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## Citizens Rise

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Soon, a zero garbage society!

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

Ahmedabad

India's 1st World Heritage City

**FACE TO FACE**

Bobby Chakraborty

## MORPARIA'S PAGE



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Diwan Purnaiah



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Arjan Singh, DFC



Vyankatesh Madgulkar



### Managing Editor

Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

### Editor

Anuradha Dhareshwar

### Assistant Editor

E.Vijayalakshmi Rajan

### Design

H. V. Shiv Shankar

### OIOP Clubs Co-ordinator

Vaibhav Palkar

### Subscription In-Charge

Nagesh Bangera

### Advisory Board

Sucharita Hegde

Justice S. Radhakrishnan

Venkat R. Chary

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Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for  
**One India One People Foundation,**  
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,  
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,  
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Fax: 022-2351 7544  
e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com  
oiopsub@fouressindia.com

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# Citizens must rally

*Some people's movements have helped the cause of environment in India, such as the Chipko movement. But these have not translated into people's participation in all the most important causes which concern them. This must change, says Rishi Aggarwal.*

CITIZEN movements or individual efforts have played a key role since Independence in shaping environmental laws and policies in India. Whether the concern has been for saving the rich biodiversity of the Western Ghats, the successful Silent Valley protest or your own backyard like the few ladies who objected to their forests being cut in Garhwal and sparked the Chipko movement, or a broader issue like solid waste management across the country where Almitra Patel filed a Public Interest Litigation in 1996 resulting in the formation of the Solid Waste Management Rules of 2016, citizens have been at the forefront of protecting our environment, making our authorities accountable and shaping policy.

Most citizen movements are reactionary in nature and in response to an event which is seen adverse to the good of the environment. There are issues which are local in nature, and then those which are wider and systemic. There are movements of the English speaking and those of the non-English speaking. There are campaigns which rely heavily on judicial support and there are campaigns which draw their support from popular public support. There are campaigns of the rich, and then there are campaigns of the poor and the dispossessed. A Narmada Bachao Andolan still refuses to capture the imagination and fancy of those staying in the cities, especially the middle class, because they see it as an unnecessary obstruction to a development pattern they have subscribed to.

Citizen movements happen far and few in between and can be difficult to sustain beyond a few bursts of activity. Understanding the exact impact of the campaigns is important, and more important, understand how the movements need to be supported. I will use a few examples below to drive the point across. The subject is important and a very vast one with a number of facets to discuss and a small article can only touch a few aspects.

## Why did the Chipko movement not catch on?

While the Chipko campaign caught the fancy of the nation and the world and the word *chipko* has become a clarion call for action in numerous small campaigns in cities around the

country, it is important to understand what has been the impact of the movement in informing policies around natural resource management in Uttarakhand itself, and in forming policy across the country. The movement was not just about trees, but about the importance of ecology in our daily lives and the need to conserve the same. "Ecology is the only permanent economy", is the term that Gandhian and philosopher Sundarlal Bahugana coined then.

And yet, the two decades of the post liberalisation era saw a slew of damaging hydroelectric power plants take over river after river in the Uttarakhand Himalayas and the whole belt, producing disastrous consequences. No citizen movement could question the flawed governance and decision making behind awarding these hydro-electric projects. Chipko was not just about saving a few trees, the movement should have moved beyond trees and intervened to ensure that two rivers and their important tributaries, which are held religiously in such high esteem be saved from such projects. There was resistance and much questioning, but in the end the political economy and a certain thinking prevailed.

Similar is the case with preserving our natural reserves from mining and roads passing through them or the shrinking wildlife corridors, the absence of which is a sure death knell for the animals we wish to save and provide for. We are yet to see a citizen movement of scale.

## Rash planning harms ecology

I have been increasingly spending time in the Uttarakhand mountains in the Aglar River watershed and it has been saddening to see how the villagers have not been able to come together to stop the Eco Task Force (with technical guidance from the local Forest Department) from planting completely wrong species of trees as part of the eco restoration work being carried out. Species like Silver Oak and Cyprus have dominated the planting regime of the ETF since 1994 when the work started. By now many of the trees are tall and firmly established on the hill sides.

Villager after villager can be found cursing these trees as being of no value, and in fact damaging the ecosystem. There is enormous local knowledge about forests and ecology. It is

difficult to meet a villager young or old who does not know his or her trees well and the various uses or benefits of the trees. There is universal agreement that the degraded ecology is no reason for not planting the right species like oak, *khadki*, *bhimal*, walnut, *padam* and many others, which would nourish the soil as well as provide valuable produce like fodder, firewood, ropes, timber etc. And yet the opposite has happened.

Why is it that in the same geography where the Chipko movement originated in contemporary memory and which is a catch word and inspiration for micro movements around the country, could the villagers not intervene in time? Why

could the villagers not influence the thinking of the Eco Task Force and their local Forest Department, and if need be carry out an agitation to ensure that the right tree species are planted? If cutting of trees illegally is wrong and can inspire public movements, then planting the wrong trees can be considered even more wrong and doing even longer damage. Once planted, a wrong forest will exist for decades not allowing for the benefits which otherwise would have accrued from a forest with the correct species. This is not the case with Uttarakhand alone, but around the country. Participatory forest management has been a buzzword for decades, and yet we do not have a citizen movement of scale around the same.

### The story of our waste

Waste being generated in our cities does not create the attractive image of an environmental movement like a Chipko or conserving the Western Ghats, but it has serious consequences for our natural environment. Millions of tonnes of solid and liquid waste is being dumped on land or rivers across the country annually. It is exhausting the capacity of the ecosystems to bear the load. It was the effort of a single citizen which brought about the Solid Waste Management Rules during the 1990s many more enlightened individuals and groups added enormously to our knowledge and practice of how to manage solid and liquid waste in our cities and towns. Two decades later, we still do not see the rules being implemented. Something as simple as segregating waste at source is not implemented at source in households across the country. There is no mass countrywide citizens movement

around the same.

It becomes difficult to identify the planning of cities in a manner such that they consume less energy as an environmental cause. It does not provide for those images from the natural world. And yet, how we plan our cities and the course of urbanisation, is one of the single biggest

environmental causes. Some people have over the past two decades tried hard to shape how we develop and design our cities. If our cities consume less energy, produce less waste and yet provide increasingly better quality of life to the residents, then it has a win-win outcome. And yet our cities are being designed and governed



The Chipko campaign had caught the fancy of the nation and the world

in a manner that they consume more energy and generate more waste. Instead of being public transport and walking and cycling friendly, cities are built for cars and lead to traffic jams and air pollution. The crux of the matter is that in India we do not have the right number of citizens who are environmentally minded enough. And I stress on the word enough because there is no shortage of naive environmental concern and knowledge, which really does more damage than good. People have simplistic notions around planting trees, cleaning beaches and rivers, or banning plastic bags. In India we also do not see institutionalised citizen environment movements like those in Europe and the United States, which successfully draw large numbers, have systematic funding from individuals, and carry on activity comfortably over decades. We do not have the equivalent of a Sierra Club or Greenpeace and it would be important to introspect why. Our campaigns are more and more centred around an individual and his or her personality, and have no chance of continuing beyond a certain number of years.

