ONE INDIA
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Patriotism Redefined
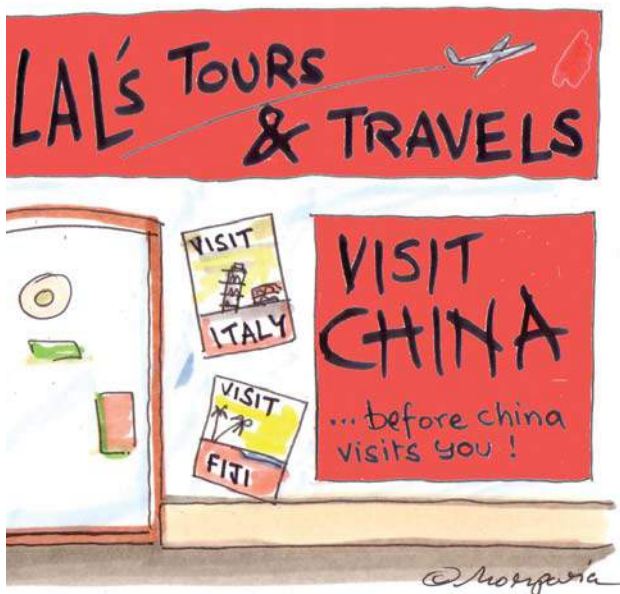

What ails
Government
schemes?

FACE TO FACE
Devinder Sharma

KNOW INDIA BETTER
Terracotta Art of Bishnupur

Great Indians: *Anutai Wagh / Maror General Eustace D'Souza PVSM / Asghar Ali Engineer*

Contents

6

23

36

Devinder Sharma

Anutai Wagh

Major General Eustace D'Souza PVSM

Asghar Ali Engineer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not quite the title

I am a regular reader of OIOP. I have enjoyed reading the the satire column by V Gangadhar. The write-up on 'vanaprastha' in the March 2013 issue was indeed rib tickling. Especially, the narrative on the interaction with the lady of the house is quite humorous.

By way of digression, I wish to make a few observations on the subject. The title given to the piece is a little out of sync with the contents thereof. The four *Ashramas* (stages of life) are *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Grahastha* (Marital), *Vanprastha* (in family fold, yet detached from pleasures) and *Sanyasa* (renunciation). I feel that the article relates to a desire to seek *sanyasa*, a life of reclusion in the forest.

– S. Nageshwar Rao, Thane

Youth are making a difference

The May 2013 issue of OIOP focused on a very relevant topic. Youth empowerment is an important issue in today's times when we are noticing a new found awareness towards issues in our youth. The protest march against the Delhi gang rape saw a huge participation of youth, which signals a positive attitude of youth towards social issues. It was nice to read about youth making a difference to society through their work (Youth Voice). Overall, the issue had a nice mix of articles and views. Keep up the good work!

– Mrinalini Kelkar, Mumbai

How much can a Government do?

V Gangadhar *cautions that too much planning and scheming can prove to be disastrous and lead to bad governance.*

AMERICA calls itself a democracy but it is a bogus claim. Why? Most Americans want the government to be kept out of anything and everything. Ronald Reagan won a presidential election promising the people he would keep the government 'off the backs of the people'. As an Indian I ask you, what kind of a democracy is that? Why do we then elect a government?

We have set a better example. We want the government to do everything for us. Roads? Government. Repairing pot holes? Government. Health care? Government. Food supplies? Government. Without government being a party to anything and everything that we desire, our system would collapse. It is a gigantic task for the government, but since independence we have been doing this. No political party would agree to 'less of government' in running the country.

How do we go about it, I mean, government doing everything for us? This is a vast system made up of plans, schemes and programmes to cover each and every issue from birth to death. Why did the government organise the family planning programme with an impactful slogan like '*Hum do, Hamare do*'? The department had a vast network of human power to keep the population under control. Don't ask if the plans have succeeded. That is not the job of the government.

It is not easy to implement such schemes, plans or programmes in a vast nation like India. Take the mid-day meals scheme for school children first introduced by the late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran (MGR), for example. This proved to be enormously popular all over the country. Then it developed major problems. The Tamil Nadu kids were supplied with staple diet like rice and sambar. Then another committee discovered this was not nutritious enough and recommended the addition of an egg. But the vegetarians objected and asked for a 'vegetarian egg' which was not available. When the scheme was implemented in the rest of the country, the menu had to be changed. The North demanded *rotis*, *parathas*, *samosas* and so on. Bengal and the eastern states recommended dishes from their region. Shiv Sena threatened a bandh if '*varan bhat* ', *poha* and *vada pav* were ignored. So now you understand the nature of problems the government has to face to implement its plans. Yes, that has been the history of government plans and schemes. When the South rebelled against the imposition of Hindi as the sole national language in an agitation which brought the Dravidian parties to power, the Centre thought of a brilliant 'Three language formula' where students would study English, Hindi and one regional language. The Hindiwalas were delighted because they could choose Hindi as their one regional language and benefit over other states. The three language formula, I think, still exists but is hardly spoken about.

> **Without government being a party to anything and everything that we desire, our system would collapse.**

Our government was so considerate that it planned and schemed to provide land for the landless, home for the homeless, food for the foodless, water for the waterless and so on. Some private individuals chipped in and became public heroes. Acharya Vinoba Bhave went around the country collecting land for his 'Bhoodan' programme though it was discovered that the land 'donated' to him was useless for any purpose including irrigation. Of course, we still remember the Bhoodan heroes because their intentions were good.

Job distribution naturally came under this concept. I was impressed when US President Obama announced his government had created five million jobs. But how could one create jobs, and for whom? What about qualifications, experience and so on? Our government also made such announcements and introduced similar schemes, but I can only shake my head in puzzlement. ■

The writer is a well-known satirist.

What ails Government schemes?

Almost all government welfare schemes that are meant to benefit the poor and underprivileged in the society are plagued by many problems such as lack of awareness among beneficiaries, faulty implementation, improper monitoring, financial laxity and above all corruption. **Leena Mehendale** *does an incisive analysis on why government schemes go awry and tells us how loopholes can be plugged in the initial stages itself to achieve the desired goals.*

THE late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is credited with one famous statement. He declared, from a thumb-rule assessment, that out of every rupee spent on a government scheme, only fifteen paise reaches the actual beneficiary. A candid revelation indeed coming from a country's premier!

However, Mr. Gandhi did not elaborate nor did he order an investigation as to why, as much as, 85% goes as unproductive expenditure. Perhaps he thought it was a futile exercise and there was no cure to the problem. Had he acted on the matter, he would have stumbled upon the many factors responsible for faulty implementation of these welfare schemes of the government and timely corrective action would have saved the government exchequer crores of rupees.

Planning and budgeting of schemes

But before I point out why these schemes don't yield the desired results, let me spell out a little about planning and budgeting. As in any financial activity, there is income to government and there is expenditure by government. It is common sense, that expenditure has to be less than income. The sources of income for government are through various taxes – taxes on land, property, income, import–export, excise, local entry tax, sales, entertainment, etc. The profits earned by public sector undertakings and lease agreements for mines, minerals and forest products are also sources of income. On the other hand, the government has various establishments to run, notably the institutions of Parliament, Military and Police for external and internal security, a bureaucracy to run the administration and judiciary system. Similarly government has to run some institutes as a public welfare measure – especially schools, hospitals, railways, postal service, telecommunication and so on. These are permanent establishments and the expenditure on them is a committed expenditure, which government cannot shy away from.

However, in any financial year, if there is surplus revenue available with government or if government is able to borrow against future earnings, then such available funds are utilised through a

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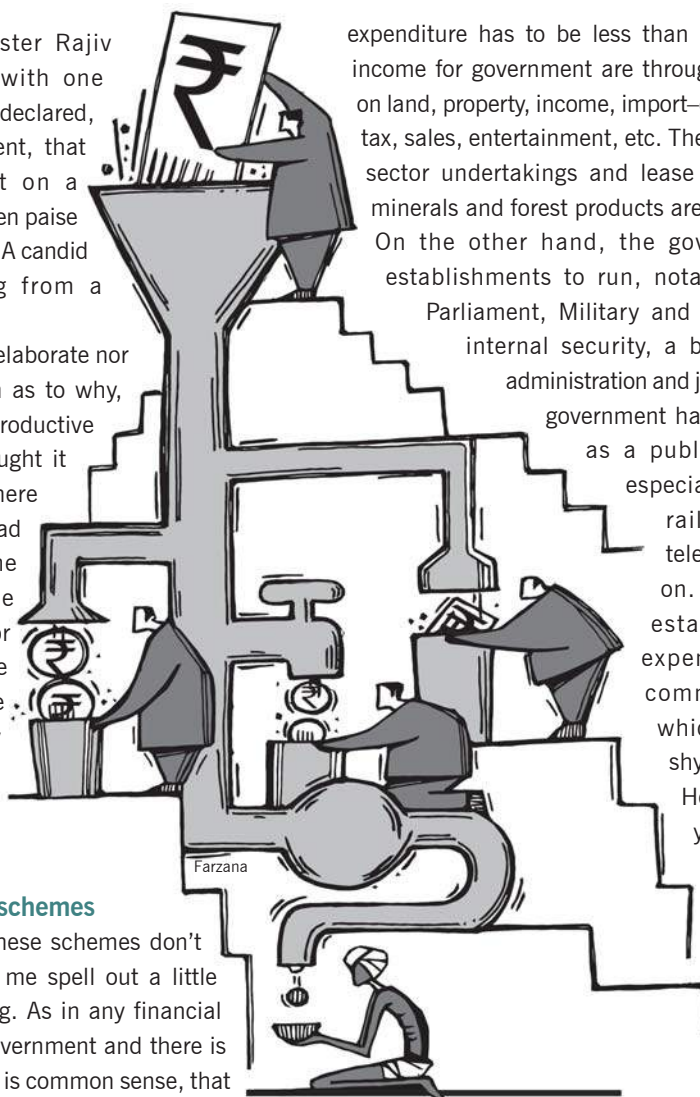
process of planning – by designing new schemes which are likely to generate accelerated development, thereby also bringing more revenue to the government.

Every year in February budget session, the budget of the country is presented and which has to be approved by the Parliament. This presents the estimates of revenue to be earned in the next financial year, estimated expenditure needed for the already running institutions and programmes, estimated surplus or possible borrowings – and finally how government proposes to use this available money for new schemes. Needless to add that this whole exercise is not a matter of few days, but has to be carried out at least for three to four months before the February budget session. In order to make this exercise more effective, we have used the methodology of Five Year Plans – so that schemes can be taken up continuously for five years – thus culminating in sustainable benefits.

Factors responsible for failure

Theoretically, the above plans look good on paper. But the moot question that comes next is why do these plans don't yield desired results? Implementation has been a weak area and matter of concern. Periodically, there are reports in media about the benefits of schemes not reaching the targeted population due to faulty implementation and alleged corruption. What are the reasons for these benefits not reaching the desired section of the society? In my opinion, there are several factors, but let me list out the top five.

i) *No unity of purpose*: First of all our schemes do not have a unity of purpose, they are many times designed in isolation. For example, the scheme for uplifting the status of rural women will not take into consideration the ill-effects of rampant alcoholism prevailing amongst the rural men. Such a scheme designed in isolation cannot yield the desired result. This can be said about all the schemes of the government. I often compare this situation with a vast field having several pyramid structures on it. Various departments are like various pyramid towers whose only agenda is vertical expansion. This leads to a segmentation of the government among various Ministries and Departments. Even if we take a simple example like distribution of milch cattle to the

"Apart from corruption in the political circles, the corruption within the bureaucracy is an equally great menace that can lead to a collapse of the total infrastructure."

– Leena Mehendale

farmers with the target of stopping farmer suicides, the programme is not matched with another scheme under the Dairy Development through which they can ensure proper milk collection, thereby giving relief to the farmer who is now a new owner of the milch cattle.

ii) *Faulty design*: Second, is a defect in the scheme design itself. It has three aspects. Firstly, the scheme does not take into account the ground reality. Secondly, there is always an attempt to have a universal scheme, applicable everywhere in the country in the same fashion, thus ignoring the local needs and local culture and local aspirations. No flexibility is given to district level administration, though it is this level which can give the cutting edge. Thirdly, when a scheme is designed there is very little budget provision for any training aspect. It is presumed that an elaborately drafted scheme issued from Delhi, is instantly understood equally well up to the lowest staff, who will implement the scheme. I have often found this presumption to be totally wrong. There is also no scope for any feedback from the field level machinery and quick response to them.

Here, I would like to cite one example. Once while working as Settlement Commissioner of Maharashtra, some senior officers and I, decided to implement a particular scheme for quick disposal of pending settlement cases. We issued instructions drafted as best possible by us. A few days later, I was holding a meeting of senior officers. As was my practice, I had also invited junior officers from the lowest rank in a representative manner of one or two from each cadre, who would not participate in the meeting, but would remain present. While we, senior officers, were discussing how quickly our scheme should be implemented and how quickly we should achieve the targets, two junior members intervened to tell us that we will not succeed. This came as a major surprise to us. We prompted them to elaborate and it turned out that for the Vidarbha area where the practices were different, we needed to make some changes in the scheme for successful implementation. This showed us that for successful implementation of any new scheme, it is necessary to brainstorm with the staff at all

levels. Such a feedback mechanism for the purpose of quick corrections and changes in scheme design and plugging loopholes in the beginning itself, is typically absent. We spend much time and money on evaluation which comes as a post mortem but very little on monitoring, feedback and timely corrective actions. Various reports which are generated with fixed frequencies also fail to give much insight to the HQ officers for corrective action. A connected issue is that there is complete absence of mechanism for quick, short term surveys over a small localised area that can be used as another form of feedback while a scheme is still under implementation. We have expertise in the country with organisations such as N.S.S.O., TCS, Ernst and Young etc., which conduct huge survey covering large geographical areas, sometimes nationwide, over periods ranging from two years to five years. However, there is no institutional expertise for collecting data to assess the impact over a small area such as a Taluka within a span of a month or two. Such service, in my opinion, is a prerequisite for effective scheme implementation. We can train and involve colleges to develop such expertise for quick localised surveys.

iii) *Rampant corruption:* Corruption is undoubtedly the topmost reason for ineffective scheme implementation. Take the example of infrastructure development schemes. Corruption invariably leads to sub-standard material and sub-standard workmanship, hence an infrastructure which is guaranteed to give sustained benefits over a long life-span starts developing defects much earlier, thus, eroding the possibility of benefits and development. Apart from corruption in the political circles, the corruption within the bureaucracy is an equally great menace that can lead to a collapse of the total infrastructure. The latest examples are of the CBI inquiry against the Chief of Air Staff and the Railway Officer in the rank of Member, Railway Board involved in taking or giving bribe.

iv) *Guarding the turf:* I would put lack of vision and passion

> **As a result of the atmosphere of not taking initiatives, the bureaucracy often lacks passion and vision. A typical attitude develops where I judge my action only by asking whether I have fulfilled my part of the job, but not by asking whether I have contributed to generate a collective team spirit so as to ensure completion of task.**

amongst the top bureaucracy as the fourth reason. I have come across several bureaucrats whose integrity is beyond doubt and the speed of work is also very high. But their job perception alarms me. Most of them are wary of thinking beyond their desk and treading with great caution so as not to step on the turf of other desks or departments. For example, if a file is to be initiated for promotion of Hindi on computers, then the Department of Information and Technology which deals with policies regarding computers and the Department of Rajbhasha which deals with policy on Hindi, will spend several years engaging in internal correspondence to decide as to who should NOT take the initiative. If at all a bureaucrat comes along who is willing to take the initiative, this internal correspondence still goes on for informing him or her as to why it is not their turf. Further, a bureaucracy who is taking initiative is often accumulating future risks at each initiative in the form of audit paras. This is because our audit system has not been re-vamped for several decades and therefore fails to make a distinction between a bonafide initiative versus a dishonest initiative. The audit system is such which will stop 99 honest initiatives through rules (read chains) to stop one possible dishonest initiative.

As a result of the atmosphere of not taking initiatives, the bureaucracy often lacks passion and vision. A typical attitude develops where I judge my action only by asking whether I have fulfilled my part of the job, but not by asking whether I have contributed to generate a collective team spirit so as to ensure completion of task.

v) *Financial laxity in the name of financial discipline:* Government schemes are also subject to an outdated concept of financial discipline. A particular sum is sanctioned for the scheme on the basis of a broad outline which is prepared during the previous financial year itself, and approved in the annual budget session.

Maxim

The Indian way of life provides the vision of the natural, real way of life. We veil ourselves with unnatural masks. On the face of India are the tender expressions which carry the mark of the Creator's hand. In the face of an Indian, you can see the natural glory of life, while we have covered ourselves with an artificial cloak.
– George Bernard Shaw

Fair prices, unfair practices

Corruption and malpractices since decades, are posing a threat to the existence of Public Distribution System (PDS), considered to be the largest retail system in the world. **Dr. Sunil B. Bhosale** *and* **Pralhad N. Kamble** *recommend measures to streamline the system, so that subsidised food and essential commodities reach the poor.*

WORLD War's own compulsions forced the British government to introduce the first structured public distribution of cereals in India through the rationing system sale of fixed quantity of ration to entitled families in specified cities or towns. The system was started in 1939 in Mumbai and subsequently extended to other cities and towns. By the end of 1946, as many as 771 cities/towns were covered under the rationing system. The basic aim of Public Distribution System (PDS) was to provide essential commodities such as rice, sugar, wheat, edible oil, soft coke and kerosene at subsidised prices. Not surprisingly, since the mid-1980s the welfare component of PDS has gained importance and its coverage has been extended to rural areas in some states, especially subsidised food grain distribution, was introduced in 1985 in all the tribal blocks covering about 57 million people.

PDS was later expanded under the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) scheme to 1752 blocks having high incidence of poverty covering 164 million people. Recently, the Government of India (GOI) has made drastic changes in the Public Distribution System. The new Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is expected to correct the regional misallocation of Food Corporation of India (FCI) grain supplies, to the extent that the incidence of poverty will be given substantial weight in grain allocation between the states.

Ensuring food security

In the context of national food security and poverty alleviation, it is essential to take a look at the "efficiency and efficacy" of the PDS, which has been operating as the food access mechanism for several decades. Proponents of the rationing system and its successor the PDS, claim that these two measures "have played an important role in ensuring higher levels of household food security and "completely eliminating the threat of famines''.

In short, PDS, from mere rationing, has evolved into the National Food Security System.

Both central and state governments made arrangements to procure essential commodities and supply them through public distribution outlets. In the case of food grains, FCI undertook the necessary operations. Moreover, the central government shoulders the responsibility of procurement, storage and bulk allocation of food grains to the state governments, whereas states take active role in identification of families Below Poverty Line (BPL), issuing ration cards, allotment of commodities, supervision and monitoring the functions of ration shops. At the lowest level, there are Fair Price Shops to sell essential goods ultimately to the consumers.

Under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), each poor family is entitled to 35 kg of food grains at highly subsidised prices. With effect from July 2013, the BPL food grain allocation will be increased to 35 kg per family per month for all accepted 6.52 crore BPL (including 2.42 crore AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana)) families in the country as per the 1993-94 poverty estimate of Planning Commission and March 2000 population estimates of RGI (The Registrar General of India).

The largest retail system

India's Public Distribution System with a network of 4.78 Lakh Fair Price Shops (FPS) is perhaps the largest retail system of its type in the world. Since 1951 public distribution of food grains has been retained as deliberate social policy by India with the objectives of:

⇨ Providing food grains and other essential items to vulnerable sections of the society at reasonable (subsidised) prices.

⇨ To put an indirect check on the open market prices of various items and

⇨ To attempt socialisation in the matter of distribution of essential commodities.

Rampant corruption and other failures

The Public Distribution System of India is not without defects. With coverage of around 40 crore BPL families, a review of the PDS leads to the following structural shortcomings and disturbances:

❑ Growing instances of the consumers receiving inferior quality food grains in ration shops.

❑ Deceitful dealers replace good supplies received from the FCI with inferior stock and sell FCI stock in black market.

❑ Illicit Fair Price Shop owners have been found to create large number of bogus cards to sell food grains in the open market.

❑ Many FPS dealers resort to malpractices, illegal diversions of commodities, hoarding and black marketing; their grievance is that they are poorly paid.

❑ Numerous malpractices make safe and nutritious food inaccessible and unaffordable to many poor thus resulting in their food insecurity.

❑ Identification of households to be denoted BPL status and distribution to grant PDS services has been highly irregular and diverse in various states. The recent development of Aadhar UIDAI cards has taken up the challenge of solving the problem of identification and distribution of PDS services along with Direct Cash Transfers.

❑ Regional allocation and coverage of FPS are unsatisfactory and the core objective of price stabilisation of essential commodities has not been met.

Lack of accountability

Several schemes have augmented the number of people aided by PDS, but the number is still extremely low. Poor supervision of FPS and lack of accountability have spurred a number of middlemen who consume a good proportion of the stock meant for the poor. There is also no clarity as to which families should be included in the BPL list and which to be excluded. This has led to genuinely poor being excluded whilst the ineligible getting several cards. Awareness about the presence of PDS and FPS in poverty-stricken societies in the rural areas, has been dismal.

