Tonk, Panchkula, Ghaziabad, Nainital, Dehradun, Cambridge MA, Mussoorie, Dahod, Pune, Hassan, Gurgaon, Chennai, Kohima Mandi, Jalpaiguri, Alwar, Salem, Shillong, Coimbatore, West Garo Hills, Guwahati, Dombivli, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Kasaragod, Muzaffarpur, Raichur, Shorapur, Virudhanagar, Nizampatinam, Gaddur, Proddatur, Shahpur, Manhatti, Tarikere, Kurnool, Mudigere, Duban, Kudal, Hunavar, Gaya, Khopoli, Latur, Bhogpur, Imphal, Ranchi, Bargarh, Nagpur, Udhampur, Midnapore, Khandala, Azamgarh, Sonebhadra, Itarsi, Nandurbar, Shirwal, Dumraon, Nashik, Bhadravati, Karwar, Satara, Thirthahalli, Kapurthala, Hingoli, Gulbarga, Kutra, Manasa, Loni, Kalbhori, Barampur, Shivajinagar, Gadchiroli, Kodagu, Bazaribagh, Tharjave, Ladwa, Udupi, Bhandara, Ottapalam, Belgam, Beesa, Sangli, Kolapur, Chachar, Goddi, Bulandshahr, Chikodi, Kottavayal, Malvi, Khandagiri, Murda, Chandigarh, Solapur, Siliguri, Garkheda, Jaipur, Shahjahanpur, Ludhiana, Rajkot, Fatehpur, Kodaikanal, Sivakasi, Porayar, Narsinghpur, Chopda, Kovilpatti, Ahmedabad, Kalugamalai, Gandhinagar, Lucknow, Itanagar, Focheny, Le Fleury, Brisbane, Naperville, Gundlupet, Aurangabad, Asansol, Hahnra, Singphum, Jalapur, Dharmapuri, Ujjain, Gangavati, Sidhi, Thiruvananthapuram, Simour, Sambhalpur, Bhatinda, Patiala, Gospe, Tughalwala, Mangalore, Tenneru, Noida, Santoshnagar, Gorakhpur, Jamshedpur, Wayanad, Puducherry, Vadodara, Margao ...





**TATA STEEL FOUNDATION**

# Skilling programmes at the **Foundation**, are poised to **Reimagine** and unlock potential

**Our journey of partnering the nation's aim to build a technically skilled youth base, is now in its 10th year. Our Industrial Technical Institutes of Tamar (from 2012) and Jagannathpur (from 2017) have ushered a rigor in this vocation among rural youth and in particular, girls from tribal belt in Jharkhand. The need is strong, and so is the appetite to create more bases (the third at Chandil, from 2022), to provide many more trained hands for a resurgent India.**

**More than 650 youths  
trained and the  
journey continues!**