There is now one form of environmental campaign or cause championing which is more in the nature of personal glorification. By now a number of Hollywood stars have moved in to support causes and that has got the fancy of a number of wealthy or otherwise around the world, who wish to be seen as saviours of the planet. The lack of understanding or talent or a long term commitment does not stop them, and a strong drive to be popular propels their efforts. The resulting event management can create a lot of light and noise but does not translate into any real gains.

(Continued on page 10)

# When citizens rise

*India was run over by an anti-corruption movement led by veteran crusader Anna Hazare a few years ago, which demonstrated the power of citizens when roused. But it didn't live upto its promise. Can this movement be revived? asks C.V. Aravind.*

THE India Against Corruption (IAC) campaign was started by the civil rights crusader, social reformer and Gandhian, Anna Hazare, and its main focus was to stress the need to constitute a Jan Lokpal that would probe corruption charges against all sections of society, including bureaucrats and politicians.

The campaign began with a *satyagraha* by Anna Hazare, and an appeal for support from the masses, with as many as six crore messages from all quarters of the country promising support to the Gandhian and the movement. The most significant aspect of IAC was that it had no political overtones, and Anna even refused

to share the stage with politicians. The Jan Lokpal bill would also be referred to as the Citizen's Ombudsman Bill and it would be an improvement on the existing Lokpal and Lokayukta.

## The ideal bill

The citizens' body led by Hazare drew up the bill in a proper format and the draft was prepared by former Lokayukta of Karnataka Justice Santosh Hegde, senior Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan, and RTI (Right to Information) activist Arvind Kejriwal. As per its provisions, the Jan Lokpal would be vested with the powers to probe politicians and bureaucrats without having to get any approval from the government. The office of the Prime Minister (PM) and the PM himself too was to come within the ambit of the Jan Lokpal. The office of the Jan Lokpal would be supervised by the Cabinet Secretary and the Election Commissioner of India. It would be completely independent of the government and

free from ministerial interference in its investigations.

Anna Hazare was insistent that a joint committee should be formed to discuss the bill and it should have representatives from the government and civil society, and the aim would be to draft tougher anti-corruption legislation. The then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh rejected the proposal, but later as the protests picked up steam, the government relented



Arvind Kejriwal (left) and Anna Hazare, the architects of the anti-corruption movement

and a committee was constituted with the originator of the first Lok Pal bill, Supreme Court lawyer Shanti Bhushan as a Co-Chairman, Anna Hazare, Prashant Bhushan, Supreme Court lawyer and activist, Justice Santosh Hegde, former

Lokayukta, Karnataka and Arvind Kejriwal representing civil society. Differences cropped up over a few contentious issues and the government steadfastly refused to accept in toto all the suggestions put forth by Anna and his team.

## The dilution called 'Jokepal'!

Meanwhile, the central government went ahead with the formation of a Lokpal, and its main objectives were to deter corruption, compensate citizens and redress their grievances, and protect whistleblowers. The government did consider the inputs provided by ordinary citizens through activist driven non-government public consultation. The bill as passed in both the Houses of Parliament came in for ridicule by Team Anna, an offshoot of IAC which had by then been disbanded by Anna Hazare, which denounced it and labeled it as 'Jokepal'. The IAC even went a step ahead and conducted a national survey which unearthed the fact that as many as 85% of those responding to the questionnaire, opposed the bill passed by the government.



Meanwhile, the IAC movement lost steam, though it still had mass support, as some followers of Anna Hazare who had until then offered him unstinted support felt that IAC had had little practical success, and it would be better to take on a political *avatar* utilising the groundswell of support that the movement had garnered. Anna however disapproved of the idea and a faction led by Arvind Kejriwal broke ranks with Anna and formed a political outfit, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which stormed to power in Delhi. Kejriwal had intended to pass the Jan Lokpal bill in the Delhi assembly in his first stint itself, but his abrupt resignation aborted the plans. Anna had launched his Team Anna, but later settled for a new outfit named 'Jan tantra morcha'. With time, some of the public support dissipated. While the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government in its second term in office passed the Lokpal Bill, Anna Hazare recently announced that he would be agitating for the substitution of this bill with the Jan Lokpal bill.

### A toothless tiger

The government's Lokpal has been branded as toothless as it has no power to initiate suo moto action, and cannot receive complaints from the public either. It could at best function as an advisory body that is bound to forward its reports to the concerned authority for further action. In short, it has no police powers. The Jan Lokpal as envisaged had powers to register FIRs (First Information Report), proceed with the investigations and also launch prosecution after completing its probes, and could even proceed against the Prime Minister. It could also investigate bureaucrats and government officers, and the entire vigilance machinery as existing would be merged into it, and full protection would be provided to whistleblowers.

In addition, the Jan Lokpal was to be empowered to impose penalties or to take matters to court, and the penalties would include removal from service, imprisonment for a minimum of one year or for life, recovery of all assets from those who have benefited from corruption, fines for filing frivolous complaints, and so on. As far as NGOs were concerned the Jan Lokpal was in favour of excluding them from its ambit as they were already involved in activities that included fighting corruption. The government's bill was not inclined to exclude NGOs.

### A people's movement

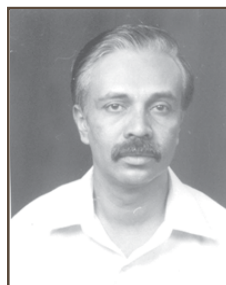
The main feature of the India Against Corruption movement was its transformation into a national movement in a short period of time. Galvanised by the avowed determination of its spearheads, notably Anna Hazare, the highly decorated police officer Kiran Bedi, and the stalwart RTI activist Arvind Kejriwal to root out corruption from the country, civil society responded

splendidly, and the reverberations of the movement were felt in most of the major cities in the country. The resilience displayed by the leaders, especially Anna Hazare, who was ready to risk his fragile health by going on repeated fasts, too spurred the citizens to raise their voices in unison for a noble cause. The overwhelming response also made it abundantly clear that corruption at all levels had turned into a hydra-headed monster, and had begun to take a toll on the lives of people belonging to all classes of society.