The stock assigned to a single family cannot be brought in instalments. This is a decisive barrier to the efficient functioning and overall success of PDS in India. Many BPL families are not able to acquire ration cards either because they are seasonal migrant workers or because they live in unauthorised colonies. A lot of families also mortgage their ration cards for money. Lack of clarity in the planning and structuring of social safety and security programmes in India has resulted in the creation of numerous new cards for the poor, but limited information about the overall use of the cards has discouraged BPL families from registering for new cards and has also increased illegal creation of new cards by such families to ensure maximum benefit for the family members.

Lack of storage facilities and faulty storage

Procurement, in the last few years, has touched new heights given remunerative MSPs (Minimum Support Price) coupled with better operational outreach. As a result, Central Pool Stocks have increased from 196.38 lakh MTs as on 1.4.2008 to a peak level 823.17 lakh MTs as on 1.6.2012. To meet the short-term peak requirements of storage capacity, the FCI resorts to short-term hiring of covered godowns as well as storage of food grains under Cover & Plinth (CAP). CAP is also a scientific method for storage of food grains. The sampling reports of Programme Evolution Organisation of the Planning Commission say that the average monthly cost of storing food grains is ₹41,440 in 13 states. The storage capacity of food grains in India does not match the production of food grains. The maintenance cost of food grains is also increasing day to day. Immediate disposal of all the stocks that are more than three years old should be undertaken. A credible physical audit of the FCI stocks is necessary.

Streamlining PDS

There are lots of loopholes in the present PDS that need to be plugged. Here are a few suggestions:

Festive times

The Sindhu Darshan festival is celebrated in the month of June in Ladakh every year. The festival aims at promoting national integrity, and is a tribute to the River Sindhu, a symbol of India's cultural harmony and unity. Many people from various states and different religions attend the festival in large numbers. People bring with them water from rivers from their states in earthen pots and immerse these pots in water... a ritual that symbolises unity in diversity! While senior monks perform rituals on the banks of the river, various cultural programmes are also performed by artistes who assemble here from across the country.

100 days of assured wages

Despite facing some implementation hurdles, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has exhibited enormous potential to boost agricultural growth and improve socio-economic conditions in rural areas, say **Dr. Nilay Ranjan** *and* **Dr. Deepender Kumar**.

MAHATMA Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with its legal framework and rights-based approach was notified on 7 September, 2005. It aims at enhancing livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Act covered 200 districts in its first phase, implemented on February 2, 2006, and was extended to 130 additional districts in 2007-2008. All the remaining rural areas have been notified with effect from April 1, 2008.

The primary objective of the Act is augmenting wage employment. The Act is also a significant vehicle for strengthening decentralisation and deepening processes of democracy by giving a pivotal role to local governance bodies, that is, the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The most significant features of the MGNREGA are that it creates a rights-based framework and that it is a law. Backed by political will and adequate budget resources from the Government of India, the implementation of the Act has yielded encouraging results, despite uneven performance across the country.

During the FY 2012-13, the scheme has provided employment to around 4.8 crore households through about 98 lakh works with more than 213 crore person-days of employment being generated at a total expenditure of about ₹ 39500 crore. The average wage rate per day has increased from ₹65 in 2006-07 to about ₹115 in 2011-12. The women workforce participation under the Scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33% and the trends indicate an increase in the participation rate at the national level. Since inception, every year, women participation has been around 48%. (See Table)

Key challenges

MGNREGA being a rights-based Act guaranteeing 100 days of employment to a rural household is likely to encounter challenges in its nation-wide implementation. At the same time GOI in consultation with the state governments and other stakeholders has been trying to address these challenges. In addition, the Ministry also engages independent institutions for its concurrent evaluation and impact assessment study. Some of the implementation concerns noticed by different institutions are:

Need for awareness on MGNREGA process: Inspite of various modes of awareness adopted by implementing agencies, still there is a section of people who are unaware of the entitlements under MGNREGA.

Lack of capacity of GPs: In the effective implementation of MGNREGA, Gram Panchayats play an important role. However, it has been found that Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas lack capacity in decision making, monitoring of MGNREGS works, assets management etc.

Participatory planning: The whole process under MGNREGA and its effectiveness are dependent on participatory planning. It has been found that the participatory planning at GP levels in most cases are not done as envisaged under the Act. Better planning of land development works, assets and convergence activities will make the farmer self-reliant.

Maintenance of assets: There are evidences that assets maintenance and monitoring are not being done as it should have been.

> In the effective implementation of MGNREGA, Gram Panchayats play an important role. However, it has been found that Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas lack capacity in decision making, monitoring of MGNREGS works, assets management etc.

Overview of MGNREGA Performance, 2006 -10

	FY2006 -07 (200 districts)	FY 2007 -08 (330 districts)	FY2008 -09 (All districts)	FY2009 -10	FY2010 -11	FY2011 -12	FY2012 -13(provisional)
Employment provided to households (crore)	2.10	3.39	4.51	5.26	5.49	5.04	4.83
Person-days of employment generated (crore) (Total)	90.50	143.59	216.32	283.59	257.15	216.34	213.41
SCs	22.95 (25%)	39.36 (27%)	63.36 (29%)	86.45 (30%)	78.76 (31%)	47.70 (22%)	46.26 (22%)
STs	32.98 (36%)	42.07 (29%)	55.02 (25%)	58.74 (21%)	53.62 (21%)	39.5 (18%)	35.45 (16%)
Women	36.40 (40%)	61.15 (43%)	103.57 (48%)	136.40 (48%)	122.74 (48%)	103.81 (48%)	110.86 (52%)
Others	34.56 (38%)	62.16 (43%)	97.95 (45%)	138.40 (49%)	124.78 (48%)	129.06 (60%)	131.70 (62%)
Work provided per year to households who worked (days)	43	42	48	54	47	43	44
Central Release (Rs. crore)	8640.85	12610.39	29939.60	33506.61	35768.95	29189.77	30009.96
Expenditure (Rs. crore)	8823.35	15856.89	27250.10	37905.23	39377.27	38034.70	39537.29
Total Works taken up (lakhs)	8.35	17.88	27.75	46.17	50.99	82.51	98.60
Works completed (lakhs)	3.87	8.22	12.14	6.39			

Positive impact of MGNREGA

Despite some of the implementation challenges which are likely to be there during the initial years because of its nature and coverage, implementation of MGNREGA has exhibited that it has enormous potential to boost agriculture growth and improve environmental services. It has allowed the people in rural areas to undertake activities like desilting, pond excavation etc., in their own villages and on their own land, to increase water availability, soil fertility and develop land. A recent study of four states by Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore has found that MGNREGA works have increased the area irrigated, soil fertility and contributed to an increase in crop yields in the range of 46 percent to 100 percent across the districts. It also shows that MGNREGA is generating multiple environmental and socio-economic benefits, leading to improved water availability and soil fertility resulting in increased crop production. Increased area under plantations and orchards potentially contributing to alternate incomes, increased employment generation and reduce migration.

MGNREGA also has led to a positive impact on livelihood on individual beneficiary household. As per a study conducted by UNDP and Sambodhi, in six states, almost 85% of the beneficiaries have reported an improvement in quality of land, post creation of MGNREGA assets. Due to this, some small and marginal farmers have shifted to more remunerative crops, for instance 11% of the respondents have been moved away from traditional crops to horticulture plantation. Also as per the study, a majority of the households noted a 10-15% increase in income post creation of assets through MGNREGA. An interesting finding of the study is that, almost 52% of the households who sought employment under MGNREGA and on whose land work was undertaken, did not come back to work on MGNREGA.

In the coming years, MGNREGA is likely to exhibit more and more positive impact in rural areas once all new provisions of the recent Fourth Edition, MGNREGA Operational Guidelines, 2013 are put in place and followed in letter and spirit. To count some the expansion of the list of permissible works under Mahatma Gandhi is likely to strengthen the synergy between MGNREGA and rural livelihoods, particularly agriculture, and create durable

quality assets. It is also likely to improve the socio-economic condition of marginalised section of the society i.e., SC/ST/ small and marginal farmers/IAY beneficiaries/Forest Right Act beneficiaries etc. because most of new works are allowed on the land or homestead of these sections.

The past seven years of MGNREGA implementation shows that the government in coordination with the states and other stakeholders is proactively taking measures to realise the objectives of MGNREGA i.e., transforming rural India by guaranteeing 100 days of employment to rural household. ■

The views expressed in the article are that of the authors and not of the government.

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Fair prices, unfair practices

(Continued from page 10)

❑ Vigilance squad should be strengthened to detect corruption, but it will prove an added expenditure for taxpayers.

❑ Personnel-in-charge of the department should be chosen locally.

❑ FCI and other prominent agencies should provide quality food grains for distribution, but a tall order for an agency that has no real incentive to do so.

❑ Frequent checks and raids should be conducted to eliminate bogus and duplicate cards, which is again an added expenditure and not foolproof.

❑ The Civil Supplies Corporation should open more Fair Price Shops in rural areas.

❑ It should be made mandatory for Fair Price dealers to display rate chart and quantity available on the black-boards in front of the shop.

Conclusion

The overall distribution of commodities to various types of card holders in India through PDS is improper and irregular. Particularly, food grains allocation sanctioned by the government to BPL and AAY cardholders is 20 kg (wheat) and 10 kg (rice) per family and 25 kg (wheat) and 10 kg (rice) per family respectively. But both the card holders do not get the quantity assigned to them.

There are many schemes announced by the government for BPL and AAY card holders. But there are very few people who benefit because of lack of awareness and proper knowledge about these schemes.

The policy of LPG (Liberalisation Privatisation Globalisation) has, in a way, been responsible in driving most of the card holders from ration shops to open market. The policy has adversely affected the poor. If unchecked, it will prove dangerous to the existence of PDS in India. ■

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How dependable is Aadhar?

The promises made by UIDAI are tall but if it fails to address the plethora of concerns, doubts and questions that have been raised again and again, how much can we rely on it, ask **Prof. Rajanish Dass** *and* **Neha Khatri**.

Launched in September 2010, the Unique Identification (UID) also known as Aadhaar project, is on constant watch – not only by Indians but the rest of the world as well, since it is a daunting task to provide a unique identity to 1.2 billion residents. Not only this, with UID, the government wants to have a surety of other social development schemes – financial inclusion, employment, education, LPG subsidy, public distribution system and healthcare - for all citizens of India. It is also supposed to enhance security through fraud detection and keep a check on terrorism and illegal immigration. Given the outcome that the initiative tries to achieve, if successful, UIDAI (UID Authority of India) may help India rewrite its history. But is it possible for UID to enable and facilitate such benefits?

Challenges ahead

Whatever the case be, the challenges and demerits cannot be ignored. One of the primary areas of concern is that Indian residents have not shown a committed acceptability and readiness for adoption for it since it is voluntary. Therefore its success and sustainability have become uncertain. Their behavioural intention to adopt can be gauged only by identifying the attributes that will drive and inhibit its adoption and before this awareness of people about this project as well as its benefits to them becomes a necessity.

Serious doubts also exist in the case of identification of a fake person as someone else and getting a UID number, which will make him a genuine resident of India. This may lead to deprivation of UID services for the real person, which will make him/her anonymous. Authenticity is also a big issue in the documents submitted by people to the UIDAI for the procedure of UID registration. UIDAI has enlisted a number of documents as the proof of identity and proof of address, but there is no specification on the authentication check of these documents. Also there is a provision for people to submit certified (by public notary) photocopies of original documents, which may lead to fake documents and fake identities. Given that 1.2 billion people will be covered under this UID project, the problems may reach an escalated figure even if 10% of the population faces any of the above issue.

Flawed techniques

Three types of biometric data will be connected to each UID number: picture of face, IRIS scan, and fingerprints of all ten fingers, which amounts to 1.2 billion photographs, 2.4 billion scans and 12 billion fingerprints. This will require a huge hardware infrastructure for which a constant maintenance, up gradation and monitoring will be a recurring cost. Further, other issues may arise such as fingerprint's

bad appearance because of dirt, age, cuts, and worn out fingers and harm to IRIS scan because of the use of spectacles and contact lenses. Even if the project is successfully rolled out with a high success rate, say with 99% accuracy, then also with 1% inaccuracy for a country with 12,000 Lakh people would mean around 120 Lakhs of fake identity floating around. It has to be noted here that with such a large system, the expected accuracy in terms of real life expectations will be much lower, at least in the initial years, than that of 99% accuracy. A quick consideration is also required on the subjects of data storage and management of such a huge database, which may face risks of security, privacy and operational inefficiencies. Even if these are taken care of, there are high chances of attacks from people (registrars and agencies handling the identification process in various cities and villages), process (validation and transmission of data) and technology (network failures or unavailability). With such huge database, we tend to be concerned about duplication, for which UIDAI has already placed a solution. Whenever a new biometric data is added, it is feeded in the existing database of UID numbers and checked for duplicates, if any. But just imagine the heavy numbers of de-duplication checks done every day with the promise of enrolling 1 million records every day and what impact it has on the system and the server. Lastly there is the issue of an easy accessibility of all these data to the government, which may very well track and share an individual's personal details and transactions leading to misuse of such data. Will it then mean that there is a new need for a huge change in various government machineries (take the police department for example) that works and acts for the nation? It then means that a larger portion needs to be answered at first — given the current instances of corruption, is India socially ready for UID or shall we at first focus on larger reforms like that of administration and government processes? And what if it fails to reduce corruption and money is siphoned off in various socio and technical ways?

Unanswered queries

In addition to these concerns, a constant requirement would be of better harmony and understanding between the various agencies involved in the entire procedure – right from the company responsible for getting the biometric data from people to the government who is in control. Further, if any of these problems arise, people are expected to intimate the concerned authority about the issue but what is the probability of getting the correction done and who takes the responsibility for that and what is the duration? Therefore, this calls for an unbiased, third-party detailed cost-benefit analysis of this project with focus on the social benefits that individuals get after having such a unique number. Of course, enumerating direct and indirect intangible benefits will be a huge challenge given the unity in diversity that our country is.

Moreover, if UID turns out to be only a unique number associated with one unique individual residing in India then how does it differ from a host of other identities that individuals have such as the PAN card, voter's IT card, driving license, ration card or similar other documents? Therefore the UID project needs to emerge as a transformational exercise for the country linked to citizen welfare across a lifecycle instead of just facilitating a transaction.

Currently the way the UID project has been conceived, controlled and executed, it has failed to get the confidence of the current government responsible for the launching of this exercise itself, leading to critical failures like non-granting of project budgets and granting statutory status to UID. How can the country then rely on such a critical exercise if it still remains non-transformational and fails to address the plethora of concerns, doubts and questions that have been raised again and again? ∎

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Good intent, lackadaisical implementation

Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme in India (IGNOAPS), a scheme aimed at providing financial security to the destitute aged living below poverty line fails to achieve its goal because of lackadaisical implemenation, writes **Dr. Nidhi Mishra***.*

OLD age brings with it lot of challenges, a major one is that of financial insecurity. Financial security of elderly in general and particularly of those belonging to BPL category has been a matter of concern, and due to increase in longevity, old age health care expenses, increasing cost of living, the problem has only compounded. Due to lower or negligible family income and rise in the cost of living, the poor often find it difficult to depend on their family for financial support, and thus the role of government becomes important in providing financial security to the destitute aged in our country.

Overview of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)

Realising the pressing need to provide financial security to the destitute elderly, the IGNOAPSGovernment of India (GOI) launched the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) of the Ministry of Rural Development, on 15 August 1995. Like other schemes of NSAP, this scheme is in line with Article 41 of the Constitution of India which directs the State to provide "public assistance to its citizens in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want within the limits of its economic capacity and development."

On 19 November 2007, NOAPS was renamed as Indira

IGNOAPS aims at providing financial security to the destitute aged

Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) and to widen its scope it has been extended to the elderly who fall Below Poverty Line (BPL). Initially under this scheme, all destitute elderly aged 65 years or above were provided a pension amount of ₹75 per month. Subsequently, with effect from 1 April 2006, the pension amount was increased to ₹200 per month per person in order to make this scheme more effective and the state governments were requested by central government to contribute a matching amount for each beneficiary of this scheme. It has been noted that not all states are contributing an equal amount of ₹ 200 per person per month to the pension.

To further improve the effectiveness of this scheme, with effect from 1 April 2011, the eligibility age for this scheme has been reduced from 65 to 60 years and the amount of pension has been raised from ₹200 to ₹500 per month for those who are 80 years or above.

The other two schemes under NSAP– Annapurna Scheme and Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) are linked to IGNOAPS in a way that under Annapurna Scheme ten kilograms of food grains are provided free of cost to those BPL elderly who though eligible, have not been covered under the IGNOAPS. And under IGNWPS, once the BPL widows reach the age of 60 years they are transferred to IGNOAPS.

The Annual Report (2012-13) of the Ministry of Rural Development, GOI, highlights coverage of 223.18 lakh BPL elderly all over India, where the highest number of beneficiaries were reported in Bihar (37.87 lakh), followed by Uttar Pradesh (37.67 lakh) and Odisha (17.77 lakh). The total expenditure reported under NSAP for the year 2012-2013 is ₹4855.77 crore, although a total of ₹8447.30 crore was allocated for it. IGNOAPS is a part of NSAP and is allotted a major portion of the funds, however, the exact breakup of scheme wise budget allocation under NSAP is not available in the annual report or on the website of Ministry of Rural Development.

Benefits

The IGNOAPS is praiseworthy, as this is the first ever national level scheme which provides economic security to the poor elderly and widows who would have either been dependent on their family's limited income or would have been forced to lead a neglected life. This aspect has also been highlighted in one of the participatory study conducted in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh by the NGO HelpAge India in 2008, where responses of participants indicated that IGNOAPS plays a very important role in poverty reduction.

Limitations

Over the years, government bodies and social scientists have highlighted some limitations of this scheme mainly in terms of its improper implementation. A research paper jointly published by four professors from Harvard School of Public Health in 2010 highlighted weak targeting of beneficiaries which is generally based on combination of a survey based definition of poverty and community identification of the poor as a major problem related to implementation of this scheme. In a survey conducted by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India in 2012, covering a total of 9,852 elderly in the seven states of India which have higher proportion of elderly viz. Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the problem of wrong targeting was observed. While investigating the utilisation of IGNOAPS, it was found that some non-BPL elderly were also availing the scheme. It was also observed that there

was low awareness of this scheme among the beneficiaries, thus raising the need for effective steps to be taken by the government to promote the scheme.

Another targeting issue identified in assessments of this scheme is the difficulty of determining the age of a person, particularly in rural areas. Along with this some researchers (Anand and Kumar, 2006) have also highlighted that while from a macro perspective IGNOAPS seems to be working well, and meeting its many objectives, a micro analysis shows that there are gaps in areas like distribution and the identification of beneficiaries.

In an assessment report of Ministry of Rural Development (2006) it was found that the IGNOAPS is lacking on two grounds which cut across states: (i) it involves complex administrative procedures and, therefore, proves especially difficult for the illiterates, and (ii) the size of programme beneficiaries is capped artificially by using an arbitrary ceiling formula.

Conclusion and recommendation

It is clear that IGNOAPS is a useful scheme for elderly below poverty line, however, it is facing problems of improper implementation such as wrong targeting, limited coverage and irregular payment of pension which needs to be strongly dealt by the government through improvement of coordination between its various bodies. Also through an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism the problem of wrong targeting and irregular payments can be controlled by the government. Along with this proper need assessment should be done by the government for effective coverage of the scheme. Additionally, the government should publicise the scheme especially in rural areas and slums for creating awareness amongst potential beneficiaries. Civil society can also play an important role by conducting training programmes for the targeted beneficiaries. ∎

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Did you know?

Naluvedhapathy village in Nagapattinam District of Tamil Nadu entered the Guinness Book of World Records by planting 80,244 saplings on December 2, 2002, breaking a previous record of 42,182 trees planted in Nilgiris, in the state. These trees, later, proved to be a boon for the village as Naluvedhapathy remained almost unscathed when tsunami hit the shores of the state in 2004. The trees managed to lessen the impact created by the killer waves!

A house for the homeless

The Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) designed to provide a roof over the heads for India's marginalised sections is far from achieving its targets because of delays in fund release and the slow pace of construction. Availability of land, sub standard quality of the houses and selection of beneficiaries are other areas of concern, writes **Avani Kapur**.

AFTER the Right to Education and the Right to Food, a new right is being sought to be tabled in Parliament – the Right to Housing. The Draft Homestead Bill 2013 aims at providing a homestead[1] of not less than 10 cents (0.1 acres or 4,356 sq. ft) to every landless and homeless poor family in rural areas.

Given that India is home to close to eight million homeless rural families, the demand for the right to housing is not surprising. In fact, the 12th Five Year Plan working group on rural housing estimates the shortage in the Plan period (2012-17) at around 40 million.

However, the main question arises is – how will this "right" differ in its implementation from the existing scheme on rural housing – the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY).