However, the euphoria was short lived when it became evident that the government of the day would not budge from its stand, and that there was not even a ghost of a chance of the Jan Lokpal bill as enunciated by civil society replacing the Lok Pal bill, which by then had already become law. So, in the final analysis it would be a fair assessment to say that the struggle against corruption, initiated by India Against Corruption and later by Team Anna had been futile, and though the government had implemented some of the suggestions, it has had the final say and has exercised its right to reject a few recommendations which it obviously felt cut too close to the bone.

The BJP, the main constituent of the present NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government at the centre had thrown its weight behind Anna Hazare when it was in the opposition, but now that the shoe is on the other foot, it remains to be seen whether the renewed efforts of Anna Hazare to replace Lok Pal with Jan Lok Pal will bear any fruit. With one of Anna's trusted lieutenants Arvind Kejriwal having become a full-fledged politician, and with his party seeking a pan-India presence, his concentration on Jan Lokpal is bound to wane. Kiran Bedi too plunged into politics by joining the BJP, and was declared the party's CM (Chief Minister) candidate for Delhi, came a cropper, and has now become the Governor of the Union Territory of Puducherry. Prashant Bhushan, whose zeal for Jan Lokpal remains undiminished, is ploughing a lonely furrow, having been sacked from AAP. He, however, remains an ardent anti-corruption crusader.

The success of IAC and those who championed the cause has however to be measured in terms of their ability to raise the level of civic consciousness and to draw the attention of the people at large to a scourge called corruption, that has



to be tackled on a war footing. The movement also emphasised how corruption signifies an erosion of social values and drew significant attention to the need for accountability at all levels. ■

C.V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

# A movement called MAVA

*A male youth movement in Maharashtra to sensitise people against violence and abuse of women has gained a lot of attention. By targeting patriarchal stereotypes, this movement hopes to change perceptions all around, says Shoma A. Chatterji.*

**M**AVA, a civil service organisation was born in March 1993. MAVA is an acronym for MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AND ABUSE and is based in Mumbai. It will celebrate its silver jubilee next year. Over the past 24 years, it has done yeoman service in spreading awareness about violence against women among young men and women of the city and across the state of Maharashtra and beyond. The three-pronged objective of this organisation was, (a) to deconstruct masculinity, (b) to help men break out of their dominant masculine image, and (c) help form an equal society that would regard women with respect.

MAVA is the brainchild of Harish Sadani, a graduate of the TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences), Mumbai, and a bachelor by choice, who was brought up in a community housing home where as a child, "I witnessed our neighbours' lives up close, and noticed how women faced oppression and violence even at home. My family, however, reversed the order of the world outside," says the ever-smiling and cheerful Sadani who does not wear his glory on his sleeve, and is grounded enough to father a movement few men would have thought of. The initiative to form this was first taken by noted journalist C.Y. Gopinath in September 1991.

Over the past decade and more, Harish has been closely working with a large number of male youths between the ages of 18 and 20 focussing on issues surrounding masculinity, sexual health and gender-sensitive behaviour. This youth initiative began in Pune district in 2006. "The initiative included selecting youths from colleges and rural communities, finding out if they had leadership skills and creative potential, and then sensitising them to be imparted intense training to communicate with their peers and other young men on gender, healthy relationships and sexuality-related matters. Through experiential learning, personal dialogue and revisiting formation of gender norms, the trained youths have been engaging their peers and thousands of young men in their respective regions," explains Harish.

## The impact

In 2006, three boys from Jejuri College in rural Pune were given expulsion notices for harassing a female student with lewd songs played on their cell phones. Out of college, they



**Harish Sadani with the new posters on redefining masculinity**

would have spent their time smoking or drinking or gambling or all three and working at some garage maybe for a few extra bucks, education, a forgotten exercise. "Our volunteers pleaded with the college administration to reconsider their stance and give the boys a second chance to learn from their mistakes. The college listened and says Sadani, now 50, "The boys never misbehaved again and one of them ended the year as the college's top NSS (National Service Scheme) cadet."

One therefore, can easily conclude that this lateral "second chance" approach fetched Harish and his NGO Yuva Maitri the Ashoka Changemakers and Campus of Excellence Award in April 2010. Ashoka Changemakers is an international online community that awards innovative solutions in various fields. Yuva Maitri – Marathi for Friendship Among Youngsters, beat 155 global entries to win a cash prize of \$5000 (₹2.3 lakh) and an invitation to attend and deliberate at the Campus of Excellence that was to be held in Spain in October the same year. In 2011, it was listed on a website by the Government of India in its list of Best Governance Practices in the country.

Harish who lives in Mahim was brought up in a Mumbai *chawl* filled with acts of domestic violence, and began to feel very strongly against ways and means to stop the sustenance, support and promotion of the subjugation and oppression of women. "But my firm conviction is that for change to be effective, men need to be sensitised rather than penalised,



the process needs to be made inclusive with men and young boys involved and not excluded and labelled perpetrators. By 2010, MAVA had built up a solid body of 120 volunteers across the state of Maharashtra who now function through workshops, an active Helpline (26826062) and an active website (www.mavaindia.org)

MAVA has initiated the use of varied out-of-the-box tools like interactive gender-sensitisation sessions, residential workshops, annual men's magazine, periodic wall newspapers, FAQ booklets, street theatre performances, film screenings, to create and perpetuate gender sensitivity among participants, elocutions and other special campaigns from 2007. "Our mentored youths reach out to peers and other young men and in the process, they have learnt to challenge gender roles and stereotypes besides evolving positive models of masculinity that are gender-equitable," explains Harish.

When Harish received a fellowship from the Population Council in 2006, he conceived the Yuva Maitri project which aimed at enlightening young students about gender equality, sexuality and domestic violence. The two-year project selected 33 volunteers from six colleges across mostly rural areas of Maharashtra and trained them to spread the word. These volunteers then spent a year learning about the issues in detail, and the following year the focus was on spreading the knowledge that they had gained through posters, interactive sessions and one-to-one talks.

### The movement that sustained

Out of the original 33 of Yuva Maitri, a few dropped out, but the core group remains strong. One of them, Sunil Chachar, now a leader-volunteer, said that they do face resistance when they try to make people listen. "First we struggled to get students interested. Even our teachers in college opposed it saying that this was not a worthwhile issue. Harish Sir told us to face this and find a way. Slowly, things started falling into place and as we ourselves began to change, our teachers began to see our point. Now they sometimes call me to talk to students in college about violence against women and other related issues." Chachar works as mentor with the Koregaon Park-based Equal Community Foundation (ECF) who began with the Yuva Maitri project under Harish Sadani when he was a student with the Jejuri Kala Mahavidyalaya, and remains a volunteer with



**A scene from a streetplay put up outside Grant Road station in Mumbai, as part of the RISE Campaign by MAVA**

MAVA. Chachar has now founded his own social organisation called Manas Ekatmat Samajik Sanstha, which focusses on women's health. At ECF, Chachar works in slum areas educating 14 to 17-year-olds about gender, sexuality and domestic violence. He began four such areas in the city way back in 2011.

A Personal Change Plan also forms a part of the functioning which includes working towards the empowerment of women in their personal lives such as upholding their mothers', sisters' aunts' and brother's wives' right to a life of dignity and safety. "Since 2008, I have gradually up-scaled the initiative (that began in Pune district with 30 young men) to six other districts through collaboration and strategic alliances with grassroots organisations, universities and youth bodies. A telephonic helpline for youths started in Mumbai in 2009 as a result of the up-scaling, is reaching out to thousands of distressed young men and counselling them to deal with their specific gender-related problems," explains Harish.

On the first anniversary of the brutal gang-rape of Nirbhaya in Delhi, MAVA, Mumbai organised a city-wide campaign called 'RISE' on 16 December 2016. As a part of the campaign, over 3,000 students from around 30 colleges were involved in mass public rallies simultaneously organised in 40 key spots across Mumbai from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. Several shows of a street-play 'De

**MAVA has initiated the use of varied out-of-the-box tools like interactive gender-sensitisation sessions, residential workshops, annual men's magazine, periodic wall newspapers, FAQ booklets, street theatre performances, film screenings, to create and perpetuate gender sensitivity among participants, elocutions and other special campaigns from 2007.**



Another streetplay performed at Tardeo Circle, Mumbai

*Dhakka* (Give a Blow) was staged by students of eight colleges. They had collectively scripted the play, covering forms of violence on girls and the measures that can be taken by youths to address the issue. It was a befitting tribute to Nirbhaya by the teeming youths. "I do not believe in candlelight processions because few attain concrete results, though such strategies raise awareness among the masses so that they can rise against violence on women," says Harish.

Through strategic collaborations with local colleges, universities, women's groups, grassroots community-based organisations and individual health activists, MAVA's 700 plus youth mentors are working in nine districts of Maharashtra. They have reached out to over 2,00,000 young men and adolescent boys over the past eleven years. These youngsters are spreading the message of respecting women and treating them with dignity. *Leading Lines*, an all-women professional agency is documenting the journey of MAVA through a video that will help the organisation to reach out to more boys and men to advance their mission.

## Citizens must rally

(Continued on page 5)

Serious campaigns are relegated to a niche audience, and the numbers are few. Campaigns like beach cleaning activities or tree planting drives or for that matter, the Rally for Rivers which hardly warrants any serious discussion, will see large numbers being mobilised across geographies. Those who initiate and drive these campaigns are champions at designing the right narrative and then controlling it tightly. They are clued into what drives numbers and understand the audience better than they understand environmental issues as such. And in this context, those who are driving serious environmental campaigns see themselves feeling increasingly incompetent

Referrals are effected through women's groups in the city like Sakhya, Special Cell for Women, SNEHA and YWCA for counselling husbands in cases of marital conflict and domestic violence periodically.

"Till date, my initiative has reached out to over 60,000 young men through hundreds of interactive workshops, symposia, camps, youth-meets and other community outreach programmes. A few years ago, my youth initiative was featured as an example of 'Best Practice in Public Service Delivery' at Government of India's website," sums up Sadani, adding, "Feminism is an inclusive concept and practice. Men are not enemies of women. The true enemies are attitudes born of patriarchy. To change these attitudes, we must seek solutions through both men and women, specially men who have been conditioned through thousands of years to believe that they are physically stronger and socially more powerful than women which vests them with the right to abuse and misuse the power against groups they believe are weaker – women."

Among many awards, Harish Sadani was bestowed the prestigious Maharashtra Foundation 2010 Award by the Maharashtra Foundation, US, instituted by entrepreneurs of Indian origin to annually felicitate individuals doing significant work on social issues in Maharashtra. He won the prize of ₹50,000 in January 2011. He won the Muktaa

Sanman 2014 Award from IBN-Lokmat, and the Karmveer Puraskar in 2010. ■



Shoma A. Chatterji 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. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards.

and clueless about what to do and for whom. Environmental campaigns are ultimately a social construct and rely on patronage and numbers. After years and decades of hard work if their work is not able to get any support then it becomes difficult to justify the effort. Burn out anyways brings activity to a halt. The environmental challenges we face are serious



and I do not see us as a society rising to the situation adequately. ■

Rishi Aggarwal is a Mumbai based environmentalist who has for almost two decades been closely involved with numerous environmental campaigns primarily in Mumbai but also adding voice to national issues. He speaks from a personal context of the challenges in sustaining campaigns.

# The rape of conscience

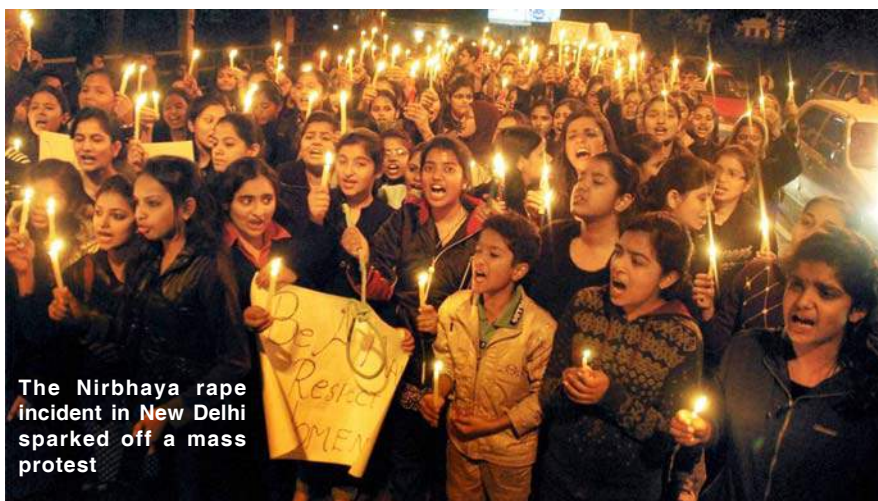
*The Nirbhaya rape incident in New Delhi on December 16, 2012, created a furore and brought millions of women into the streets to press for stringent safety measures, as well as changes in rape laws. Kamayani Bali Mahabal chronicles this mass campaign.*

THE Delhi 'Nirbhaya' gang rape in 2012 sparked off a debate and waves of protests against the brutal sexual assault, while the demand for a need to amend the rape law with a survivor-centric approach reverberated in newspapers, TV debates and discussions.