Background

Launched in 1985, Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) is Government of India's (GOI) flagship programme on rural housing. The objective of the scheme is to provide funds for the construction of dwelling units for members of Scheduled Castes (SCs)/Scheduled Tribes (STs), free bonded labourers, and non SC/ST rural below poverty line (BPL) households. With effect from 2013, ₹70,000 is provided per dwelling unit for plain areas (up from 45,000 in 2009) and ₹75,000 for hilly/difficult areas (up from ₹48,500)[2]. IAY funds can also be utilised for up gradation of a *kutcha* house for which a subsidy of ₹15,000 per unit is provided. Further, IAY beneficiaries can also avail of a top-up loan of up to ₹20,000.[3] In 2009, to assist those rural BPL households who have neither agricultural land nor a house-site, IAY also launched a scheme for providing homestead sites.

Over the years, allocations for IAY have increased over two-fold from ₹3,885 crores in 2007-08 to ₹8,121 crores in 2012-13. The scheme received a significant boost in allocations in 2013-14, when GOI allocated 15,184 crores - nearly doubling the allocations for the previous year. During the 11th Five Year Plan, against a target of 140 lakh houses, 126.98 lakh houses were constructed at a cost of ₹53497 crores. (See Table for performance in the last 10 years)[4].

While these numbers suggest a relatively well-functioning scheme – most of GOI allocations are released, funds are utilised and houses are being constructed – there are wide state variations in performance and numerous issues with respect to implementation. Some of these are highlighted below:-

Implementation highlights
1) Delays in fund flows and construction
In 2012-13, till January (more than three quarters of the financial year completed), out of the total funds available[5] for IAY, only 63% of the funds were utilised. Moreover, only 46% percent of the annual target for construction was completed. These delays are particularly acute in some states. While Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh had utilised nearly 100 percent of their funds available during this period, Jammu and Kashmir had utilised only 21%, Punjab 36% and Tamil Nadu 45%. Other states such as Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal and Maharashtra had utilised only between 50-60% of funds available.[6] According to reports, part of the problem lies with delayed release of funds. In 2012-13 itself, out of the total allocation of ₹10513.20 crores only 54% (₹5655.37 crores) was released by January 2013.

Pace of construction is also slow. Till January 2013, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh had only completed 10% and 13% of their annual target for the year, respectively. Most other states also ranged between 20-50 percent completion rates including Maharashtra (20%), Odisha (32%), Gujarat (33%), Chhattisgarh (36%) and Kerala (46%).[7]

2) Quality of houses
An important concern over the years has been with respect to the quality of houses. According to the IAY guidelines, the construction of an IAY house is the responsibility of the

Performance of IAY over the last 10 years				in lakhs	
Year	GOI Allocation	GOI Release	Utilisation	Target (No.of houses)	No. of houses constructed
2002-03	165640	162852.86	279496.46	13.14	15.49
2003-04	187050	187107.78	258009.69	14.84	13.61
2004-05	246067	288310.02	326208.64	15.62	15.21
2005-06	273240	273822.58	365409.05	14.41	15.52
2006-07	290753	290753.06	425342.45	15.33	14.98
2007-08	403270	388237.01	546454.3	21.27	19.92
2008-09	564577	879579.39	834834.33	21.27	21.34
2009-10	849470	863573.99	1329236.4	40.52	33.86
2010-11	1005370	1013945.4	1346572.75	29.08	27.15
2011-12	949120	986477.8	1292632.74	27.26	24.71

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Annual Report 2012-13

beneficiary. While no specific design type has been stipulated for an IAY house, sanitary latrine and smokeless *chullah*s are required to be constructed along with each IAY house.

The Planning Commission's mid-term review of the XIth Plan noted many instances of "poor quality construction, sagging foundation, use of temporary materials for roofing or leaving the construction incomplete because of inadequate finance".[8] Four years later, similar findings were reported by the Ministry's National Level Monitors (NLMs). During their visit to 3083 villages across 478 districts, only 15.2% of the houses were found 'excellent' in terms of quality of construction, 52.2% were rated 'good', and the remaining 32.6% were ranked poor or average condition. [9]

The NLMs further found that 16% of houses which have been sanctioned for more than two years were still incomplete. Moreover only, 8% of the verified houses visited had smokeless *chullah*s and only 39% had sanitary latrines provided.

3) Beneficiary selection and allotment of houses

Selection of beneficiaries was originally the responsibility of Gram Panchayats (GP). However, due to rampant irregularities and biased selection[10], the revised guidelines stipulate that beneficiaries be identified through a permanent IAY waiting lists prepared as per the BPL list of 2002. In order to increase transparency these lists are supposed to be displayed in all GPs.

The NLM reports, however, found that out of 2780 villages where permanent IAY lists were finalised, only 53% villages were lists displayed on the walls. Moreover, in nearly 10% of the villages, the selection of beneficiaries was still not based on these lists.

While guidelines specify that 60% of IAY allocation is meant for SC/ST families and IAY houses are to be allotted (in this order of preference) in the name of the woman or jointly between the husband and the wife, audit reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) have found many instances of houses being allotted to "fake persons" or male members.[11]

4) Land availability

Finally, the biggest constraint faced is often with respect to land availability. Land costs tend to be high and in the absence of land, houses tend to be incomplete or not constructed despite being sanctioned.

These findings suggest that despite nearly 30 years of the scheme in operation, there are a number of hurdles with respect to the implementation of IAY. While GOI has taken some steps in addressing these (particularly with respect to increasing the unit costs of dwelling units, providing additional assistance for construction of toilets and increasing

transparency in selection of beneficiaries), there still appears to be genuine constraints with respect to delays, lack of monitoring, technical capacity, lack of awareness amongst beneficiaries and even unavailability of land. Until these implementation issues are resolved the "right to housing" is unlikely to go too far. ∎

FOOTNOTES

[1] Homestead is defined as a dwelling with adequate housing facilities including access to basic services (drinking water, electricity, roads and public transport), appropriate location, accessibility and cultural adequacy.

[2] Ministry of Rural Development, Annual Report 2012-13.

[3] This is a part of the Differential Rate of Interest (DRI scheme) wherein beneficiaries can apply for a loan from any Nationalised bank at an interest rate of 4% per annum

[4] Ministry of Rural Development, Annual Report 2012-13.

[5] Funding for IAY is shared between GOI and states in a 75:25 ratio (for UTs it is completely centrally funded)

[5] Total funds available would include releases by GOI and States as well as opening balances at the start of the year.

[6] Indira Awas Yojana Portal, PRC Meeting 1 and 2

[7] Ibid

[8] Planning Commission, Mid Term Appraisal for Eleventh Five Year Plan. Available online at: http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/mta/11th_mta/MTA.html

[9] Details of the criteria for different categories are available at:http://www.ruralmonitor.in/nlmreport/RM_12-13_Phase-I_All%20India.pdf

[10] The 11th Five Year Plan document had found that "25 to 50 percent of beneficiaries were not being selected to Gram Sabhas. Allocation among Panchayats was influenced by PRI/MLAs.

[11] For instance, CAG found that in one district in Maharashtra, in 685 out of 2426 cases allotment of houses at a cos of ₹4.69 crores were to male members in 2010-11. A recent report on Odisha found ₹1.15 crore in allotment of houses to 1144 non-BPL families in 4 districts and irregular payments to 321 "fake"BPL beneficiaries.

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What ails Government schemes?

The individual sanction however, has to be communicated separately which can easily get delayed upto September. The details are then worked upon, drawing authority is decided and communication sent to district level officers, again as late as in December. Then there is a scramble for reaching out to the beneficiaries, getting necessary paper work done along with physical work, all of which involves some expenditure. But whatever remains unspent at the end of 31st March of the next financial year gets "lapsed" which means it has to now await the whole process of budgetary sanction, individual scheme sanction, and drawing authority declared -- thus again nothing may happen till December of that financial year. The corridors of Mantralaya are a scene to be watched in the last week of March, when almost everyone is working overtime, scheme approvals are flowing, and huge amounts are sanctioned and drawn, many of them for ulterior purposes - these sums are shown as "spent for right cause" within a few hours. When it can't be spent as soon as it is sanctioned, it has to await many months for approval. Unless a timely and smooth flow of funds is ensured, the schemes not only fail but also take away all the enthusiasm of good officers.

I have often stated that the answer to corruption in government is not honesty alone, but honesty coupled with five other essential attributes. These are inculcating team spirit and collective action, continuous, adequate and effective training of the staff responsible for implementation, proper motivation of staff, proper monitoring and feedback and finally our attitude towards sustainable scheme completion. ∎

Leena Mehendale, presently Member CAT Mumbai in the rank of High Court Judge, is an accomplished administrator, teacher, thinker and writer. She has travelled over 400 out of 650 districts in India and is proficient in many Indian languages. As an administrator she has worked in various departments which include education, women, children, industries, petroleum, agriculture, and health.

Some of her service highlights are economic rehabilitation of Devdasis, making TV and radio serials for energy conservation, designing, training and framing policies for Yashada (Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration) and promoting Indian languages on computers. Presently, she is actively pursuing revival of Sanskrit language.

She has given over 1000 lectures, authored 25 books on diverse subjects and over 600 articles, in Marathi, Hindi and English.

Aarogyam

Bad breath, also known as halitosis, indicates other health problems. If timely care is not taken to prevent bad breath, it can lead to serious health issues later. Observing oral hygiene is important to prevent bad breath. Gargling with salt water also helps prevent bad breath. Chewing on fresh mint leaves or parsley leaves or spices like cardamom or cloves is also good to freshen breath.

The fight against malnutrition

Malnutrition not only accounts for one-third to half of child deaths but also leads to stunted physical growth and cognitive development in children that last a lifetime. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) has been an arsenal in fighting malnutrition, and the reforms in the scheme are expected to further reduce the rate of malnutrition, says **Dipa Sinha***.*

PERSISTENT and high child malnutrition continues to haunt India in spite of impressive advances the country has made in other fields. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), 20% of Indian children below five years are wasted (acutely malnourished) and 48% are stunted (chronically malnourished). Importantly, with 43% of children underweight (with a weight deficit for their age), rates of child underweight in India are twice as higher than the average figure in sub-Saharan Africa (22%). The consequences of this nutrition crisis are enormous. In addition to being the cause of one-third to half of child deaths, malnutrition leads to stunted physical growth and cognitive development that last a lifetime.

Research has shown that the age group of up to two years is a crucial window of opportunity to address malnutrition. It is very difficult to reverse malnutrition after the age of two. Children in this age group also require special services as it is a very vulnerable period. Further, any service for young children has to be linked to the rights and needs of mothers, since women bear the maximum burden of child care. Also, the importance of breastfeeding makes it necessary to put in place mechanisms that support mothers. Therefore any programme addressing needs of these young children, must understand that a large number of women in the country are working in the unorganised sector with very little support in the form of maternity entitlements or child care services.

ICDS – the central tool to fight malnutrition

Reducing child malnutrition requires a range of services including maternity entitlements, crèches, breastfeeding support, supplementary nutrition and counselling towards appropriate infant and young child feeding practices; along with improving access of the household to food and livelihood, water and sanitation and health services. Therefore for effective interventions on malnutrition, a whole range of services related to food, nutrition, health, water, sanitation and livelihoods need to be put in place. The ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) occupies a central place in the fight against malnutrition because it is the only programme that directly addresses health, nutrition and development needs of children under six. ICDS works through a network of anganwadi centres (AWC) that are run by anganwadi workers (AWW) and helpers (AWH) who, among other things, are supposed to provide supplementary nutrition, nutrition and health education and pre-school education.

The constraints

The ICDS currently suffers from low coverage, overburdened staff, poor infrastructure and poor quality supplementary nutrition. Major reforms in ICDS are required through the universalisation with quality of the ICDS. The quality of supplementary nutrition provided in the ICDS needs to be greatly improved to ensure that the food provided is nutritious, culturally appropriate and something that attracts parents and children to the centre.

Improving anganwadi centres

The anganwadi centre must be made into a full day centre that provides preschool services for children in the three to six year age group and also crèche services for younger children. This would require appointing a second anganwadi worker and improving the infrastructure of the anganwadi centre. Children who are in the crèches will have to be provided three meals a day. NGO experiences with crèches have shown that this can also be an effective strategy for improving the nutrition status of children. This is done by

providing adequate quality food, care and health services (including growth monitoring). The ICDS should also graduate to providing these services. Further, there is a need for introduction of universal and unconditional maternity entitlements and diverse and flexible models of child care based on the need of working mothers. The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) which is currently being implemented on a pilot basis in 52 districts must be expanded to the entire country.

Stepping up coordination, supervision and monitoring

Convergence must also be ensured between the ICDS and other departments, especially health services to ensure that all needs of young children are met. The ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) in the village has to be included in efforts towards nutrition counselling and growth monitoring as she makes regular home visits and is in constant touch with families.

There also a need to step up the supervision and monitoring of the programme. The vacant posts of supervisors and CDPOs (Child Development Project Officer) need to be filled and a system of supportive supervision evolved. The AWWs must be encouraged to properly report on malnutrition and infant deaths. While there is a role for governance reforms and putting in place better monitoring mechanisms, it is also very important for community participation in the ICDS to be enhanced. Once the local community is involved and interested in monitoring the ICDS, it can contribute in a major way in making the entire programme accountable.

For increased community participation formation of mother's committees, discussing ICDS-related issues in the Panchayat and related committees, conducting social audits, public display of information related to growth monitoring and SNP (Supplementary Nutrition Programme), encouraging community contributions to the AWC, conducting mass awareness and mobilisation campaigns are some of the strategies that can work. It is only when the community recognises the importance of child nutrition and the ICDS programme for its children; and the ICDS is designed in a manner where it responds to the needs of the community, that the programme will be truly meaningful.

Positive signs

All of this requires much greater investment in ICDS and related programmes. With such unacceptably high levels of child malnutrition there needs no further explanations to justify such expenditure. There are also compelling economic reasons to invest whatever is required for eradicating

malnutrition. Reducing child malnutrition not only contributes to higher productivity and therefore economic growth in the future through healthier populations but also leads to savings of health care costs that arise from malnutrition and future health benefits. Some estimates indicate that the losses to GDP from various components of undernutrition can be as high as three percent of the national income.

Many improvements are being made to the ICDS programme since the last few years. The ICDS was started in 1978 on a pilot basis in 33 blocks and has been gradually expanded since then. Following Supreme Court orders, there has seen a significant increase in the number of anganwadi centres, with almost every village across the country now being covered with an anganwadi centre. While there were about 5.4 lakh anganwadi centres in 2002, we now have 12.5 lakh operational anganwadis across the country. Almost another one lakh anganwadi centres have been sanctioned and are in the process of being made operational.

Similarly the coverage of children under the ICDS has also increased manifold. The number of children covered under the supplementary nutrition has gone up from less than three crore to 9.2 crore children in the age group of six months to six years. The coverage of children for the preschool education component under the ICDS has also doubled in the period 2001-2011 from 1.6 crores to 3.5 crores.

The budgetary allocation for ICDS has also been greatly increased. While the budgetary allocation for ICDS Scheme was ₹10391.7 crore during the 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007), it was enhanced to ₹44,400 crore in the 11th Plan Period (2007-12). Therefore it is seen that there has been an impressive increase in the scale and coverage of the ICDS in the last ten years. ₹1,23,000 crore has been approved as the budget for ICDS over the 12th Plan period, where a massive restructuring of the ICDS programme is also planned.

The restructured ICDS plan talks about providing a second anganwadi worker in the high malnutrition burden districts, improving the allocations for the SNP, starting anganwadi-cum-crèches on a pilot basis and so on. It is hoped that these reforms reach the people and are able to truly make a dent on child malnutrition rates. ∎

The writer is a public health and food rights researcher and activist. She is involved with the Right to Food Campaign and Working Group for Children Under Six (of the Right to Food Campaign and Jan Swasthya Abhiyan). She has also worked with the Office of the Commissioners to the Supreme Court on the Right to Food.

Bishnupur in West Bengal is a beautiful temple town housing many unique terracotta temples. There are stone temples too which remind visitors of the glorious history of the place that was once ruled by the Malla kings. Bishnupur is also famous for handicrafts, terracotta artifacts and exquisitely crafted Baluchari sarees.

TERRACOTTA ART OF BISHNUPUR

Text and photos: Rangan Dutta
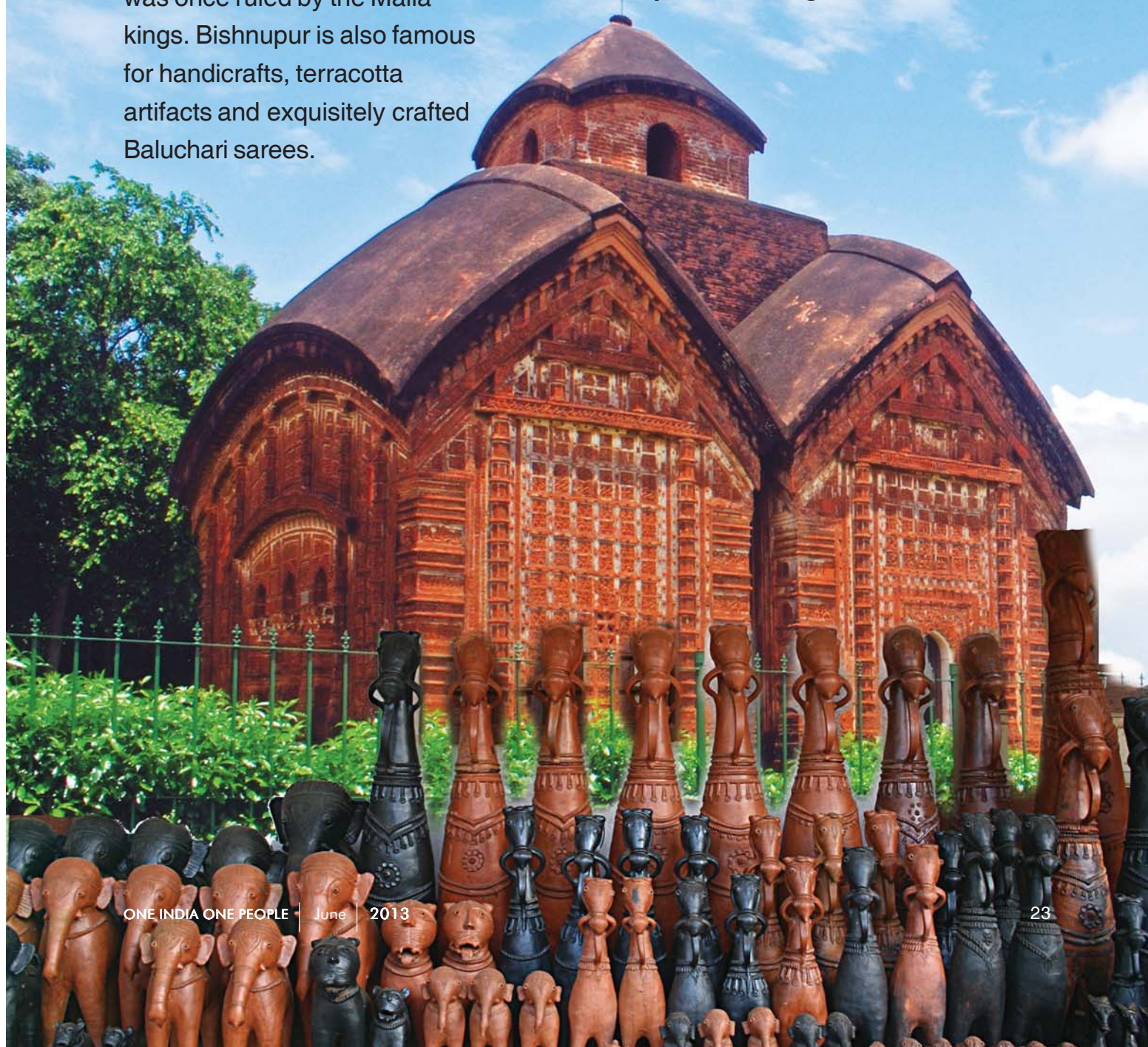
THOUGH Bishnupur, located in Bankura district of West Bengal, about 132 km from the state capital Kolkata, can ideally be referred to as a cultural centre, it is the terracotta temples that give the town its unique identity. The temples, which have intricately carved work depicting the brilliant architecture of the time, still stand as strong and elegant as ever, turning Bishnupur into one of the most favoured tourist destinations in not only West Bengal but also in the whole of India.