## The stringent law

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (CLA) 2013, was formed after reviewing 80,000 recommendations that were received after wide consultations and research by the Justice Verma Committee. The committee in its report emphasised on the duty of the State to ensure gender justice which arose from sources of international law. Emphasising the need for gender justice, it discussed at length the Universal declaration of Human Rights Convention Against Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Beijing Principles of the Independence of Judiciary to which India is a party. The report acknowledged violence against women as not only an offence under the principles of penology, but also a direct constitutional violation. The Justice Verma Committee report used a feminist language wherein lies the importance of this document in the feminist legal jurisprudence.

The report starts off with enunciating how rape is associated with shame and honour of the society, and emphasises on the duty of the state to deconstruct this paradigm of shame and honour. It also emphasises on the need to view rape as any other crime against an individual. The report goes on to say that rape should not be viewed as an offence against the society, but one which is against the individual woman. The report looks at sex as something cultural and not biological, which also comes from a very feminist understanding of sex. Several crimes like stalking, voyeurism were clearly specified and included in the list of new crimes



The Nirbhaya rape incident in New Delhi sparked off a mass protest

in this legislation. Acid violence and disrobing were further elaborated on, with respect to the punishment that should be given to the convict. Under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, the age of consent was increased from 16 to 18. In order to ensure that victims are not hesitant in filing a complaint, the security blanket that protected public servants and police officers has been removed. Stalking, voyeurism and sexual harassment, which were once considered gender neutral, were changed to offence committed on women. The law also states that in case of repeated offence of rape or in case where victim has been led to a comatose stage, death penalty can be pronounced on the convict. The 2013 Act also brought about changes in the evidentiary framework relating to sexual offences. Section 53A and an additional proviso to Section 146 of the Indian Evidence Act were introduced specifying that a victim's previous sexual experience with any person is irrelevant for the issue of consent or the quality of consent.

## Under-utilisation of Nirbhaya Fund

The government also launched the ₹ 2,000-crore Nirbhaya Fund to support sexual assault victims. Money was spent on CCTV cameras, helplines, mobile apps and more. Four hundred fast-track courts were set up to handle rape cases. Sadly, more than 90 percent of the ₹ 3,100-crore 'Nirbhaya Fund',



has remained unutilised since 2015. 'According to an affidavit filed on the utilisation of the funds on 23 August, the Centre has sanctioned ₹ 264 crore – just 8.5 per cent of total funds – till August 2017 .

Only 1 in 4 rape cases ended in conviction in India in 2016, which is the lowest since 2012, as per the National Crime Data. India's conviction rate for rape, at 25.5%, remains low compared to all cognisable crimes. The reason for the declining conviction rate in rape cases could be due to the fact that lesser number of registered cases could be proved in court or that the police was not able to investigate properly or that survivors did not have a good legal defense lawyer. In the last five years, the number of rapes reported each year in Delhi has more than tripled, registering an increase of 277% from 572 in 2011 to 2,155 in 2016, according to data released by the Delhi Police. Cases pertaining to "assault on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty" (under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code) have increased by 473% from 727 in 2012 to 4,165 in 2016.

The rise in the number of reported rapes could be due to advisories issued by the government and the Supreme Court of India that action would be taken against police personnel who fail to register a First Information Report (FIR) for rape and other cognisable offences.

Only 50% of all crimes are reported, and only half of these are registered as FIRs, a 2015 public survey entitled 'Crime victimisation and safety perception' conducted by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) among households in Delhi and Mumbai, found.

### Tracing the women's movements

The Indian women's movements' focus on rape as a legal reform issue emerged primarily through cases of custodial rape in the late 1970s. Two prominent cases galvanised the movement towards national campaigns demanding legal reform; the custodial rape of Rameeza Bee, a young Muslim woman in 1978, and that of Mathura, a young tribal woman in 1980. In both these landmark cases, the emphasis in the trials was not on evidence of rape, but rather the survivor's sexual history and their characterisation as promiscuous, leading to the acquittal of the police officers charged. Feminists gradually grew disillusioned by the role of law reform in combating violence against women, for they saw a disconnection between enactment of new laws and their implementation. This disillusionment did cause a shift in how women's organisations chose to engage with law. Instead of focusing on demanding law reforms, some organisations focused on taking up individual women's cases in courts, while others focused on the lack of institutional support for women, and created women's centres to provide women with legal

assistance, health services and counseling .

While feminists have continued to look at the state with scrutiny for their role in perpetuating women's oppression, they nevertheless maintain their engagement with the state for legislative reforms. Such was the case after the December 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case; women's organisations knew they had to set the path for others to follow, and petition the government for overhauling legal procedures.

### Dissecting the protest

Protesting the incident, for the first time, a mass upsurge spilled over onto the roads of Delhi and in other parts of the country as well; debate, discussion and dialogue defined rape in new perspectives; political masters and legal luminaries lent their voices; social scientists and psychoanalysts explained the issue; self-proclaimed godmen preached on it, and the media provided a platform to all of them like never before .

The men did come for protests, but the presence of these men further created a hostile atmosphere for women during the protests where they were subjected to groping and ogling by the men; though there were instances of genuine solidarity as demonstrated by the "Skirt the Issue" campaign in Bangalore in January 2013, which saw 25 men wearing skirts with more than 200 supporters present to raise awareness that the choice of clothing could not be a justification for rape.

The discourse on women's bodily integrity and dignity continued to be propagated in public spaces as well as in private homes. The emerging voices from the general public reflected changing ideologies that violence against women is as much of a men's issue as it is a woman's, as evident from a demonstrative poster which said, "Don't tell your daughter not to go out, tell your son to behave properly." The shifting ideologies were also reflected in the motto "Don't get raped," which was revolutionised to "Do not rape", to place the emphasis on men's actions instead of women's. The slogans raised during the protests were, "*Mahilaein mange azadi, sadak pe chalne ki, raat mein nikalne ki, kuch bhi pehenne ki*" (Women demand freedom, to walk on the streets, to go out at night, to wear anything they like.).

Many slogans were based on the principle that a woman's dress, mobility, or her disposition had nothing to do with getting raped. There were posters and placards that carried the slogans, "Don't teach us how to dress, teach men not to rape," "My voice is higher than my skirt," and "Your gaze is the problem so why should I cover myself up?"