Temples were traditionally built in stone and there are quite a number of stone temples in Bishnupur as well. But since stone was in short supply in the vast flood plains of Bengal, the architects looked for suitable substitute. As clay was easily available, burnt clay bricks soon became a good replacement for stone. This gave rise to a new form of temple architecture and led to the construction of elaborately decorated terracotta temples. Terracotta literally means baked earth in Italian. West

A panel depicting Krishna Leela and dancing gopis

Bengal has the distinction of housing some of the finest terracotta art in the world, which had reached its pinnacle under the patronage of the Malla Kings of Bishnupur during the 17th century.
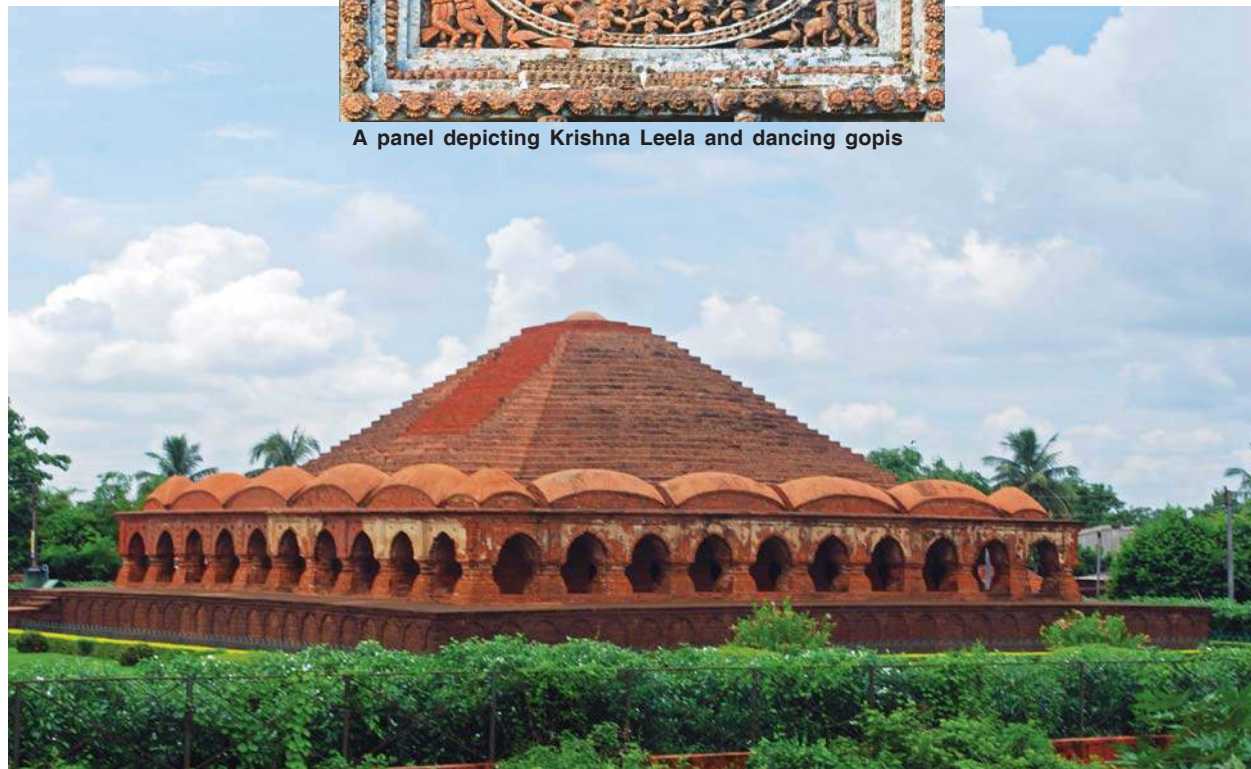
The rein of Malla dynasty

Legend has it that during the 7th century AD, an exiled king of a small kingdom in North India was making a pilgrimage to South India with his pregnant queen. During their journey through the present day Bishnupur area, the queen experienced labour pain. She delivered a male baby in the house of a village Brahmin, but did not survive to see her child. Overcome with grief, the king abandoned the child at the Brahmin's house and proceeded on his pilgrimage. The poor Brahmin raised the child as his own. One day, a miracle happened. The boy had fallen asleep tending to cows in the field. The Brahmin was astounded to see a huge snake with his

Rashmancha, the oldest standing structure of Bishnupur, is architecturally unique and one of its kind

Shyamrai Temple - terracotta at its best

hood shielding the boy from the sunlight, which was falling on the boy's face. Seeing this miracle, the Brahmin was convinced that this was no ordinary child and he provided the boy with best education along with physical and warfare training. The boy not only excelled in education but also turned out to be an outstanding wrestler. Soon on the request of the local elders, he ascended the throne of the local kingdom, which was renamed as the Malla Kingdom (Malla meaning wrestling) and he came to be known as Adi Malla. The Malla Kingdom flourished and Mallas ruled over the region for a long time. After about 300 years, the 19th Malla King Jagat Malla decided to shift his kingdom to Bishnupur. Over the next 800 years, Jagat Malla and his descendants built several temples and structures (both of brick and stone) thus turning Bishnupur into a temple town.

Temples of Bishnupur

Although known for its terracotta temples, Bishnupur contains an interesting mix of terracotta and stone temples. Apart from temples, it also contains several other interesting religious and social structures. Since the temples of Bishnupur are located in a small compact area, they can be explored either by walking or cycle rickshaw rides or a combination of both.

Joypur Rashmancha is a spectacular octagonal structure crowned with nine onion shaped pinnacles

The 1742 built Dalmadal Cannon weighs 112 quintal and measures 3.8 metres

The double-storey Large Gate accommodated troops and narrow slits allowed the archers and the gunmen to fire their shots

Shyamrai Temple: A left turn from Gumgarh leads to the Shyamrai Temple, popularly known as the Panchchura temple, because of its five pinnacles. Built by Mallaraja Raghunath Singha in 1643, this is terracotta at its best. The temple is built of bricks and its exterior and interiors are made of densely sculpted terracotta panels.

Approached by triple arched entrance on all the four sides, Shyamrai Temple contains terracotta on all its four sides including the inner walls and the pinnacles. The sculptures depicting the Rasamandala in the Krishna Leela and dancing Gopis are very impressive.

Keshta Raya Temple: A short distance away from the Shyamrai Temple is the Keshta Raya temple, another terracotta styled structure. It follows the Jor Bangla style of architecture and hence is popularly known as the Jor Bangla Temple. Jor Bangla type of temple consists of two Bengal styled thatched roof like structures joined together. In the case of Keshta Raya Temple the joined structures are crowned with a turret.

The 1655 built temple is considered as one of the finest examples of Bengal terracotta art. There are numerous panels covering a wide range of topics. In addition to panels of ships and boats there are also several impressive panels from Ramayana and Mahabharata but a panel depicting Bhishma in *sarasajya* (bed of arrows) stands out among all.

Radhashyam Temple: Just next to the Keshta Raya temple is the Radhashyam Temple. This *ek-ratna* (single pinnacled) temple is built of laterite stone and contains lime stone stucco decoration. The temple is enclosed with high walls and its entrance consists of a triple domed Islamic style gateway. The temple dating back to 1758 was constructed by the Malla King Chaitanya Singha.

Radha Laljiu Temple: A little away is the Radha Laljiu

Rashmancha: Rashmancha is the oldest standing structure of Bishnupur. It is not a temple but idols of different temples are brought here and displayed during the festival of Rash. The Rashmancha was built in 1600 by the Malla King Hambir. It stands on a raised laterite stone platform and has arched entrances. It is crowned with a stepped pyramidal structure surrounded by smaller sloped roofed structures.

It is architecturally unique and one of its kind in the whole of Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh combined). Sadly, apart from a few floral lotus motifs, the Rashmancha does not contain any terracotta art work.

Gumgarh: It is a fort like structure that is located atop a small mound. Not much is known about its construction date or the purpose for which it was built. Some say it was a prison while some believe it was a granary.

Temple, built 100 years earlier than the Radhashyam Temple. The temple is placed upon a large plinth. It is a square shaped temple with slanting roof slightly sloping in all sides. Built by the Malla King Bir Singha in 1658, it is considered as the finest laterite stone temple in Bishnupur.

Mrinmoyee Temple: Just opposite the Radhashyam Temple is the Mrinmoyee Temple, the oldest temple of Bishnupur. As the old structure does not exist now, the idol of the temple deity Mrinmoyee is housed in a newly constructed structure.

Stone gateways: Short distances away from the Mrinmoyee Temple are two stone gateways. The larger of the two gateways is known as the *Pathar Darwaja* (Stone Door) as it is built of laterite stone. This gate once served as the northern entrance of the royal residence and was built in the second half of the 17th century by Maharaja Bir Singha.

The double storied gate accommodated troops and narrow slits allowed the archers and the gunmen to fire their shots.

A few yards away is a small stone gateway, which was built in the same period. Although much smaller in magnitude, the small but elegant structure still reminds one of the glorious days of Bishnupur.

Stone chariot: A short distance from the two stone gateways is a small but intricately carved stone chariot. Built in the 17th century the laterite chariot is in the lines of the *ek-ratna* (single pinnacled) temples of Bishnupur.

Madan Mohan Temple: As you go a little further from the stone chariot, you reach the Madan Mohan Temple. This single pinnacled temple has some of the finest terracotta in the whole of Bishnupur and should not be missed. Built in 1694 by Malla King Durjan Singh the star attraction of Madan Mohan is its intricate terracotta work.

The temple is dedicated to Lord Madan Mohan (an incarnation of Lord Bishnu or Vishnu) and is still an active temple. The temple complex also contains a *do-chala* (double sloped roofed) structure.

Dalmadal Cannon: Bishnupur also has many remnants of a glorious past. The massive Dalmadal Cannon is one such attraction. The 1742 built cannon weighs 112 quintal and measures 3.8 metres with a diameter of 30 cm.

Dal Madal means destruction of enemy. It is said that during wars, elephants were used to drag the cannons out to the fighting spot. It is believed that when the Marathas attacked Bishnupur in 1742 the deity Lord Madan Mohan himself fired the gun to drive them away.

Chinnamasta Temple: Next to the cannon is the Chinnamasta Temple, an ancient temple modified into a modern structure which in the process lost its beauty and grace. The idol is a rare one, of Goddess Kali holding her severed head in one hand. Just ahead of the Chinnamasta Temple are seven scattered laterite stone *ek-ratna* (single pinnacled) temples decorated with beautiful lime stone stucco art. Sadly the lime stone art has not survived the test of time and only traces of it can be seen to this day.

Seven *ek-Ratna* temples: First to the left is the Nandalal Temple. Just across the road is a complex of three temples known as the Jor Mandir. These temples were built by Malla King Krishna Singh in 1726. Some beautiful stucco work still remains.

> **It is said that during wars, elephants were used to drag the cannons out to the fighting spot.**

A terracotta panel depicting Bhishma in *sarasajya* (bed of arrows)

An intricately designed panel showing ships

Next is the Radhagovinda Temple built by Krishna Singh in 1729. A short distance away is the Radhamadhav Temple built in 1737. The *ek-ratna* temple is accompanied by a *do-chala* (double sloped roofed) structure. The temple was built by Churamony Devi, wife of Malla King Krishna Singh. The temple has some interesting stucco work featuring animals.

Further down the road is the Kalachand Temple with its towering pinnacle. Built in 1656 by

The 19th Malla King Jagat Malla decided to shift his kingdom to Bishnupur. Over the next 800 years, Jagat Malla and his descendants built several temples and structures (both of brick and stone) thus turning Bishnupur into a temple town.

the Malla King Raghunath Singh, the temple was once covered with stucco decoration. Only traces of it remain to this day.

Bishnupur Museum: Located at a short distance from the West Bengal Tourist Lodge is the Bishnupur Museum or the Acharya Yogesh Chandra Purakirti Bhawan. It houses an interesting collection of folk art and music. There are around five thousand manuscripts, hundreds of sculptures belonging to the 10-
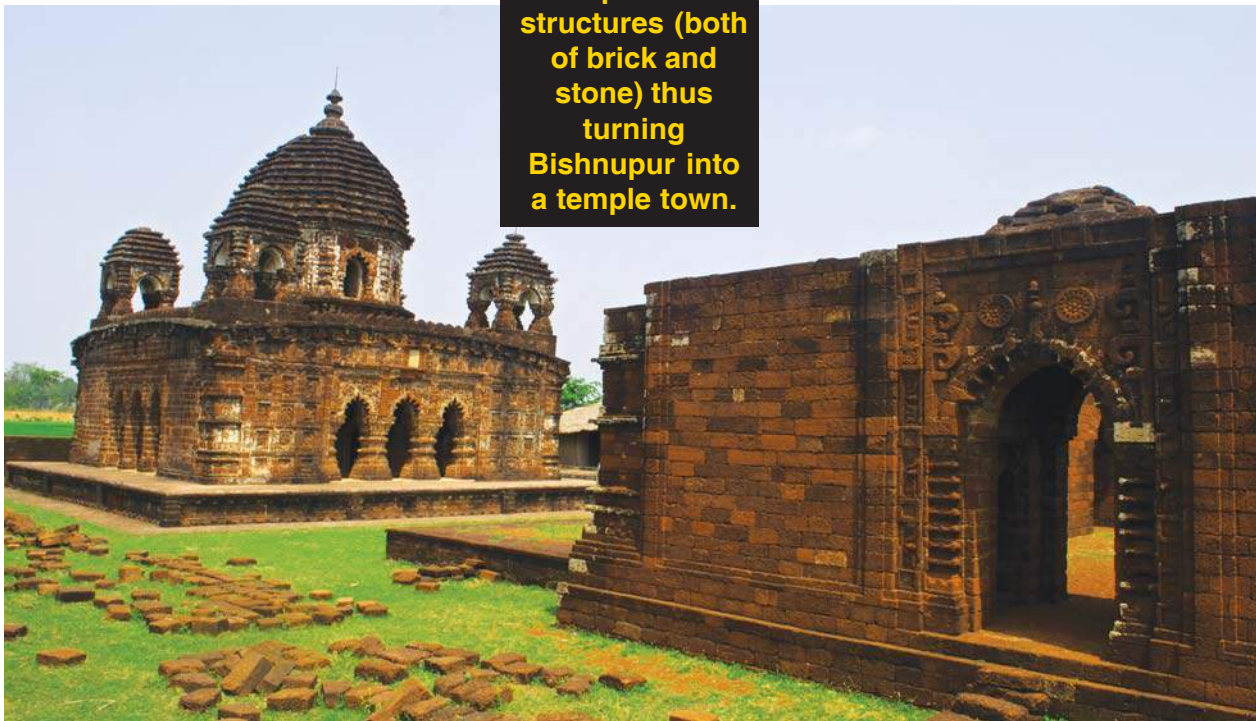
Gokulchand Temple, once a magnificent monument, is today littered with stone slabs reminding one of the horrifying days of plunder

Kotulpur contains some fine terracotta temples along with large mansions

12th century, pre-historic specimens of textiles and other objects. There is also an archeological gallery which houses Paleolithic and Mesolithic tools, temple terracotta of 17th - 18th century, metal ornaments and beads of terracotta, semi precious stones and more.

Shopping: It is not just temples that attract tourists' attention in Bishnupur but also the shopping options that it provides. The terracotta artifacts are the most sought after items. Long necked giraffe like horses are the most popular of the terracotta artifacts. Terracotta musicians are also quiet popular. Visitors can also visit the neighbouring village Panchmura to get an insight into the terracotta artifacts' industry of Bishnupur. The handloom industry is another thriving cottage industry of Bishnupur. It is home to the famous Baluchari sarees, renowned all over the world for its intricate designs inspired by the terracotta panels of the temples.

Dasabatar cards: Once a traditional indoor game of Malla Kings, these special cards are now a collectors' item.

Brass utensils: Brass and German silver utensils

The terracotta temple art of Bengal is not restricted to Bishnupur only. Several villages near Bishnupur contain similar, if not better terracotta temples.

and artifacts also feature among the most shopped items of Bishnupur.

Beyond Bishnupur

The terracotta temple art of Bengal is not restricted to Bishnupur only. Several villages near Bishnupur contain similar, if not better terracotta temples. Since sadly infrastructure and tourist facilities are poor, these places do not get as much visitors as Bishnupur. These places can only be covered by cars from Bishnupur and preferably with a packed lunch.

Joypur: Located just 15 km east of Bishnupur, the non-descriptive village of Joypur houses some of the finest specimens of terracotta art. It was during the 18-19th century that a few families of the village took advantage of the cloth trade with the British and made a fortune. They acquired land and became *zamindars* and built fantastic temples. De and Dutta family were two such families and they still have a temple standing in the courtyard of their delimitated family mansion.

A panel showing Arjun firing an arrow at the fish's eye at Draupadi's *Swayamvar*
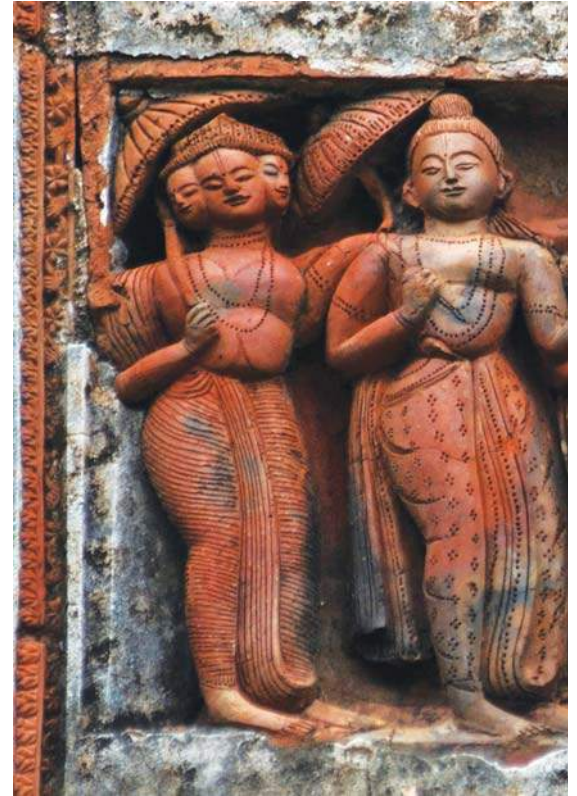
Elegant terracotta designs at Sonamukhi Temple

Siddheshwar Temple - one of the oldest and most unique temples in West Bengal

Both the temples are built in *naba ratna* (nine pinnacles) style and are approached by a triple arched entrance from the northern and eastern side. Sadly the temples are in bad shape and need urgent professional restoration.

The Damodar Temple of Dutta family has elaborate terracotta on the eastern arch panel. The central arch panels have scenes from Krishnalila while those on the left and right contain battle scenes from Mahabharata and Ramayana. The uniqueness of the Joypur terracotta is its deep relief giving an almost three dimensional effect to most of the figures. The set of musicians on the cornice are three dimensional figures. The temple also contains panels of *das avatar*, Vishnu in *anantasaya* and Bhishma in *sarasajya* (bed of arrows).

Located at a short distance away is the Vishnu Temple belonging to the De family and follows the same pattern of *Naba Ratna* architecture. The arch panel shows a series of boats, some with armed guards and other with noble men and ladies, including a scene where a noble man smokes a *hookah* carried by an attendant in another boat.

Another arch panel shows two jumping lions embedded on a floral motif complete with birds and flowers. Just above the lions is a fantastic panel showing Ram and Sita enthroned attended by monkeys and musicians. A little away from the De family temple is a spectacular octagonal Rashmanch crowned with nine onion shaped pinnacles.

Gokulnagar: Located next to Joypur is the village of Gokulnagar, which probably houses the grandest stone temple of West Bengal. The 64-feet high *pancha-ratna* (five pinnacled) Gokulchand Temple is flanked by a *natmandir* and the entire 23,500 sq. ft. temple complex is surrounded by a high wall, giving the impression of a fort rather than a temple. An arched gateway leads to the temple complex.

The central pinnacle of the *panch-ratna* temple is octagonal in shape while the four pinnacles at the corners are smaller in size and square in shape. The temple has verandas on three sides, each with a triple arched entrance, and circumambulatory path goes round the temple. The idol of Lord Krishna has long been removed from the temple and is housed in Bishnupur, only to be brought back on the occasion of Holi and Rash festivals. A photo of the idol is all that is worshipped today.

The eastern and southern face has stone sculpture in low relief. Although heavily eroded by centuries of wind and rain, the sculptures of *Das Avatar* and Krishna Leela can still be seen. Sadly the foundation plaque has been heavily eroded and its content has become illegible, but according to experts the Gokulchand temple was constructed by the Malla King Raghunath Simha I in 1643.