The protests therefore raised larger questions relating to sexual violence and discrimination against women. Although, the CLA 2013 has deleted the proviso that allowed the judiciary to exercise discretion to reduce the sentence for rape, but the judicial responses to rape are still overwhelmed by

concerns of chastity and marriageability of the survivor, rather than focused on punishing a violent exercise of power. Let us also not forget that even as Delhi witnessed unprecedented protests against the December 16, 2012 gang rape, the high rate of sexual assaults on Dalit women in neighbouring Haryana or the gross failure of the state to even probe grave allegations of mass rape in 1991 by the Indian army in Kunan and Poshpara villages of Kashmir, did not spark off any public outrage. It is this silence and this lack of scrutiny from the public and the media that encourages the impunity with which sexual assaults are committed, and leads to acquittals of the accused.

To counter such biases, the legal system needs to provide enabling mechanisms. By having a cadre of para-legal workers who would help the survivor navigate the criminal justice system; public prosecutors trained in understanding sexual violence and gender justice; and judges oriented to comprehending sexual violence as rooted in patriarchy and structural inequality. Survivors need to be provided with reparative justice, which would include compensation and other restitutorial measures. By only making amendments in

criminal law, the state has abdicated its constitutional obligation. Women's enjoyment of the right to life remains constrained by violence and the fear of violence.

A transformation can only happen through campaigns holding politicians accountable for assertively tackling the issue of violence against women. In a government whose officials are elected to be representatives of the people, these leaders need to set the tone and path for their constituents. Violence against women will continue to be justified by victim-blaming, and communal fascist and casteist politics will keep breeding, as long as there is patriarchal control over women. It is all the more urgent to recognise that freedom for women



from the patriarchal structures of the household, caste, and community along with financial, social and sexual autonomy needs to be prioritised in the political agenda for all democratic and progressive movements. ■

Kamayani Bali Mahabal writer is an expert in gender, health and human rights issues.



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# Soon, a zero garbage society!

*In a portrayal of what citizens can achieve, an affluent high-rise in central Mumbai has shown the way in segregating and composting garbage to an exceptional level. Sujata Sridhar, a resident and active campaigner, gives us a lowdown on what it takes to shake a people out of their stupor and achieve such miraculous results. Citizens, indeed, can!*

**S**EGREGATING, composting, recycling. These words were not new to us. We knew these are important for our city, our country, our world, our planet. What then was stopping us from doing it? There may be many answers to this question, but I believe most people thought it was too much work. It was just easy to put everything in one bin and leave it outside. Sorting out our garbage was always viewed as someone else's job.

I was told that last year some high schoolers from our building Raheja Atlantis in Lower Parel, Mumbai, had put up a proposal for garbage segregation. As all of us know, the basic human instinct is to reject change if one is living comfortably in the present environment. Why would anybody want to increase their work and expenses? Their proposal was therefore not accepted.

Then we suddenly started reading articles in various newspapers about the BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) wanting to make garbage segregation mandatory in large housing societies. That came as a wake-up call to us. We heard of a couple of buildings in the neighbourhood that were already segregating and composting. We visited them to see how they were doing it. We realised we would need some hand holding in the initial stages, but we decided to start. And once we set the ball rolling, there was no looking back.

In the meantime our enthusiastic youngsters had finished school and gone off to colleges abroad. As we wanted to be absolutely sure of following the right processes, we approached a few NGOs and some private companies offering help with waste management solutions. We sat through a few interesting presentations and discussions, and decided to go with Sampurnearth.

## Hard work, rich returns

For anyone who is keen on starting segregation and composting in their building, the first thing people need to understand is that it doesn't matter how much professional help you get, you have to be prepared to work hard yourself. Every household in the building needs to start with basic segregation - wet and dry. Easy as it may sound, this does not happen just by sending messages and mails, or by putting up



**A Sampurnearth volunteer explaining segregation of garbage to the domestic and housekeeping staff of Raheja Atlantis building**

charts of what goes in which bin. After the initial couple of weeks, when we did not see much progress towards our goal, we conducted a training session for all domestic help in the building along with the housekeeping staff. After all, most of the wet waste coming from the kitchen, is handled by domestic help. This gave everybody a chance to ask questions and clear whatever doubts they had in their mind about wet and dry waste. For example, one person thought that a take away container should go with wet waste because it is wet from the inside.

Though we did see a marked improvement in segregation levels after the training session, there were many households that were still not co-operating. After repeated requests, we realised that we needed to have strict rules in place. So, clear instructions were given to housekeeping staff to inspect the garbage bins and not to collect unsegregated waste. We also informed those households that they would have to dispose the waste themselves as they were not complying. We maintained a detailed register in which we marked every household that did not comply. After another couple of weeks, we had overcome the first hurdle. Everybody was segregating!

There was already an Excel composting machine in the building that had never been used. We had it serviced, bought a crusher and started composting with the help of one staff and a supervisor from Sampurnearth.

(Continued on page 16)



# Being the change

*A residents' welfare initiative in a key, yet unplanned and busy central Mumbai district, holds out hope for a better tomorrow for the bustling city of Mumbai. Leena Sabharwal, a resident-activist, chronicles some of these efforts.*

**L**OWER Parel...the bustling heart of Mumbai. The neighbourhood which has seen maximum development in terms of residential, commercial and business establishments. Along with it came challenges of tremendous pressure on its infrastructure as well as hygiene.

The residents of Lower Parel, however, decided to do something about it. They all came together to bring issues of traffic, cleanliness, encroachment, and noise pollution, to the notice of the authorities. The residents joined hands with the Worli Residents Welfare Association (WRWA) to fulfill their goal of a better neighbourhood. Action committees were set up to tackle the above issues in a systematic manner. Weekly meetings to discuss future plans were held as well as periodic meetings with the police, traffic, municipal and urban development teams are held to ensure that the change is brought about for the better.

### It starts with a small step

The residents of Raheja Atlantis Cooperative Housing Society have done some ground breaking work in terms of citizen initiatives. The burgeoning traffic bottlenecks on Ganpatrao Kadam Marg were causing school buses to be delayed, constant jams and angst amongst office goers. This was due to increased number of cars due to various business establishments located on that narrow road. The residents teamed up and visited the traffic authorities with a viable solution, requesting them to place road dividers along the road to avoid indiscriminate U-turns. This was a plan that worked well to a large extent. Their next project is to improve the pedestrian experience and make the sidewalks conducive to walking.

To begin with, with the support of WRWA, they adopted the sidewalk outside their lane. They had a cleanliness drive, beautification of the same along with planting of trees on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017. This event saw large participation from the residents of nearby towers, local residents and children. The idea was not just beautification, but to create awareness of neat and clean living and educate them about the evils of garbage dumping, etc., which lead to diseases and epidemics. The neighbourhood children enjoyed painting the wall and it give them an opportunity to get their creative juices flowing. In response to this enthusiasm, the residents plan to conduct community activities such as art and yoga classes.



**Children of Raheja Atlantis building in Lower Parel participated in the beautification drive**

Simultaneously on the same day, WRWA conducted a free medical camp in the local municipal school which was well-received by the neighbourhood. Free medicines and supplements were handed out. This event was backed by Wockhardt.

### Some roadblocks

This path of preventing encroachment by hawkers as well as dumping of garbage by the locals has definitely not been a smooth one. There were cows being left on the sidewalk, where they not only defecated but left uneaten fodder, causing a large hygiene issue. The BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) along with the State veterinary department ensured that the cows were confiscated and the owner fined.

The residents of Lower Parel partnered with municipal authorities, in a major drive to get rid of the hawkers who did not hold valid licenses, plus also they were restricted to a certain space, not spilling onto the road. This has now led to cleaner footpaths and streets. The residents constantly take up the initiative to educate the locals on civic rules and cleanliness. In one such initiative, they have managed to create a bus stop zone for school buses, as they were otherwise parking on this already narrow road causing traffic bottlenecks. This two-birds-with-one-stone approach resulted in not only safety of the school going children, but also elimination of random squatters on free sidewalks.

The other pressing issue was that of noise pollution. The residents were horrified with the blatant flaunting of acceptable noise levels in the locality. Loudspeakers were blaring at unacceptable decibel levels way beyond the 10 p.m. deadline. The arrival of any festival sent shivers down the spines of the residents dreading what was in store for them as far as the aural experience was concerned. The residents met with senior officials in the N.M. Joshi police station and expressed their concerns over this growing menace despite appropriate Supreme Court rulings. Residents now contact a toll-free helpline and record their noise pollution grievances. Today, they have come a long way where not only does the neighbourhood respect one's space but also the police authorities proactively follow up to ensure that the complaints are resolved to finality.

## Conclusion

The residents of Lower Parel are definitely on a path to a better tomorrow. A number of buildings have taken up the initiative of garbage segregation. This will be a huge step towards a greener tomorrow. Buildings such as Raheja Atlantis are utilising their wet waste to produce their own organic compost. This compost is very beneficial in meeting the nutritional needs of their beautiful garden. They make as much as 100 kgs of compost already. They are also creating disposal avenues for e-waste as well as creating tie-ups with NGOs like GreenSole for productively utilising discarded shoes.

## Soon, a zero garbage society!

(Continued from page 14)

Our building generates about 80 kgs of wet waste every day. With that, we got our first 100 kgs of manure in six weeks. Our garden committee confirmed that it was of excellent quality!

A team from the BMC from our G South Ward visited our building and was extremely happy to see what we had achieved within three months. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was gathering momentum and they were able to document some initiative taken in their own ward. They sent news reporters to our building, our waste management initiative had found its way in newspapers and magazines, and we were also delighted that our efforts were being noticed and recognised.

After this first successful step, it was now time to move ahead. We introduced a third level of segregation viz., biomedical and hygiene waste. This includes soiled diapers, sanitary pads, cotton swabs etc. This is all reject waste i.e., it can neither be composted nor recycled. Some residents complained that this was getting more and more cumbersome and taking too much of their time. However, one needs to understand that once one starts segregating, it comes naturally and it is not time consuming. This is a long journey and we hope to learn with every step we take. Our aim is to become

However, all this would not be possible without the cooperation of the locals. Lower Parel has a peculiar mix of the age old mill worker community who have been a part of the Lower Parel culture for decades, and the residents of the new 'towers' who are mostly from the corporate background. The growing disparity in their individual way of life, expectations as well as resistance to the transformation of the locality are concerns one has to watch out for. The authorities have extended a tremendous amount of support to all those who have been involved in bringing about this change. They have backed the citizen initiatives whole heartedly to the extent that they can.

It is commendable how the tower residents have decided to take up projects by harmoniously working with the locals. In order to achieve long term solutions and ensure long term sustainability, it is important to have mutual participation and consent of all the stakeholders. ■

**After a successful corporate stint of over 10 years, Leena Sabharwal took over a new role as a home maker post her two children. Ever since, she has been actively teaching patients at the Pediatric ward, Tata Memorial Hospital, and runs classes from home for pre-schoolers. Her hunger to leave a better world for children has prompted her to participate in various social and community activities, and one such has been to join the Advanced Locality Management programme.**



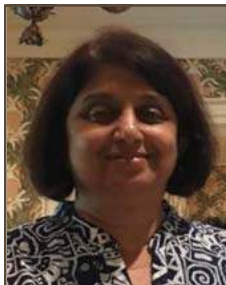
**After a successful corporate stint of over 10 years, Leena Sabharwal took over a new role as a home maker post her two children. Ever since, she has been actively teaching patients at the Pediatric ward, Tata Memorial Hospital, and runs classes from home for pre-schoolers. Her hunger to leave a better world for children has prompted her to participate in various social and community activities, and one such has been to join the Advanced Locality Management programme.**

a zero garbage society i.e., a society that gives no garbage to the BMC.

## Conclusion

To me personally, it has been a very satisfying experience to see our building making its own contribution towards a greener Mumbai. We must never forget that we are all residents of this planet only for the blink of an eye, and that we don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, but only borrow it from our children. For their sake, as much as for our own, I hope that other societies who want to start segregation and composting but are hesitating to take that first step, will take a leaf out of our book. We would be happy to share our experience with any society/group that wants to start waste segregation, and welcome them to take a look at our waste management programme. ■

**Sujata Sridhar grew up in Pune and has a Master's degree in German from the University of Pune. She has been a German language teacher at various Goethe Institutes in India and abroad and has lived in various cities in India, and then overseas for almost 20 years because of her husband's job. She now lives in Lower Parel, Mumbai, and plays an active role to help find solutions to civic problems in the area. She is a member of the local residents' welfare association and is on the management committee of her housing society.**