Sridhar Temple follows a unique style and houses some of the most beautiful and intricate terracotta art
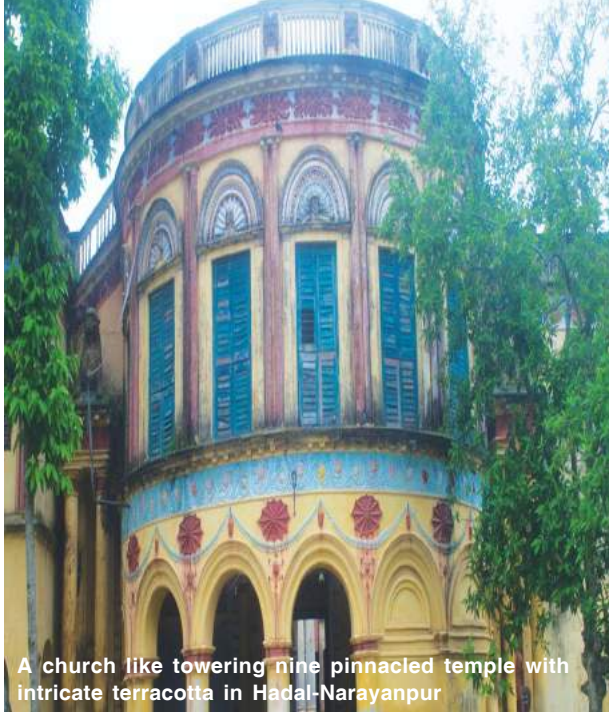
A church like towering nine pinnacled temple with intricate terracotta in Hadal-Narayanpur
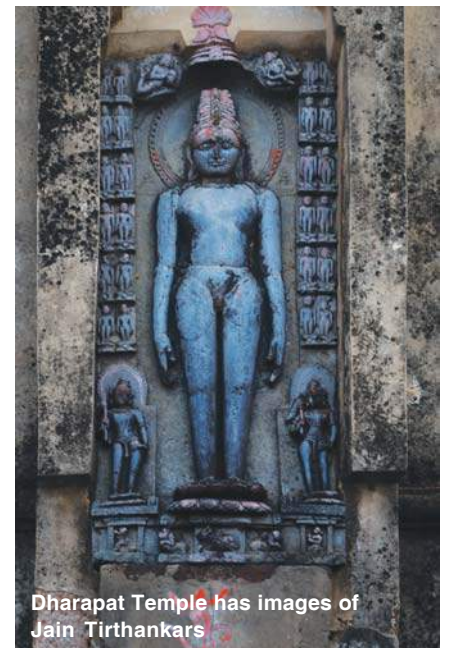
On the southern end of the temple lies the *Natmandir*, whose roof has long been collapsed. Covering a larger area than the temple, the *Natmandir* has a triple arched entrance facing the temple and a single arched entrance marks the two sides. The first systematic efforts of restoration of the Gokulchand Temple date back to 1923 when Rakhaldas Bandopadhyay of Mohenjodaro fame, visited the temple complex. But sadly it was only in 1996 the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) took over the temple and declared it a monument of national Importance.

During this long period of neglect the Gokulchand Temple has seen very bad days. Large quantities of stones have been removed by contractors for construction of roads and buildings. Today the looting has stopped but the complex is still littered with stone slabs reminding one of the horrifying days of plunder.

Kotulpur: Kotulpur is located about 38 km south-east of Bishnupur and contains some fine terracotta temples along with large mansions. The Bhadra family of Kotulpur made a fortune trading with the British and constructed palatial mansions and large number of temples. Sadly the ruins the mansions and few of the temples still stand reminding one of the glorious days of Kotulpur.

The Girigobardhan Temple is the star attraction of Kotulpur. The *panch-ratna* (five

Dharapat Temple has images of Jain Tirthankars

pinnacled) temple follows the girigobardhan style and looks like a boulder. The Sridhar temple contains intricate terracotta works. Kotulpur also has a 17 pinnacled Rashmancha and 9 pinnacled Dolmancha.

Sonamukhi: Sonamukhi is located 36 km north of Bishnupur. The town was mentioned as a village of *tanti* (weavers) in the 17th century manuscript of *Deshaabali-bibriti*, written by Jaganmohan. Sonamukhi, meaning gold faced, is named after ancient village deity "Swarnamukhi." The temple of Devi Swarnamukhi, although modified into a modern structure, can still be seen in Sonamukhi.

But the star attraction of Sonamukhi is the Sridhar Temple. Built in *Panchabinsati Ratna* (25 pinnacled) style, the temple not only follows a unique style but also houses some of the

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Hadal-Narayanpur Mansion

Dihar Temples contain beautiful floral and geometric stucco work

most beautiful and intricate terracotta art of West Bengal. Located in the Madan Gali, near the *chowrasta* (where four roads meet) of Sonamukhi, the Sridhar Temple was constructed in 1845 by Kanai Rudra, a weaver. Presently the ownership of the Sridhar Temple is with a Ganguly family. The Sridhar Temple has terracotta on all four sides but almost three of its sides are badly encroached upon. This temple too is in an utter stage of neglect and needs immediate professional conservation.

Sonamukhi also houses several other temples and religious structures but sadly most of them have been reconstructed into modern structures and in the process wiped out centuries of intricate terracotta art.

Hadal-Narayanpur: Hadal and Narayanpur are twin villages approachable from Bishnupur via Sonamukhi. Three branches of the erstwhile Mondal zamindar family erected huge mansions and intricate terracotta temples, many of which have survived the test of time and can be seen to this day.

During the reign of Malla King Gopal Singha (1720-1752) Muchiram Ghosh came in Hadal-Narayanpur and with the help of Subhankar Das, a member of the royal court, settled down and started his business. He made a fortune by dealing with *neel* (indigo) and received the title of Mondal. Ghosh built several temples and mansions and his descendents followed his footsteps turning the non-descriptive village into a temple town.

Today the temples of Hadal-Narayanpur are divided into three parts Chototaraf, Mejotaraf amd Borotaraf. The Chototaraf contains a natmandir and two terracotta temples. The star attraction of the Chototaraf is a church like towering nine-

pinnacled temple with intricate terracotta. The panel showing Arjun firing an arrow at the fish's eye at Draupadi's *Swayamvar* definitely stands out among the other panels.

The nine-pinnacled Radha Damodar Temple is the star attraction of Mejotaraf. It contains a detailed panel of the Ramayana war with Goddess Durga in the middle. The temple also contains interesting panels of Bishnu in *anantasayana* (Lord Vishnu in reclining position).

Only Barataraf has no terracotta temple but it is largely compensated by the huge Mondal Mansion with its arched gateways. A towering octagonal rashmancha with beautiful terracotta work is another attraction. There is also a beautiful brass chariot, which is taken out during the Rathayatra festival.

Dihar: Located 8 km from Bishnupur on the Bishnupur-Sonamukhi highway, the village of Dihar houses two ruined but majestic temples. Both the temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva and are known as Sareswar and Saileswar. A Nandi (bull) guards the entrance of Sareswar Temple.

Built in 1346 by the Malla King Prithvi Malla, the temples follow the Oriya Deul style. Deul styled temples are Hindu temple styles that evolved and became standardised in north India, Orissa, and the Deccan between the 6th and the 10th centuries. The towering spires of both Sareswar and Saileswar have long collapsed, but they still command majestic presence. The temple contains beautiful floral and geometric stucco work.

Dharapat: Dharapat is located 11 km north of Bishnupur, on the Bishnupur-Ajodhya highway. A plastered laterite Oriya style Deul temple is the main attraction of Dharpat. The temple is

Shops selling terracotta artifacts

complete with flying lions, signifying Oriya influence. Built in 1701 by King Advesh of Dharapat, the temple contains images of naked Jain Tirthankar on its outer walls, hence the name Nangta Thakur er Mandir (Temple of the Naked God).

According to historian Amiya Banerjee, the deul like structure was actually a Jain Temple which may have been converted into a Hindu Temple.

The temple contains four stone panels on its four walls. The eastern wall contains a massive panel of Vishnu, complete with two men flying above Vishnu's head and two women at his feet. The other three sides contain naked images of Jain Tirthankars. Dharapat also contains a temple complex housing of 10 smaller Deul styled temples.

Bahulara: Located 14 km from Bishnupur, near the Ondagram railway station, Bahulara village has the distinction of housing Siddheshwar Temple, one of the oldest and unique temples in the whole of West Bengal. It is renowned for its unique architectural style and exquisite ornamentation of the temple walls. Built in brick, the Siddheshwar Temple stands on a base measuring 30 feet by 27 feet and towers to a height of 64 feet. Not much is known about the temple but it is believed to have been built in the 11th century. In 1972, Mr. J. D. Beglar of ASI described Siddheshwar Temple as the "The best in this district."

A corbelled arch leads to the inner sanctum of the Siddheshwar Temple which contains images of Ganesh, Durga and a Jain Tirthankar. The southern side of the temple complex houses scattered remains of dilapidated stupas.

Suggested itinerary

Day1: Explore Bishnupur. It can be best done in a combination of walking and cycle rickshaw rides.

Day2: Hire a car to visit Sonamukhi, Hadal-Narayanpur, Dharapat, Dihar and Bahulara. This would take an entire day.

Day3: Hire a car to visit Joypur, Gokulnagar and Kotulpur. This would take half a day.

Necessary information

Getting there: Bishnupur is well connected to Kolkata by rail and bus. The train journey is more comfortable.

Places to stay: West Bengal Tourist Lodge is the best option, however, there are hotels of all budgets.

Places to eat: Bishnupur has several good eateries but during excursion, only basic food is available at roadside stalls, so it is best to carry some food and water along. ■

A mathematics teacher by profession, the writer is a regular contributor in the travel columns of leading newspapers. To know more, visit his website www.rangan-datta.info and blog www.rangandatta.wordpress.com

"The proposed National Food Security Bill is nothing but an old wine in a new bottle"

Devinder Sharma is a distinguished food and trade policy analyst. Trained as an agricultural scientist, Sharma quit active journalism to research on policy issues concerning sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and intellectual property rights, environment and development, food security and poverty, biotechnology and hunger, and the implications of the free trade paradigm for developing countries and has authored four books.

The popular Indian weekly magazine *The Week* in its issue dated Aug 16, 2009 listed Devinder Sharma among the 25 Most Valuable Indians, calling him 'Green Chomsky". Sharma is associated with numerous national and international organisations, civil society groups and farmers organisations.In an interview with **One India One People**, Sharma says it is high time India brings back the focus on rejuvenating agriculture.

Huge funds are allocated for the various government schemes like PDS, NREGA, Indira Awas Yojana etc, and on paper, they look almost perfect but their implementation is invariably flawed. What should be done to plug loopholes and ensure that the benefits reach the needy?

It is generally believed that the schemes/ programmes are well thought of and also well framed but it is at the implementation stage where the problems arise. But in my thinking, much of the fault lies at the policy planning level itself. Most policies nowadays are prepared by the concerned Ministries in consultation with the industry. More often than not you will find that the policies are for all practical purposes proposed and written by the industry lobby groups. Even when the policies are meant for the social sector, most consultations happen with the industry or with a group of experts only.

I have never understood how and why a handful of bureaucrats/ experts should prepare a national policy, and also the action plan (rules and regulations) to go along with it. With such myopic thinking and vision, we end up doing a shoddy job. Since these policies, and equally important the framing of rules, is not done under a widely
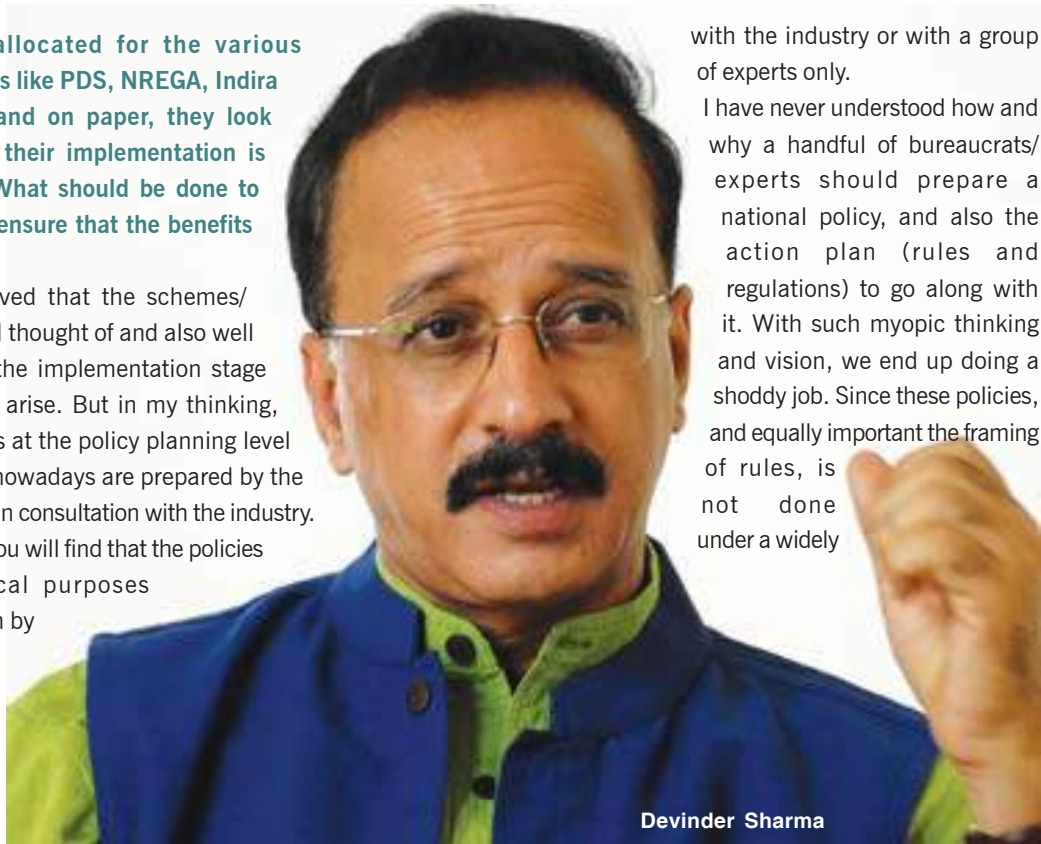
Devinder Sharma

consultative process, the loopholes remain. It is not a transparent process, and invariably does not involve the public at large. Take the case of MNREGA. This is considered to be a flagship programme of UPA. But were the beneficiaries ever consulted (through public hearings) before the plan was formulated? I am sure you will agree that it is only the beneficiaries who could have pointed to the loopholes, and what needs to be done to plug these and thereby make the programme fool proof and effective.

The proposed National Food Security Bill, 2013 promises to 'provide for food and nutritional security by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices…' Do you think it will deliver what it promises? What flaws do you see?

I think it is an opportunity lost. What is being presented as the National Food Security Bill is nothing but an old wine in a new bottle. With a little bit of tinkering, and by of course making it rights based, it is the failed public distribution system that has been rechristened as National Food Security Bill. It is actually a food-for-vote programme and has therefore been introduced in Parliament just before the elections. It should therefore not be seen anything more than that.

Whether the bill brings the UPA-III into saddle is a different question but what is more important is whether the proposed bill will address the problem of hunger and malnutrition in a manner that in the long run it significantly reduces the population of hungry. After all, in a country, which has the largest population of hungry in the world, and which as per the Global Hunger Index ranks 66th among 105 countries, the food law will only serve its purpose if the number of hungry gradually comes down in the years to come.

Moreover, unless the food bill provides a roadmap to build up the capacity of the hungry to ensure their own food security, in the sense that they become self-reliant in addressing their own food and nutritional insecurity, I think it may be practically impossible to sustain the massive feeding programme in the years to come. With policy makers not looking beyond 2014 elections, it is therefore a lost opportunity.

> **National Food Security Bill is actually a food-for-vote programme and has therefore been introduced in Parliament just before the elections. It should therefore not be seen anything more than that.**

You have also spoken against the proposed cash-for-food programme. Why?

The enthusiasm for routing the food subsidy in the form of cash transfers has severe political advantages but at the same time has serious fallout in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Providing cash in the hands of poor beneficiaries means less emphasis on the PDS ration shops. The idea is to provide coupons or provide food entitlements in the form of cash, and leaving it to the people to buy their quota from the market. Whether the money provided would be used primarily to buy liquor, junk foods or other consumer goods is an important issue, but what is more important is to understand how it is aimed at dismantling the food procurement system. This subtle way, very cleverly designed, would undo the gains of food self-sufficiency so assiduously achieved after the advent of Green Revolution.

The underlying objective is very clear. Once the direct cash transfers begin, the ration shops would be gradually phased out. Once the PDS shops are removed, the cap in food procurement by FCI that is being suggested will come into play. With food procurement limited to meet the buffer requirements, which is somewhere between 14 to 22 million tonnes a year (against 90 million tonnes expected to be stocked with the FCI in June 2013), wheat and rice farmers would no longer get the benefit of the minimum support price. Farmers would be left to face the vagaries of the markets, and as has been the experience in those States which do not have a robust system of *mandis* and thereby unable to provide farmers with assured prices, distress sale will become a norm.

Withdrawal of food procurement system will have an impact on food production. This would force farmers to abandon farming, and migrate to the urban centres. This is exactly what the World Bank has been proposing for several years now. The 2008 World Development Report had called for land rentals and providing farmers with training opportunities so that they can be absorbed in the industry. In fact, the Prime Minister himself has said that the country does not need 70 per cent farmers, and all out efforts should be

made to shift them to the urban centres. A population shift from rural to the urban centres is the underlined policy thrust. The Food Ministry has meanwhile asked the Forward Markets Commission to look into the possibility of allowing FCI to enter commodity trading. In other words, the government is already contemplating divesting FCI of its sovereign role and in turn convert it into a key market player. The cash-for-food programme therefore has to be seen in the light of the other policy changes being considered.

The issue of starvation and food insecurity is not because of less production. India's storehouses are overflowing with rotting food grains. Where is the missing link? How do we rectify the system? When can we truly see poverty eliminated from India?

Yes, India continues to be faced with a paradox of plenty. On the one hand its grain silos are bursting at the seams, and on the other teeming millions live in hunger. Since 2000-01, on an average the foodgrain surplus every year has been around 60 million tonnes. In 2012, it has a record surplus of 82.3 million tonnes. Not knowing what to do with the record surplus, the government has so far exported about 10 million tonnes each of wheat and rice. This year again, by June 2013, foodgrain surplus will be around 90 million tonnes. Once again, the government is contemplating exporting more food grains.

Hunger, malnutrition and starvation therefore are not the result of any shortfall in production. It is the outcome of faulty policies leading to gross mismanagement on the food front. I have always said that it is criminal for any hungry nation to be exporting food grains. I believe that India should adopt a two-pronged strategy to address hunger. First, it is important to rework the poverty line. The existing poverty line, of ₹ 28 and ₹ 24 respectively for the urban and rural areas, is actually the hunger line. In ₹ 28 per day it is not possible to feed a pet dog. The poverty line has been kept artificially very low and in reality denotes the population living in hunger. This section of the population must get food aid.

In other words, India should have two lines. The approach to address hunger for this section of the population should

> **Hunger, malnutrition and starvation therefore are not the result of any shortfall in production. It is the outcome of faulty policies leading to gross mismanagement on the food front.**

be to build up their capacity in such a manner that they become self-reliant. In many villages, which have built community grainbanks and have therefore addressed hunger at the village level itself, have become food secure. It is high time the government, by involving NGOs and self-help groups, replicate this model.

Making agriculture more economical and sustainable is what is urgently required. Instead of translocating rural population, the focus should be to bring more economic prosperity into the villages. The terms of trade must be made more favourable for the villages. As Mahatma Gandhi had said: What India needs is a production system by the masses, and not for the masses.

India today is in what I would call the greatest agrarian crisis since the eve of the Green Revolution. Do you think it is time for another green revolution? What is the way forward?

Yes, India is passing through a terrible agrarian crisis. Over 2.9 lakh farmers have committed suicide in the past 15 years, and another 42 per cent want to quit agriculture if given an alternative. What is however not being realised is that the prevailing crisis is the outcome of the Green Revolution. Over the years, repeated emphasis on intensive farming systems, monoculture, excessive use and abuse of chemical pesticides, coupled with faulty pricing policies have pushed farming into the throes of unsustainability and rendered agriculture unviable.

Instead of learning from the mistakes made, we are however trying to bypass the crisis so that the needle of suspicion does not point to the agricultural scientists, economists, administrators and policy makers. The people who were responsible for the crisis are now being asked to provide solutions. The proposal to bring in 2nd Green Revolution, which is a euphemism for corporate farming, shows we haven't drawn any lesson nor are we keen to make some historic corrections. What is therefore needed is to overhaul the existing farming systems by bringing in agro-ecological methods. In Andhra Pradesh for instance 10 million farmers are practicing non-pesticides management in 10 million hectares. In half of these areas, farmers have stopped using chemical fertilisers

also. Agriculture hasn't collapsed. Instead it has grown. Soil fertility is getting restored, water mining has been curtailed, pest incidence has decreased, environment has become cleaner, and the farm incomes have gone up. Why can't the same model of farming be replicated elsewhere? What India needs is not a second Green Revolution that will exacerbate the existing crisis, but to adopt the AP model of 'Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA)'.

Farmers' suicides in India continue to be a matter of concern. Agricultural development seems to have been on the backburner of the government which feels that industrial development is the only way forward. How can we ensure sustainable development?

Yes, farmer suicides are a matter of great concern. As I was saying, it is high time India brings back the focus on rejuvenating agriculture. The obsession the planners have with agriculture growth needs to be replaced immediately with the benefit that policies can bring to improve farmer welfare. This is possible provided we follow the following three broad approaches: 1) Launch a massive nationwide programme to restore soil fertility, revive groundwater levels, and stop the destruction of the natural resource base. The CMSA model from Andhra Pradesh, with local adaptation in different agro-climatic zones, can serve as the guiding spirit. 2) Disband 'minimum support price (MSP)' and replace it with Direct Income Support for farmers. The need of the times is to set up a National Farmers' Income Commission which works out the monthly take-home package for farmers depending upon his production, farm size, and its geographical location. The NSSO works out the average monthly income of a farm family at ₹ 2115. This is scandalous, and since farmers also generate economic wealth in the form of agricultural commodities, it is time to adequately compensate them for their contribution. 3) Restrict imports of agricultural commodities under World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). There is a need to raise import tariffs to protect domestic agriculture. I see no reason why duties on edible oil imports are zero thereby flooding the Indian market with edible oil imports exceeding ₹60,000 crores. This money should go to Indian farmers

> **We have produced generations after generations of agricultural scientists and economists who have been programmed to believe that Indian agriculture is backward, sub-standard and inefficient.**

who can produce enough oilseeds to cater to the nation's demands. Raise the duties, stop imports and the farmers will do the rest.

As an agricultural scientist, who has spent years in research and policy analysis, could you tell us your key learnings about the agrarian crisis in India and what needs to be done to avert a crisis in future?

Over the years, I have realised that the continuing agrarian crisis is the outcome of western disturbances. Ever since the first agricultural university at Pantnagar (then in Uttar Pradesh) came up under the land grant system of education borrowed from the United States, the entire education, research and extension has been tuned to the American curriculum. Not only has the university campuses, which were initially set up by USAID, the entire education syllabus too been borrowed from the West. The result is that we have produced generations after generations of agricultural scientists and economists who have been programmed to believe that Indian agriculture is backward, sub-standard and inefficient.

We have been programmed to believe that if we really need to improve agriculture we must borrow research and education from the western universities. In the process, we ignored our own strengths so much so that we destroyed what could have been the foundation for a highly successful and economically viable agriculture. Take the case of domestic breeds of cows. We were made to believe that Indian breeds were unproductive and so we have no other option but to import exotic breeds like Jersey and Holstein-Friesen if we had to improve our milk production. We did it. But now I find that while we discarded our own cattle breeds, Brazil has become the biggest exporter of Indian breeds of cows. In other words, if we had worked to improve our own majestic breeds, our cows wouldn't have been roaming in the streets.

We have already done enough damage. It is time to go back to the farms, look into our own backyards, and find solutions to the prevailing crisis. The solution to India's agricultural crisis lies within India. We don't have to look for solutions in America or Europe. There is no other way. ◼

... and, above all, Pran

A talented actor and one of the stylish villains on Indian screen, Pran was recently honoured with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award for Lifetime Achievement. **Sanjit Narwekar** pays tribute to the iconic bad man of Indian cinema.

As Sher Khan in Zanjeer

IT was nearing midnight in the notorious district of Hira Mandi in Lahore, then a flourishing cosmopolitan city in undivided India. Several men had gathered outside a *paan* shop for a quick post-dinner *paan*. Among them was the lyricist-director Walli Mohammad Walli, better known in the Lahore film industry as Walli Sahib. For quite some time now he had been staring at a handsome young man who seemed ideal "hero material". Moments later he introduced himself to the young man and invited him to the Pancholi Art Studio for a screen test.

The young man had ambitions in that direction but was sceptical of the offer – probably because of the time, place and manner in which it was made. He muttered to himself, "*Raatke andhere mein har aadmi apne aapko walli samajta hain.*" Translated it means, "In the darkness of the night everyone thinks he is a *walli* (a wise man)". And so, the next day, he did not go to the studio.

A few days later the two once again met during a film show at the Plaza in

With the positive character of Malang Chacha in *Upkaar* **(1967), Pran began a new chapter in his career.**

Pran paid great attention to change his make-up and approach to every role so that no two roles looked alike.

Lahore. This time the young man took the offer seriously and did go to the Pancholi Art Studio where he was signed for a small negative role in the Punjabi film *Yamla Jat* (1940). Thus began a career which was to span two countries over a little more than six decades.

Pran was not a born Lahorite; he was actually born into a wealthy Punjabi family of Old Delhi at Ballimaran, Kotgarh on 12 February, 1920. His father, Kewal Krishan Sikand, was a trained civil engineer who worked as a government civil contractor. His father's transferable job compelled him to study in various places, including Dehradun, Kapurthala, Meerut and Unnao (Uttar Pradesh), finally completing his matriculation from Raza High School, in Rampur.

He was academically gifted, especially in mathematics, but, being creatively inclined, he wanted to make a career as a photographer and so, he worked as an apprentice with A. Das & Co., Delhi before leaving for Lahore where destiny waited for him.

Pran was handsome enough to play the hero – and he did play the hero in at least one film (*Khandaan*/1942) opposite Noorjehan, then in her early

teens– but fate had other plans for him. *Yamla Jat* was a superhit and other films followed in quick succession, notably *Sahara* (1943), *Daasi* (1944), *Kaise Kahoon* (1945), *Badnami* (1946) and *Khamosh Nigahen* (1946). He was so popular that within the space of just five years he had acted in 23 films.

Pran received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for Lifetime Achievement at his home

Partition found Pran in Bombay, where he had come to be with his family on the occasion of his son Arvind's birthday on August 11. The rioting had not yet begun but, sensing the mood of the

moment, he decided to stay back with his family in India. So disappointed was he with the turn of events that he never returned to Lahore even for a visit – though there were several invitations after he had made it big in the Bombay film industry. Pran explains his reluctance to visit Lahore as an emotional matter: he found it difficult to return to a place from where he was once forced to leave because of his religion.

However, the fractured film industry of India had changed considerably. There were many other actors from the other side of the newly-drawn border looking for work. So, even the 23 films he had done in Lahore could not get him any work in Bombay. He began to work at Hotel Delmar in order to look after his family till noted Urdu writer Sadat Hasan Manto got him the villain's role in Bombay Talkies' *Ziddi*, starring Dev Anand and Kamini Kaushal. The film was a huge hit and established the careers of all three artistes.

Within a week of *Ziddi*'s success, he signed three more films; S. M. Yusuf's *Grihasti* (1948), which became a diamond jubilee hit, Prabhat Film Company's *Apradhi* (1949) and Wali Mohammad's *Putli* (1949).

Pran played a comic role in the 1962 classic, *Half Ticket*

Kyoon?AurKahan?, *Gaddar*, *Andhaa Kanoon*, *Duniya*, *Hoshiyar*, *Dharm Adhikari* and *Azaad Desh Ke Ghulam)* the positive roles were in overwhelming numbers.

Pran had played in comic films like *Pilpili Saheb* (1954) and then opposite Mehmood and Kishore Kumar (*Half Ticket, Manmauji*) but in the 1980s he formed a great comedy team with friend Ashok Kumar in films like *Victoria No. 203, Chori Mera Kaam, Chor Ke Ghar Chor, Apna Khoon, Aap Ke Deewane* and *Raja Aur Rana.*

After acting for more than half-a-century Pran began to refuse films from the mid-1990s, but the pressure continued unabated till 1999 (Manoj Kumar's *Jai Hind*). In the new millennium he acted in just three films: *Tum Jiyo Hazaron Saal* (2002), *Ek Hindustani* (2003) and *Dosh* (2007). Pran is no longer in the public space but his innumerable films (361 at last count) will keep him in the public memory forever.

Even for an actor like Pran who has won more awards than he can possibly remember, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for Lifetime Achievement is surely something special. It was a little late in coming (many of his contemporaries have won it several years ago) but it is undoubtedly a fitting culmination and tribute to a career which spans the history of post-Independence Hindi Cinema.∎

The writer is a National award-winning film historian, scriptwriter and documentary filmmaker.

Another huge hit was *Badi Bahen* (1949). In the meantime two films which he had completed in pre-Partition Lahore were also released: *Taraash* (1951) and *Khanabadosh* (1952). After that there was no looking back and Pran went on to become one of the most successful villains of Hindi cinema playing the foil to the top three leading men of his era: Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Raj Kapoor. Though he played the villain in film after film he took care to change his make-up and approach to every role so that no two roles looked alike. That plus the dialogue ensured that every role he played was a variation, a milestone.

In the foreword to Pran's biography *And Pran*, Amitabh Bachchan remembers his first association with the legendary villain in Zanjeer thus: "I was relatively new to the film industry. I did feel apprehensive but Pran Saab was very helpful and he set me at ease. In fact, he was the biggest selling point of the film. I marvelled at the manner in which he took tremendous care of his looks. Right from a hennaed wig and beard, to his costume and make-up, he ensured that every element was flawless."

During this period he played the central character only once: that, too, as the evil King in *Halaku* (1956). He became evil personified—so much so that mothers hesitated (if not refused) to name their boys Pran.

Pran began a new chapter in his career in the mid-1960s when a brief cameo in *Shaheed* (1965) led to a friendship with the matinee idol turned producer-director Manoj Kumar who gave him the positive character of *Malang Chacha* in *Upkaar* (1967). Once before he had played Raj Kapoor's sympathetic friend in *Aah* but the film failed and his performance was lost. *Upkaar* set the trend and though he did play the occasional bad man (*Kab?*

> **Pran is no longer in the public space but his innumerable films (361 at last count) will keep him in the public memory forever.**

Mother tongue, an endangered language

Of the 6000 odd languages spoken all over the world, 1652 originate in India, where the dialects are spoken in various regions of the states. As English becomes a preferred language of communication, Shoma A. Chatterjee fears that the mother tongue will soon disappear from our lives.

HOW important is one's mother tongue to the citizen of tomorrow? In an age of rapid globalisation and the jet-age speed with which we are on the information highway, 'not much' if one were to consider urban children in most English-speaking countries of the world. The mother tongue cannot afford to receive step-motherly treatment from social and academic circles. It opens the window to the world because it helps the infant step down from the mother's lap to crawl, take its first tottering steps and then run to join the world.

Language is linked to its communicative qualities, its qualities of expression and articulation in writing, in print and in vocal articulation. The mother tongue as a language for daily use in life and at work, in reaching out and crossing borders, has received a bad beating at the hands of more 'elite' and universally accepted languages like English or French for urban and elite Indians. The mother tongue is described as the first language an individual learns, also called primary language. This term defines the language that people know best and use the most, the communication tool people most closely identify themselves with. It is with this concept in mind that the celebration of Mother Language Day was created, to represent two crucial components of the value of all world languages. Languages are the communication tools used by human beings to channel their expressions of identity and belonging, while mother tongue represents the most familiar language that one experiences while learning to communicate.

Fifty per cent world languages to die out

According to UNESCO, roughly over 6,000 languages are spoken across the world. At least 50 per cent of them are expected to die out during the current century. It is a real challenge to ensure that the 'endangered' languages, 95 per cent of which are spoken by only four per cent of the world's population, continue to be used alongside the world's major languages. Monolingual countries like Japan, China, Korea, France and Germany, made rapid progress as a result of imparting basic and higher education to their citizens in their own languages. History has shown that the economic development of these countries has not suffered in the least as the result of the paucity of knowledge and use of English. No one is suggesting the replacement of English with the mother tongue in education. But basic education in the mother tongue has always proved to be a big boost to the macro-sociology of the country and to the development of the personality of the child. Studies show that we learn better in our mother tongue. But then

it has to be taught in school, which is not the case for all minority languages. More convinced than ever of the value of multilingualism, certain countries are trying to promote learning in a number of languages. However, the political and economic obstacles are enormous.

Language-based nationalism

The celebration of International Mother Tongue day recognised by UNESCO in 1999, has a history of bloodshed and violence that took the lives of innocent people, including students, scholars and intellectuals because they asserted their right to use their mother tongue, Bengali, in all forms of communication in place of Urdu. This day is February 21. It celebrates the martyrdom of people who laid down their lives during the Language Movement in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

After the British rule, Bangladesh (the former East Pakistan) underwent new colonial subjugation by Pakistani rulers. From the beginning of its 'emancipation' (1947) Pakistani rulers denied the Bengali people equal opportunity. The Bengali community, conscious of this discriminatory policy, took steps to organise themselves. The Language Movement of 1952 brought forth a completely new movement hitherto unknown in the history of world culture – language-based nationalism. The Bengali community felt that if

the mother tongue is denied to them, they would fight for independent territorial identity rooted in love for its mother tongue. After its leader, Awami League's Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gained majority in the national parliamentary election of 1970, Bangladesh achieved independence.

Mass support was the key spirit within freedom fighters in their struggle against a brutal army. Bangladesh gained support from across the world. Together with Pandit Ravi Shankar, pop singer George Harrison arranged a concert to strengthen worldwide support for Bengalis. After a nine-month war of liberation, at the cost of millions of lives, Bangladesh was created on 16 December 1971. For the first time a country had chosen to identify itself with its language and culture. International Mother Language Day, celebrated annually on February 21, aims to promote the recognition and practice of the world's mother tongues, particularly minority ones.

According to the 1961 Census, India has 1652 mother tongues identified with various nomenclatures in post-Independent India such as Scheduled Languages, Non-Scheduled languages, Regional languages, major languages, minor languages, minority languages, tribal languages, etc. There is no mention of the word 'mother tongue' anywhere in this classification. This creates fear in our minds about the complete disappearance of many of these 1652 languages by sheer virtue of a classification based on a hierarchy of caste and class. The classification automatically creates a 'ghetto' in language, leading to fragmentation of language based on caste and class and thus, power – economic, cultural and social. The aesthetic, scriptural and literal qualities of any mother tongue will remain unknown to the world, till it dies an ignominious death at the hands of politics, bureaucracy, E-mail, the Internet and the Establishment. One is reminded of *Vigdis Finnbogadottir, UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador for Languages, Former President of Iceland, who said:* "Everyone loses if one language is lost because then a nation and culture lose their memory, and so does the complex tapestry from which the world is woven and which makes the world an exciting place." ∎

The writer is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema twice.

"When has seeking equality of sexes become an option?"

Anuja Gopalan is a lawyer, fresh out of law school. She cares deeply about civil rights, gender equality and education. She enjoys research and analysis and hopes to make a fulfilling career as an academician.

ARE men and women truly equal?
'A woman is human.
She is not more creative, intelligent, better, wiser or stronger than any man. Likewise, she is never less.
Equality is a given.
A woman is human.'
As I write this, I remember Rashnaaz Apa, who I had met while volunteering with a women's rehabilitation organisation sometime ago. Apa, a calm and composed elderly woman, was heading the organisation. I got to know more about her life as I started working with her. Apa had lost her young daughter to a horrific case of dowry death and had established the organisation hence. One day, out of the blue, she asked me in her chaste Urdu, "Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?" My prompt reply was, "Yes, I very much do." Apa seemed stoic and what she said next stunned me. "Oh! I've hardly met anyone who is a feminist out of choice. Feminism is generally a creation of circumstance, not of choice." I kept thinking about what she had said, trying to figure what it is about our culture and upbringing that gives women this choice. Since when has seeking equality of sexes become an option? Wouldn't all women want it irrespective of what they have been through? That brings us to the crucial question. Are men and women truly equal? How we answer this question reflects our politics, our

Anuja Gopalan

ideology, highlights our socio-cultural context as well as gives hints about how we live our private lives.

Equality, to me is the recognition of the concept that inspite of our evident differences, we deserve to be treated in the same manner and as compassionate human beings. It is the acceptance of our differences, not only physical but also mental and physiological and the acceptance that we all have positive qualities as wells as faults too. Equality paves way for human beings of all castes, races, genders, classes to be given the same political, social and cultural rights.

If this concept is so easy to understand, then why are we failing as a society to treat women on par with the men? The problem's genesis lies in the pre-established hierarchy of Indian society.

Patriarchy has had a strong foothold in India since times immemorial. Patriarchy is evidentiary power. It allows the male to exercise his power and dominance over the female members of his family. Women have been dominated upon for so many centuries that the demand for equality from them is hard for the male mind to digest. Every day, we see the monster of a misogynist society raising its ugly head and sabotaging the effort for equality. The Delhi gangrape case only goes to show the extent to which men can go to prove their power on a vulnerable woman. Equality only desires for women to be treated as civil human beings and not cattle. Men and women can never be equal unless the hierarchical foundation of our social structure is destroyed and the idea of the inherent equality of human beings, qua human beings, is enthroned in our culture.

The fight for equality does not mean that women try to be masculine or that men have to have feminine traits, but that women too have the right to her life and freedom as much as the men have. What is stopping us in achieving this simple objective is our obsession with power and male dominance.

I would like to conclude with a quote from John Steinbeck -

"And finally, in our time a beard is the one thing that a woman cannot do better than a man, or if she can, her success is assured only in a circus." ■

Serving muse through raga

The *Raga* tradition of India is under dire threat of oblivion, though profit-making stake-holders try to cover up this obvious fact, says **Prof. Rajiv Trivedi**.

Its status as a word connoting culture, grandeur, refinement all at once, has made '*Raga*' familiar to the globe. For such popularity, price has been paid by Indian Classical Music. Most enthusiasts consider *Raga* to be-all and end-all of Indian classical tradition. Oblivious to hazards and achievements that formulate its progress, they mistake the lengthy journey for its current destination. As music matured during Vedic period, *Jaati-s* came into existence. It was only when *Shadja* (the defining note of the scale from which the other six notes emerge) stabilised between 8th to 11th century due to application of frets in *Kinnari Veena*, that the concept of *Raga* began to develop. The term finds first mention in Matang's *Brihaddeshi (*a classical Sanskrit text on Indian classical music, attributed to Matanga Muni).

Knowing 'Raga'

Defining *Raga* is challenging. "*Raga* is a Sanskrit word that has umpteen shades of meaning – from love, affection, desire and infatuation to entertainment, pursuit, disposition, poetry and music." (http://www.omenad.net/articles/logicmuse.htm) It does echo that sensibility, which defies confinement within measurable bounds. In other words, the expression of Indian music while exhibiting perfect mathematical integrity in retrospect, is guided by impulsive consciousness in practice. This leads to complex nature of musical structure that constitutes a *Raga*. In form, it does have a fixed number of permitted and prohibited notes following each other in prescribed permutations. In practice, a musical *Raga* is like a fractal that despite a well-defined aspect is neither limiting nor limited. One finds a close parallel to theatre where different actors in separate presentations portray a Hamlet or a Romeo in styles individual and unique, yet none of them ever twists the tale.

Classification of Ragas

There have been several attempts at categorisation and classification of *raga-s*. Two modern accepted forms are *thaat* and *ang*. One classifies them by the structure of notes while the other by movement of notes. Yet, like all classifications, these in no way represent the potential of a given *raga*. Scholars tried categorising notes in different ways; common surviving classification is of *Thaata*, of which only 10 could be validated. This classification is based on notes. Some preferred to identify *Ragas* through *Ragang* system. An earlier system was based on genesis, where each male *Raga* had female *Raginis* and sons and daughters born out of their union.

Late Dr. Lalmani Misra, eminent Indian classical musician and scholar, had observed that an artiste who follows the path of eternal truth does not create history whereas one charmed and fascinated by the world of desire and allure is able to bring about changes. Indian music, it is believed, is the smoothest way to absolution. Yet, the element of divinity or spirituality comes at a stage realised by few; even sage Bharat restricts himself to the tangible, logical aspects of music in his *Natyashastra.*

Time theorists believe that similar to body clock there exists a note-clock, for time affects music as well. So beginning midnight the *Ragas* of ten *Anga* cover the day. Lethargic pre-dawn notes of *Sohni*, *Paraj* welcome *Brahma-Muhoort* (a period of 48 minutes before sunrise which is considered the most auspicious time for meditation, worship or any other religious practice) with freer movement of *Lalit* and *Bhatiyar*. Touched by rising sun notes of *Bhairav*, *Ramkali* and *Jogiya* still sound nostalgic for night past. Forms of *Todi* and *Bhairav* are played from eight to ten in the morning. *Bilawal*, *Bhairavi*, *Deshkar* occupy late morning and from 12 forms of *Sarang* celebrate the day. *Multani*, *Bhimpalasi* retain strength but late afternoon promotes relaxed movement of notes. Dusk is welcomed by *Patdeep*, *Poorvi* and *Shri* and evening finds *Ragas* of *Kalyan Ang* in their multi-splendoured frolic. Once evening loses all contact with daylight, the notes in such *Ragas* as *Durga*, *Desh*, *Kedar* and *Jayjaywanti* explore shades of beauty in their characteristic delineations. Midnight is reached through late *Kalyan* and early *Kauns raga-s* and then on, it is *Malkosh* that reigns supreme. Theorists cite combination of notes in particular phrases and equate it with average activity during a particular period in day. Yet, no rule can bind fluidity of notes save that of consonance. The *Raga*

pattern in simplistic terms, is setting the boundary or an exposition through *Alap*. The artiste takes up notes in proper order and dwells on them to establish and impress the aural connection in minds of listeners. Once the periphery of soundscape is drawn and connected, he goes on to fill in it with symmetric and contrasting patterns of note-phrases. *Swara*, *Laya* and *Tal* together constitute music. So introduction of rhythm is the next phase. Interweaving of beats with notes while covering all permitted permutations of the *Raga* demands for skill and practice of the artiste.

Ten *lakshana* or characteristics ensure that only a compatible innovation is accepted as a valid *Raga*. Loyal adherents of a school are averse to unstudied 'invention' of new Raga-s. Admits Pandit Rajshekhar Mansur, "I have not created any new *Raga-s*… because I do not feel the need to. I have so much that I received from elders that all my time and efforts get spent in embracing this treasure." On other hand there are those, who can come out with a novel *Raga* for every occasion. Karnatic *Raga-s* do not follow the regimen of Ten *Lakshana* and therefore several musicians draw upon this trove to create a unique bouquet. Musicians like the late Pandit Ravishankar, knew how to avoid the discordant note that might mar an otherwise melodious composition. But when an enthusiastic novice tries the same Raga, she may not sound as pleasant. That does not mean that new *Raga-s* cannot be created. Ustad Allauddin Khan created *Raga Hemant* which employs perfect consonances and has been performed successfully by several disciples. *Sameshwari*, a perfect *Shastrokta Raga* was created by Dr. Lalmani Misra, which again has been performed by several artistes. But often, a perfect invention may still be unable to capture attention of musicians and is likely to disappear with time.

Flawed innovations

Indian music – north Indian and Karnatic, together – has a repertory of over 650 *Ragas*. Combine this with possible *Tals* and almost every Indian may have a unique *Raga-Tal* melody for himself. While this may appeal to the digital citizen, this mammoth repertory is not conducive to mass production. Hence, the projection of a limited few artistes has introduced the concept of brand-marketing in Classical music. Recordings follow a set pattern prescribed by limits of media; so instead of preparing for a two or three hour presentation, artistes now focus on 28 minute, 14 minute or 12 minute presentation. Within this short duration, they try to present new *Tan-alankar* patterns. Increasingly, it is the miraculous instead of melodious that dominates these presentations. This affects learning of music as well. Instead of learning to explore the character of a *raga* through *alap*, the contemporary learner devotes greater time to novel permutations. A great deal of classical learning is about the "don'ts" so that one may understand the limits of a *Raga*. Innovation without knowledge of constraints leads to novel sounds that lack cohesion and integrity and thus fail to appeal to a *Rasik or a music connoisseur* . So as well-known *Raga-s* like *Gauri, Malgunji, Patdeep, Gunkali, Jogiya, Jait, Shree, Suha, Bihagada, Bilawal, Shankara* and even *Multani* go into oblivion, experimentations that vandalise *Jhinjhoti, Khamaj, Bageshri* and *Gorakh Kalyan* abound. Unimaginative performances of *Yaman, Bihag, Maru Bihag, Rageshri, Bageshri, Malkauns, Chandrakauns, Todi, Ahir Bhairav, Vrindavani* and *Madhumat Sarang, Darbari Kanhada* hurt sensibilities of connoisseurs. Repeated performance of a *Raga* in a flawed manner by different artistes creates controversial application that drives the original out.

In an earlier age of non-virtual reality, an artiste would be responsible to a live audience. It was a true exchange of appreciation. Only when the performer got consumed by his performance, did this *Anand-Atirek* or ecstasy permeate to the listener. Such personal, experiential performance was likely to attain *Ras-Nishpatti* or emotional satiation. It has been replaced by alienated, selective packaging of notes which are carefully rehearsed for a predictable response. There is little *Anand* or bliss experienced by the performer who is far too conscious a creator and consequently the audience never becomes his *Anand-Sahodar* – they are no longer on the same side. By its design, classical music had transcendence as its goal; joy and merriment were aimed by popular music. While for grandeur and exaltation, lip-service is still given to transcendence, in practice it is entertainment that producers keep their focus on.

The *Raga* tradition under threat

The *Raga* tradition of India is under dire threat of oblivion; only profit-making stake-holders try to cover up this obvious fact. Despite several government and private agencies created to foster Indian art and culture, unbridled commercialism has almost succeeded in subverting this age old legacy. Whereas learned enthusiasts and scholars were able to check any deviation fifty years back, there is a strong need for strengthening the voice of dispersed scholars/ enthusiasts that may inform and guide the performers. Unless a body dedicated to the cause of conservation of our intangible heritage empowers these lone voices, the art would be silenced in time.■

After three decades of teaching, Prof. Rajiv Trivedi is devoted to safegurading intangible cultural heritage.

Drug abuse: A ticking time bomb

June 26 is observed as "The International Day against Drug Abuse & Illicit Trafficking". Although drug abuse in India has reached alarming proportions, there is no real will to deal with the menace, writes **Johnson J. Edayaranmula**.

Over the past three decades, the use of illegal drugs has spread at an unprecedented rate and has reached every part of the world. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) estimates the international drug trade to be around US $ 500 billion, which is more than the international oil trade and only second to the international arms trade. The United Nations describes this as "A menace which no country can ever feel immune". According to a circular of the World Health Organization (WHO) to member states, "With increasing urbanization and industrialization the modern society has become more permissive and has given birth to many social evils… and one such evil is substance abuse. For a growing number of adults, drugs have become a way of life. They take pep-pills to get-up, a tranquillizer to stay calm, a cocktail to begin the evening and a barbiturate to go sleep". Thus over a period of time substance use seems slowly emerging as a part of one's daily life.

The United Nations has taken several measures to curtail the supply and demand of drugs through several global initiatives involving member countries. By resolution 42/112 of 7 December 1987, the General Assembly decided to observe 26 June as "The International Day against Drug Abuse & Illicit Trafficking" as an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drugs.

The Indian scenario

The geographical position of India sandwiched between the 'Golden Triangle' (Myanmar, Laos and Thailand) and the 'Golden Crescent' (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan), which is one of the world's largest opium producing countries, makes the situation most vulnerable. Apart from this, India is the largest legal producer of opium for medicinal purposes. Along with it, illegal production has also flourished. Besides, illegal cannabis cultivation is widespread in several states of India. Side by side, the abuse of drugs has reached alarming proportions causing serious public health harm and social consequences. As a result the progress of our nation has been hindered, health has deteriorated, production has hampered, crimes have increased, besides the erosion of moral and social norms. Young people have become the largest hostage of this menace and their vulnerability is increasing day by day. Drug abuse is a crime that imposes a staggering burden on the people and the Nation. It is a burden no society can afford to carry.

The changing pattern of illicit drug abuse and risk taking behaviour arising from abusing illicit drugs, threatens the health and safety of drug abusers and those around them. The introduction of synthetic drugs and intravenous drug use leading to HIV/AIDS has added a new dimension to the problem in many parts of the country.

The National Survey on Extent, Pattern and Trends of Drug Abuse in India carried out jointly by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Regional Office of South Asia and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment - Government of India (Ray et al, UNODC, 2004) reported that alcohol, cannabis and opiates were the three most commonly used drugs among males aged between 12-60 years. The project had three major components viz. National Household Survey (NHS), Rapid Assessment Survey (RAS) and Drug Abuse Monitoring System (DAMS) with sub-studies on drug abuse among rural population, prison population, women, and in border areas.

Based on data from the above study, it can be projected that in India there are approximately 87 lakh cannabis users and 20 lakh opiate users. Among these, 26% of cannabis users and 22% of opiate users are dependent users. These figures translate to about 2.3 million cannabis-dependent and 0.5 million opiate-dependent individuals. Another biggest concern is the widespread abuse of Prescription Drugs

which are meant for medicinal purpose. So, it is very difficult to gauge the real magnitude of the drug problem in India. The survey and studies indicate a high concentration of drug addiction in certain social segments and high-risk groups, such as, commercial sex workers, transportation workers, and street children; and in the North-Eastern states/border areas and opium growing regions of the country. The situation in the North-Eastern states has been little aggravated due to high incidence of Intravenous Drug Use (IDU), especially in the state of Manipur, leading to HIV/AIDS.

Curtailing the menace

Drug trafficking has been recognised as a "*Crime against Humanity*" by almost all the countries in the world. The fight against drug trafficking is therefore of major importance to all. While in some countries this task ranks fairly high in terms of priorities due to the extent of drug abuse problem, in other countries, this problem is still considered to be of low priority because they never consider drug abuse as a major problem or they might have not assessed the problem properly. Whatever be the reason, no country can afford to be complacent about this Crime against Humanity, for it recognises no territorial barriers and possesses the potentials for destabilising national governments and threatening the very security of states, which has been witnessed in several Latin American countries.

That is the reason why several International Conventions and Treaties have been adopted to curtail the drug menace at the global level, besides the enactment of strong legislations at the country level.

Prevention & control strategies adopted by GOI

Article 47 of the Constitution of India

directs "the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, and, in particular, to endeavour to bring about prohibition of consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health". The GOI has adopted a multi-prone strategy to address the supply and demand enacting appropriate laws as well establishing separate departments to deal with the issue. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), under the Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI is the Central Nodal Authority on all drug related issues in India. Its mandate includes enforcement of the laws against trafficking of drugs as well coordination among various ministries on issues relating to drug abuse and its prevention.

The Demand Reduction programmes are under the domain of the social sector and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. GOI is the Nodal Agency, where the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is also involved and broadly covers the healthcare, de-addiction, rehabilitation and social reintegration of addicts.

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act) is the statutory framework for drug law enforcement in India. The NDPS Act also incorporates provisions to implement India's obligations under various International Conventions. Some further amendments were incorporated in the NDPS Act in 2001, mainly to introduce a graded punishment.

Apart from the Narcotics Control Bureau, Department of Customs & Central Excise, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation, Border Security Force and the Coast Guards at the Central level and the State Police and Excise

Departments at the State level are notified as designated agencies to deal with narcotic offences in India.

Recognising drug abuse as a psycho-socio medical problem, which can be best handled through community based interventions, the GOI has a three-pronged strategy for demand reduction which comprises:

✓ Building awareness and educating people about the ill effects of drug abuse;
✓ Dealing with the dependants through programme of motivational counselling, treatment, follow-up and social-reintegration of recovered dependants;
✓ Imparting drug abuse prevention/ rehabilitation training to volunteers with a view to build up an educated cadre of service providers.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, as the focal point for drug demand reduction programmes in the country, has been implementing the Scheme for Prohibition and Drug Abuse Prevention since the year 1985-86. Under this scheme, the ministry is assisting 361 voluntary organisations for maintaining 376 De-addiction-cum-Rehabilitation centres and 68 Counselling and Awareness centres all over the country.

Apart from this, under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, treatment facilities are provided through 122 de-addiction centres attached to Government Medical Colleges and District Hospitals in different states of the country.

The government has established a "National Centre for Drug Abuse Prevention (NC-DAP)" under the aegis of the National Institute of Social Defence, to serve as the apex body in the country in the field of training, research and documentation in the field of drug abuse prevention. Eleven Regional Resource and Training Centres (RRTCs) have also been established in

different parts of the country.

The Federation for Indian NGOs in Drug Abuse Prevention (FINGODAP) has been formed to facilitate networking amongst member NGOs (essentially those funded by GOI) so as to gain from each other's experience, and also to ensure self-restraint towards implementation of minimum standard of services.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and UNODC, implemented a project on "Developing Community Drug Rehabilitation and Workplace Prevention Programmes", to sensitise and train the voluntary organisations and workplace settings on prevention of alcoholism and substance abuse in workplace. This collaboration has led to the formation of an effective group of various stakeholders known as ARMADA, the Association of Resource Managers against Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

In collaboration with the Ministries of Human Resource Development, Youth Affairs & Sports and Women & Child Development, the Ministry of Social Justice has also initiated demand reduction programmes addressing various stakeholders.

A draft "National Policy on Substance Use (Alcohol & Drugs) - 2012" which has been recently developed is now waiting for approval of the Government of India.

Enforcement and prevention challenges

Though we have strong legislations and sufficient establishments, a lack of commitment and political will is clearly visible in the area of drug abuse prevention and control. In spite of the multiplicity of Ministries and Departments to deal with the menace, no sincere attempts are being made to effectively deal with the problem.

Enforcement is a big farce and illicit cultivation, trafficking and abuse is increasing in alarming proportions all over the country. Almost all the Narcotics Special Squads and Narcotic Cells constituted under the State Police and Excise are idle and the Officers concerned are doing un-related work. The unholy nexus between some of the enforcement officials and the traffickers has affected the credibility of the enforcement agencies to a great extent. It is a sad truth that honest officers could not survive long inside these agencies. There is a lack of cooperation and coordination among various enforcement agencies.

Drug traffickers have many advantages over those trying to disrupt the illicit transactions. Large trafficking organisations have the financial resources required to pay for their operations besides power, equipment, transport and everything else they need. They have the time and material to prepare for the concealment of drugs; they can pick the time, place and method of introducing drugs into a State and they are prepared to flout all laws and regulations as they have the support of many godfathers.

Enforcement agencies on the other hand usually lack financial resources, proper training and sophisticated equipment.There is a need to adopt a uniform procedure by the various agencies. For this purpose, a guideline needs to be prepared. Appeals should be preferred to Higher Courts in all cases under the NDPS Act which ends either in acquittal or lesser punishments. Special prosecutors should be appointed in the special courts and higher courts for conducting the cases effectively.

Demand reduction activities are also not reaching the right audience. Though millions are being spent every year towards prevention programmes, the outcome is negligible. Most of the funds are being spent on treatment rather than education and preventive actitvities, and the end results are discouraging and mostly on papers.

The present status of the "National Centre for Drug Abuse Prevention (NC-DAP)" at New Delhi is a clear example of the Government's attitude in addressing the drug menace. It is functioning from a small room at the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment headed by a Dy. Director who has numerous other responsibilities, without any supporting staff. Interestingly, the national headquarters of the Narcotics Control Bureau is also functioning in the same building, and together they could have contributed a lot. But that is not happening. If this is the fate of the "National Centre" for Drug Abuse Prevention, then what more can we expect in a country with 28 States and 7 Union Territories and with a population of over 1.2 billion…? The old adage – *"An ounce of Prevention is worth a pound of Cure"* is an obvious truth in the fight against drug abuse!!

"Drug Abuse is a time bomb ticking always in the heart of our civilization.

We must now find measures to deal with it, before it explodes and destroys us".
*-Mr. Perez De Cu 'Eller (Former UN Secretary General)* ■

The writer is Director, Alcohol & Drug Information Centre (ADIC) – India (since 1989). He is also the Executive Director of Indian Centre for Alcohol Studies (INCAS) and also the Advisory Member of Expert Committees on Adolescent Health, Substance Abuse Prevention and Road Safety, etc. of the GoOvt. of India and Govt. of Kerala and other reputed Organisations.

A wonderful life

The affable wildlifer is alive and well. But every once in a while, this cheerful facet of his personality is dented, darkened and tested by those who would build golf courses in mangroves where flamingos feed; chemical ports on beaches where sea turtles nest and mines that excavate the future of the tiger even faster than the minerals they want to turn to cash.
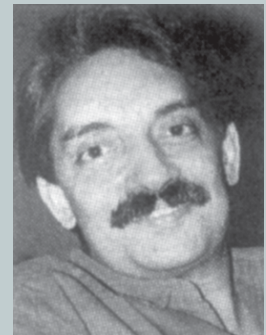
Bittu Sahgal
Editor, *Sanctuary* magazine

I used to laugh at prophets of doom. And for as long as I can remember, I have abhorred self-righteous, sanctimonious preachers with intensity. By and large I managed to ignore such people. Which is why my optimism and purpose are still intact after decades of battling the dragons of despair!

But imagine my dismay upon waking one morning to discover that I had almost metamorphosed into the creature I loathed. Even though I never saw myself in the image, most people believed I was indeed the quintessential prophet of doom. I realise now that my near Jekyll and Hyde transmutation came about insidiously, like a winter's dawn, a consequence of years of tramping the murky corridors of environmental reporting.

"Life" I was gently reminded by an unsympathetic wife over breakfast one New Year's Day "is what happens to you while you are making other plans."

Where, I wondered was the life-loving, affable wildlifer I had started out as? And would I ever be able to turn the doomsday merchant from my inner door?

I have been reading, writing and editing reports about global and Indian environmental concerns for over a decade now. I studiously ignored those who, in the mid-seventies, predicted ruin and mayhem, preferring to focus on the more positive aspect of nature conservation, the magic of plant-animal relationships, the exhilaration of watching that arch predator, the tiger bring down its prey, or the mesmeric precision of a spider spinning its deadly web.

Cocooned in my own world of discovery, I rationalised my priorities by believing that appreciation is a precursor to concern. Why, after all, would anyone mourn the loss of rain forests, rivers and mountain slopes if the value of these life-support systems were unknown to them?

People responded emotionally and warmed to my worldview. Without the benefit of any outside finance (not even a bank loan!), I launched *Sanctuary*, a magazine devoted entirely to the proposition that wild India was worth saving.

But 'realists' (read politicians, contractors and economists) look upon the wilderness - forests, wetlands, corals, mountains and rivers - as little more than untapped resources. In their view people like us were locking up resource islands (like the national park in Borivli) that were crucial to development. There were jobs to create, food to grow and progress to usher in. And if some forests had to be sacrificed, so be it.

I am happy to report that the affable wildlifer is alive and well. He was rescued some years ago, when the realisation struck him that he was not responsible for every leaf that stirred, or every river that was poisoned. But every once in a while, this cheerful facet of his personality is dented, darkened and tested by those who would build golf courses in mangroves where flamingos feed; chemical ports on beaches where sea turtles nest and mines that excavate the future of the tiger even faster than the minerals they want to turn to cash. ■

Child abusers need harsher punishment

Assaults against vulnerable children are heinous crimes which call for timely and stringent punishment against perpetrators.
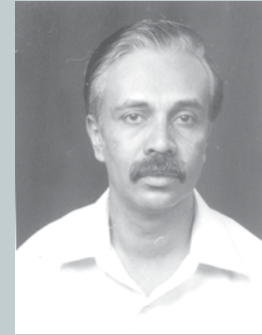
C. V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

THE government's acceptance of most of the recommendations of the Justice Verma report and the introduction of an anti-rape law are welcome signs that the government is taking cognizance of the heinous crime of rape and sexual assault. However, a very disturbing development in recent times is the phenomenal rise in cases of child abuse that are being reported from different parts of the country. Considering the fact that not even five percent of the crimes take the form of complaints to the police, the real figures of abuse could be very much higher. Children, both boys and girls, even those right out of the cradle are vulnerable and in many of the cases the crimes are incestuous, where the perpetrators are family members or close relatives.

Most of the cases often do not reach the courts because a deliberate attempt is made by the parents of the child to bury the issue as they often disbelieve the child's version. This apart from indirectly abetting the crime also shatters the confidence of the victim adding to his or her trauma. The rise in number of such cases makes it evident that this is hardly an issue that can be brushed aside. Children, unless they are tutored, only speak the truth and when a child confides in the parents that a father, stepfather or an uncle or a school teacher has been touching her inappropriately, the parent should immediately take steps to ensure remedial measures so that the child returns to a cocoon of security. On the other hand if parents admonish the child and ignore the child's version, the torment is bound to continue. In many of the cases especially where incest in any form is involved, many of the children are forced to bear the agony, silently fearing threats till it becomes totally unbearable or where the parents themselves are exposed to telltale evidence of the assault. By then it might become too late and the future of the child could be in jeopardy.

The law often fails to nab such offenders and there are cases where the accused go scotfree as the witnesses could be intimidated and the victims themselves might be too traumatised to narrate the incidents, more so, if the criminals are close blood relatives. Then there is the hostile environment in the court where the defence lawyers in a bid to pick holes in the statements of the victims subject the latter to protracted questioning which often is extremely sexual in nature and causes great discomfort to the child victim. It is therefore necessary that the government should step in and ensure that the law takes its own course and to see that such criminals are punished. The onus is also squarely on the parents of the child as they have a bounden duty to protect their offspring from such abuse. The tendency of educational institutions to defend their personnel who have been accused of child abuse deserves to be condemned and such institution heads should also be booked for abetment. If horrific crimes like child abuse have to be checked the law should be tightened and all loopholes should be plugged. The quantum of imprisonment in such cases which usually does not exceed seven years should be enhanced to life imprisonment and even death in extreme cases. ∎

COOL CHAMP

Try to answer the questions below and send your answers along with your name, address, date of birth, school and photograph to: **"YOUNG INDIA QUIZ"** One India One People Foundation, Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor, 22, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 26. You can also log on to our website and answer our quiz online at **www.oneindiaonepeople.com.** We will choose two winners (the Cool Champs) from all the correct entries and publish his/her photograph and name along with the answers in our next issue. **(Last date for entries: June 20, 2013)**

Quiz No: 113

1. **Who is referred to as 'the father of Indian medicine'?**
   a. Chanak ☐
   b. Aryabhatta ☐
   c. Charak ☐
   d. Susruta ☐

2. **Where is Mahatma Gandhi Setu located?**
   a. Tamil Nadu ☐
   b. Gujarat ☐
   c. Madhya Pradesh ☐
   d. Bihar ☐

3. **What is Raja Ravi Varma renowned for?**
   a. Cricket ☐
   b. Painting ☐
   c. Handicrafts ☐
   d. Pottery ☐

4. **This clay pot is actually a musical instrument. What is it known as?**
   a. Jaltarang ☐
   b. Pungi ☐
   c. Damru ☐
   d. Ghatak ☐

5. **Where is Sudha Car Museum located?**
   (Clue: OIOP, May 2013 issue)
   a. Itanagar ☐
   b. Chennai ☐
   c. Delhi ☐
   d. Hyderabad ☐

Answers to Quiz # 112

QUESTION 1
Answer: (b) Annie Besant

Annie Besant, a British, made India her home and settled here. She established the Indian Home Rule League in 1916 and presided over the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1917, the first woman to hold the prestigious position.

QUESTION 2
Answer: (a) Five

Jantar Mantar is an astronomical observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh II. He built five such observatories, the Jaipur one being the largest. The others are in Delhi, Varanasi and Ujjain. The fifth one built in Mathura does not exist anymore.

QUESTION 3
Answer: (d) Gujarat

In 2006, Gujarat became the first state in India to electrify all its 18,065 villages. The state government undertook the ambitious 'Jyotigram Yojna' successfully in 30 months at a cost of ₹15,000 crore.

QUESTION 4
Answer: (b) Cricket

Ranji Trophy is the domestic cricket championship played between different state and city teams. It is named after the Ranjisinghji Vibhaji Jadeja, the Prince of Nawanagar in Gujarat, who played test cricket for England.

QUESTION 5
Answer: (c) Hawa Mahal

Hawa Mahal or the Palace of Winds is the signature building of Jaipur built by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh in 1799. This stunning example of Rajput architecture is made of the famed Jaipur pink stone and has 953 honeycombed windows or niches. (For more information, read OIOP, March 2013 issue)

QUIZ No. 112
Arjun Kumar Gupta
Bhadar, Dist. Sultanpur (U.P.)

Sculptor of Steel

IN the capable hands of sculptor Anish Kapoor, even rust looks beautiful! Born in Mumbai in 1954, Kapoor studied art in London. The Turner Prize-winning artist is best known for his ambitious public installations like Cloud Gate and Sky Mirror.

Kapoor's early works were made in stone like granite, marble

CLOUD GATE, CHICAGO

and limestone. His sculptures are usually monochromatic with simple, elegant curves. In the late 90s, he began working with highly polished steel.

His Sky Mirror is a 6m-wide concave steel dish set at an angle in such a way that it provides a luminous reflection of the changing sky. The Cloud Gate in Chicago, said to be inspired by liquid mercury, is a unique bean-shaped steel structure, which gives a distorted reflection of the city's skyline. In 2012, he designed UK's largest piece of public art to commemorate the London Olympics — the 115m-tall Arcelor Mittal Orbit. It features a giant upward spiral of bright red metal crowned by an observation deck. Kapoor's works are displayed in prestigious art museums around the world like the Guggenheim in Bilbao and Tate Modern in London. He was conferred the Padma Bhushan in 2012.

The Human Computer

Shakuntala Devi, the legendary math prodigy, died on April 21, 2013.

- **When and where was she born?**
  She was born on November 4, 1929 in a humble Brahmin family in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- **At what age was her talent discovered?**
  At the tender age of three, her father who worked as a magician discovered her extraordinary calculating skills when she was playing cards with him. She went on to publicly demonstrate her amazing mathematical abilities at the University of Mysore and Annamalai University at the age of six.
- **What is her educational background?**
  She did not have a formal education. Her family could not afford the fees of the school she was attending and she was forced to drop out.
- **What were her memorable feats?**
  In 1977, she outsmarted a powerful computer at an American university when she solved the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in 50 seconds while the UNIVAC 1108 computer took 12 seconds longer.

She earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records (1995) when she correctly multiplied two 13-digit numbers picked at random by the Computer Department of Imperial College, London, in 28 seconds in 1980.

She could tell the day of the week for any given date in the century in a jiffy.

- **What did she do to further the cause of mathematics?**

Shakuntala Devi was always keen to remove the fear of mathematics from people's minds. She wrote many books to simplify the science of numbers – *Puzzles to Puzzle You, Fun with Numbers, Awaken the Genius in Your Child, Book of Numbers, In the Wonderland of Numbers,* etc. (She has also written other books on astrology and cooking.)

She had set up the Shakuntala Devi Education Foundation Public Trust to provide quality education for poor children. Her dream was to establish a mathematics university in her name.
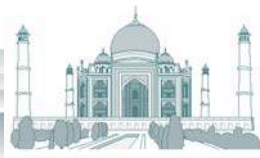
The Flower Maiden

KASAULI is a hill resort about 12 km from the Shimla-Kalka road in Himachal Pradesh. It is located at a height of 1,800 m above sea level. According to the locals its name derives from Kusmawali or kusmali, meaning the flower-maiden. Wild flowers bloom throughout the year in a riot of colours. Between April and June, rhododendrons, coral trees, gulmohars, katchnars and kashmais bloom along the hill slopes. Chir-pine, Himalayan oak and huge horse chestnuts give the quaint town with its cobbled streets and gabled houses with neat little gardens, a bewitching look.

The highest point in Kasauli is the Monkey Point. Steps cut into the mountain lead all the way to the top. Climbing up is fun, especially because you get to ring the numerous bells along the way. On top is a small temple dedicated to Hanuman. According to legend, Hanuman stepped on this peak when he was returning with the sanjivani. From Monkey Point, you get a breathtaking view of Kasauli town, the river Satluj meandering its way to the plains, and the distant city of Chandigarh.

Sir Henry Lawrence is believed to have developed Kasauli into a settlement. The well known Lawrence School a few kilometres away at Sanawar, was established by him. Sunny Side, the cottage in which he lived with his wife, stands to this day.

Mindbender

SITTING at a square table are a smuggler, a mafia boss, a bootlegger and a contract killer. Only two of these men, Mama and Kalia, are genuine criminals. The other two are CID officers posing as criminals. Mama is sitting opposite the Mafia boss; the junior CID officer is sitting to the left of the smuggler and the senior CID officer is sitting opposite the bootlegger. If the senior officer is not playing the role of a smuggler, what is the junior officer disguised as?

Answer: Bootlegger

Big Mouth

SOME animals eat seeds that are much bigger than their mouths! The green imperial pigeon is unique because it can unhitch its lower beak and elongate its mouth not only vertically but also horizontally. It can swallow a nutmeg complete with its edible rind. The nutmeg is about as big as a hen's egg with a diameter of almost 5 cm. That makes it larger than the pigeon's head! The seed remains in its gizzard where the rind is stripped off and digested. The nutmeg inside is excreted whole. In fact, the pigeon has adapted so well to eating nutmegs that seeds that are even slightly smaller, pass through its digestive system intact.

The pigeon is found in South Asia, including India.

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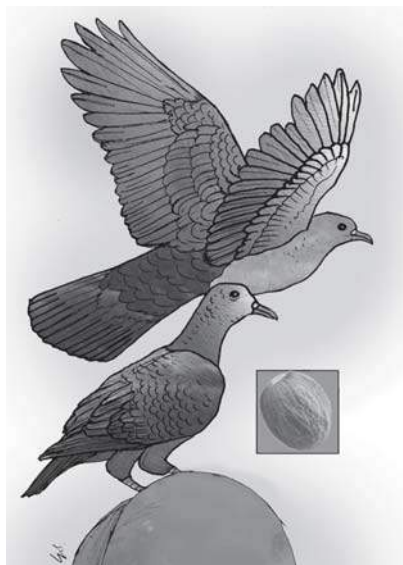
ANUTAI WAGH
Pioneer in basic eduation (1910-1992)

EIGHTY years ago, Anutai Wagh laid the foundation for tribal education in India. She was a great social activist, democratic teacher and educational researcher dedicated to the cause of early childhood education. As a pioneer in basic education, she had the courage of conviction in her experimental work. She was the disciple of Tarabai Modak, a pioneer of education programme whose curriculum was indigenous, using low cost teaching aids and was aimed at holistic development of the participants. Anutai infused modern ideologies and research into her work. While bringing about a revolution in tribal education, she went to the grassroots to learn their problems. Her work helped in bringing about mindset change for modernisation in the education system.

Anutai was born on 17 March 1910, the eldest of five children, in a household of humble means. As per the prevalent system then, she was married off at the young age of thirteen years. She was widowed just six months after the marriage. This event became the turning point of her life. As a young widow with incomplete education, her life could have been miserable. But she displayed rare courage by changing the course of her life by registering in the national school in Akola. She appeared for her final examination at Igatpuri. She ranked first in the district in this exam.

She got involved in the freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and worked for 13 years in Huzurpaga as a teacher before moving to Kosbad. She wanted to complete her matriculation while still working, so she registered herself in a night school. She completed her matriculation in 1938 with a good score. Many years later, in 1961, she appeared for her degree in Kosbad. Though, by then, 51 years old and ailing from cataract, she studied with the aid of a reader and appeared for her exam. This too, she completed with good grades. Anutai was a lifelong learner.

In 1945, Anutai accompanied Tarabai to Bordi, and started a new chapter in her life. She started a Balwadi (pre-school) for kids at Bordi along with Tarabai. At that time, with primary education being a novelty even in urban areas, trying to convince the villagers to send their young children for the same was a Herculean task. In the midst of multiple obstacles Anutai's *Vikaswadi* (school for progress) took shape. To resolve the problem of gap in their lifestyle with tribal people, they lived with the tribal people. They started a school in the courtyard of their house. This is how *Anganwadis* (pre-schools) came into being. These two women, who took "the school to the children" since the children wouldn't come to school, were indeed extraordinary.

To promote women's education, she started crèches attached to the school. She personally strived to awaken the tribals on social issues such as banning liquor, encouraging widow remarriages, evils of bride price, indebtedness etc. She arranged mass marriages of tribal couples. She expanded her horizon by starting a school for the deaf at Dahanu, with facility of lodging and boarding, and included technical and vocational training in the syllabus to make the children economically independent. Anutai took great efforts to start a Teachers' Training College, Primary School, Printing Press and technical training schools at the campus *Gram Mangal*, Kosbad.

Despite her silent work and low profile, her fame spread far and wide. The Government acknowledged her efforts and honoured her with a Padmashri. Her reaction on getting the award displays her humility; she said that she felt great merely because the work of her institution would now move faster. She was also bestowed many prestigious awards like The Adarsha Shikshak (Ideal Teacher) Award by the Maharashtra Government, Dalit Mitra Savitribai Phule Award and International Child Development Award. Anutai died of old age in 1992. I consider myself fortunate that I could spend quality time with Anutai between 1988-1989 at Kosbad. ■

– Dr. Vibhuti Patel is the Professor and Head, Dept. of Economics, SNDT Women's University, Churchgate.

MAJOR GENERAL EUSTACE D'SOUZA PVSM

Once a soldier, always a soldier (1921-2013)

MAJOR General Eustace D'Souza PVSM was born on 29 November 1921 and had his early schooling in St Patrick's School, Karachi and St Stanislaus School, Bandra, Mumbai. He graduated from Xavier's College, Mumbai in 1941 and joined the army in 1942. He was commissioned into 1/5 Maratha Light Infantry (Maratha LI) from the Indian Military Academy in June 1943. It must have been a surprise to the young officer that on completion of three months jungle warfare training with 14 Infantry Division in Chinwara, he was instructed to proceed to Italy to join his unit there in 1944. He fought in the last great battle of River Senio on 9 April 1945. Later, the unit went to Japan as part of 268 Infantry Brigade in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. After the war, the battalion was selected to be a part of the British Commonwealth Forces. In September 1947 when it returned to India, he was rushed to Jammu and Kashmir (J & K) to counter the aggression by Pakistan. His next task was to raise a battalion of J & K Militia. He commanded the newly raised battalion with distinction and was awarded Mention-in-Dispatch for gallantry in Uri sector. He attended a course at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington in 1951 and served on the staff of Military Advisor, London from 1952 to 1955. He was promoted Lt Col in 1960. After a brief tenure as instructor in Infantry School, Mhow, he raised and commanded 17 MLI in Sikkim and Poonch from 1958 to 1961. He commanded a brigade in Nathu La on the Sikkim-Tibet border in 1965 when the Chinese raised a false alarm about intrusion by the Indian Army. He continued to be apprehensive about the Chinese intentions and warned against its threats. Recent Chinese encroachment in Ladakh justifies his views. He attended the NDC course in 1967 and was posted as Deputy Military Secretary in Army HQ.

His next posting was again to field on promotion as Major General to command 19 Infantry Division in Baramulla in Kashmir. It was not for this committed soldier to ask for a soft posting and he carried out his duties with enthusiasm.

The Indo-Pak War broke out in December 1971. After 1965 War, Pakistan had strengthened its defences in this sector to the extent that frontal attacks were costly. General D'Souza planned limited offensive with considerable administrative effort and won territory in Lipa Valley and Kaiyan bowl for which he was awarded PVSM (Param Vishisht Seva Medal). He took over as GOC (General Officer Commanding) Delhi Area in 1973 and retired on 30 November 1975. He settled down in Mumbai and continued to be Colonel Commandant of the Maratha Regiment till 1977. He continued to take keen interest in defence issues and contributed more than 500 articles in various magazines. During communal riots in Mumbai in 1993, he organised a human chain of nearly one lakh people from Afghan Church in South Mumbai to Borivali in North Mumbai. He was an active member of the Generals for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament. He got an occasion to address the British Parliament and had an hour long meeting with selected senators of USA. He was in the forefront to organise relief for victims of Gujarat earthquake. He kept an open house and enjoyed guiding retired and serving defence community. In spite of his failing health, he visited his old units regularly. That association gave him strength. He made a trip to Sikkim and Nagaland even after a bypass operation. He had kept in touch with the people of Kashmir. An outstanding sportsman, he played for the Army hockey team in India and abroad and was a member of the National Hockey Selection Committee from 1974- 78, when India won the World Cup. He was sorry to note that regional and parochial interests damaged Indian hockey standards. Under his stewardship, the Maratha Regiment Centre team won the Aga Khan tournament and three players of the team made to the national team. Besides hockey he had interest in cricket and football too. He led the Army cricket team to victory in 1969 and was a member of the Durand football organising committee.

The grand old Maratha soldier passed away on 26 March 2013. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER
Crusader for Peace and Justice (1939-2013)

Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, the renowned scholar-activist, died on 14 May 2013. With this the country has lost a major voice that stood for preservation of secular values and promotion of communal harmony. He was born on 10 March 1939, in a place called Salumber near Udaipur and received his graduation in Indore, as a civil engineer. He came from a modest family of a Bohra priest.

His first struggles were against the stranglehold of Bohra priest on the Bohra community. He strove for the democratisation of religious organisation and accountability from the priest. Annoyed by this reformist demand, the Bohra priest excommunicated him from the community and he was denied the rights as a member of Bohra community. He fought this by laying the foundations of reform movement in the Bohra community. His second major area of work was around the painful phenomenon of communal violence, violence in the name of religion. In due course he started investigating the violence in the name of religion and to his dismay he found that the name of religion is abused by vested interests. In these riots the innocents get killed. He kept on visiting city after city where violence was taking place and produced reports, which unravelled the truth behind such violence, showing that religion has nothing to do with the violence. Along with this realisation was the fact that communal violence is instigated due to misconceptions about the 'other' community. Through immaculate reading of medieval history he could show that India had a profound tradition of peace and amity between Hindus and Muslims. He kept spreading this awareness through articles and books with regular frequency. He came out with reports of all major sectarian violence and his books are a landmark. He was constantly striving to get justice to the victims of violence and also helped in the rehabilitation process after the acts of violence.

The other major area of his work was the interpretation of Islam. There are lots of misconceptions about words like *Kafir*, *Jihad* etc. His extensive writings tell us that as per Koran, *Jihad* means striving for better society and the word *Kafir* is for those who hide the truth. Contrary to the popular understanding which links Islam to terrorism and violence, he showed very authoritatively that Islam is the religion of peace and that Islam shares the values of love, peace and compassion with many other religions. He was the world recognised authority on Islam and his commentaries on Koran and Islam are avidly read all over the world.
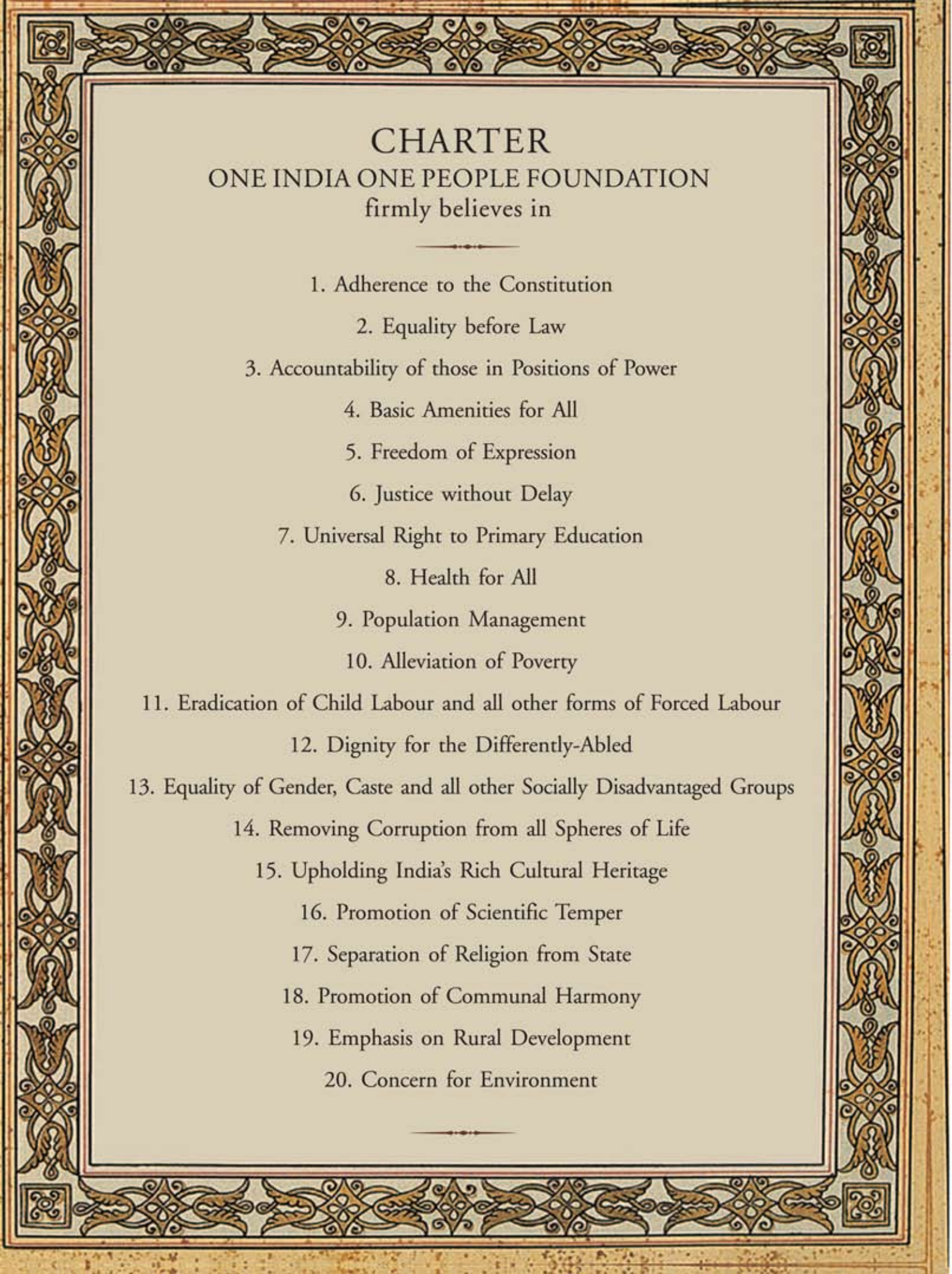
His other major contribution was to show that Koran and Islam give an equal status to women. Contrary to the prevalent perceptions and practices in which women are given secondary position in Muslim community, he strived for gender equality which is inherent in the teachings of Prophet Mohammed, as elaborated in Koran. To popularise all these aspects of his highly relevant work he undertook extensive tours all over the world to attend seminars and address conferences on this topic. Within India he was travelling extensively to conduct workshops, to deliver lectures and to initiate the activities for peace and amity between different communities. His website www.csss-isla.com carries his articles on secularism and his essays on issues of Islam and Modern age.

He has authored over 100 books on these themes and was the recipient of many awards, the major ones amongst them being, Right Livelihood Award (Also called Alternate Nobel), National Communal Harmony Award and honorary doctorate from four major Universities.

He has been a silent worker for the human rights of all and it is imperative that we carry on his struggle for better society far and wide. The title of his autobiography, *A Living faith: My Quest for Peace, Harmony and Social change* sums up the mission which he undertook in his life. ■

– Ram Puniyani, a former Professor at IIT, Mumbai, is also involved with social issues, particularly, those related to preservation of democratic and secular ethos in our life.

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2. Equality before Law

3. Accountability of those in Positions of Power

4. Basic Amenities for All

5. Freedom of Expression

6. Justice without Delay

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11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour

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16. Promotion of Scientific Temper

17. Separation of Religion from State

18. Promotion of Communal Harmony

19. Emphasis on Rural Development

20. Concern for Environment

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?

Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?

Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?

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Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
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