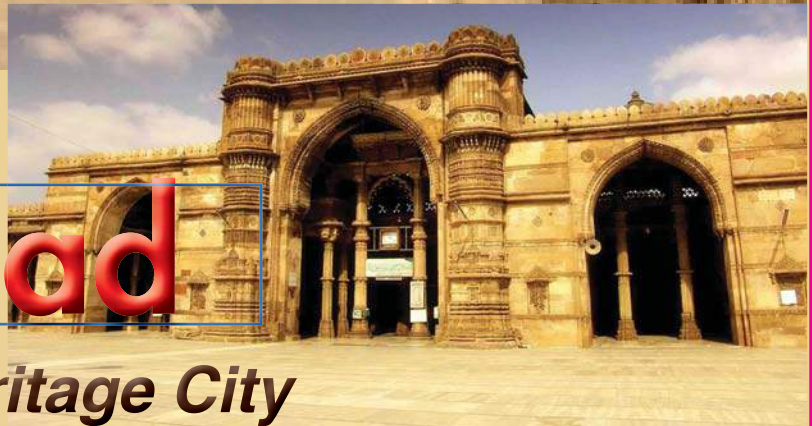


**KNOW INDIA BETTER**



# Ahmedabad

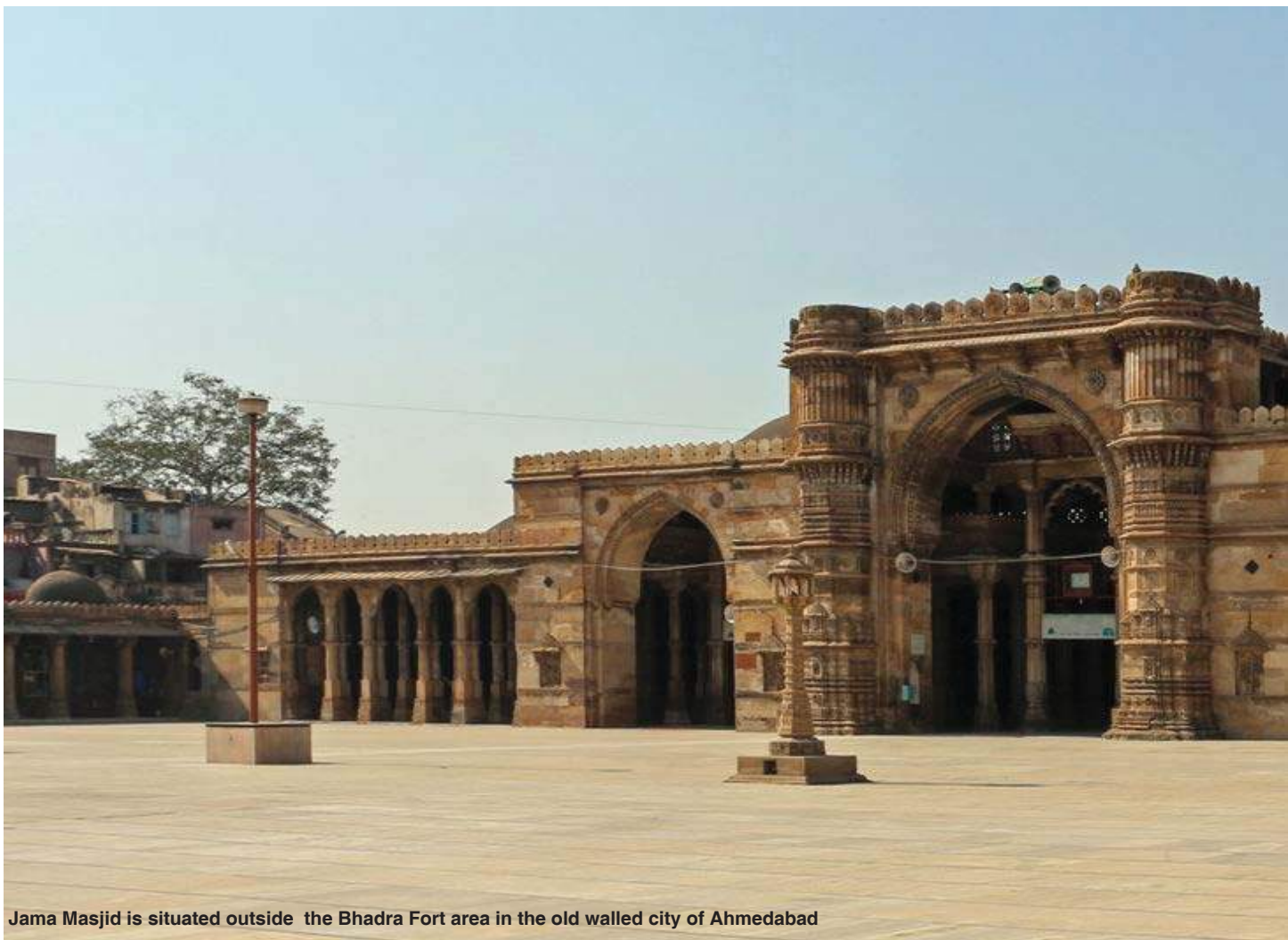
*India's first World Heritage City*



A bustling city in the prosperous state of Gujarat, Ahmedabad is a unique blend of heritage and development that stands even taller now after being declared India's first World Heritage City by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), earlier this year. It was a well-deserved title for a city that has experienced myriad cultures, rulers, dynasties, governments and industrious people. The diversity and dynamism of Ahmedabad has finally got its due with the coveted heritage city title.

**Text : Gajanan Khergamker**





Jama Masjid is situated outside the Bhadra Fort area in the old walled city of Ahmedabad

**A**HMEDABAD has been an important trading centre for centuries, albeit under changing rulers and dynasties. First came the industries, then the industrious entrepreneurship that helped Ahmedabad in creating a conducive and stable environment for trade and commerce. But, there is more to Ahmedabad: Its culture, architecture, history and legends form a unique and rich blend, and that is what lends the city its character. 'Amdavad', as the locals call their city, has something for everyone. The old city has beautifully blended in and accepted the newer ways of life, in its wake.

### Muslim makers, Hindu buyers

For instance, till date, the peaceful Hindu-Muslim integration is visible in Sarkhej Roza. With the monsoons coming to an end and the humidity in the air finally easing out, Sarkhej Roza of Ahmedabad will, once again, be the destination for hundreds of Muslim potters who will move into *karkhanas* here to create pots for the next eight months for predominantly Hindu wholesalers.

The Kumbharwada has around 25 homes of potter families living and working in tandem. Most of the potters

are from North Gujarat – Mehsana or Patan. Their huts are covered with plastic sheets while unsold pots are placed in beautiful symmetrical patterns in rows and on top of each other, waiting to be sold in the wholesale market. The potters, Muslims, mostly belonging to the Sumra community, specialise in creating multi-hued pots to store water particularly during the summers.

### Beating drought, the Adalaj way

The five-storied step well at Adalaj, close to Ahmedabad, bears testimony to the fact that the drought has been no stranger to Gujarat. The step-well was built in 1499 by a Muslim king Mohammed Begda for Queen Rani Roopba, wife of Veer Singh, the Vaghela chieftain, in an attempt to woo her, following her husband's killing in war. The presence of this step-well, like many other historical structures also underlines the fact that Gujarat itself has been a victim of violence – a fact that most choose to downplay.

All talk of climate change, global warming and water conservation propagated by the 'developed' world apart, India and Pakistan together are home to Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Lothal with a string of wells, which is the predecessor of



Adalaj Ni Vav

the step well. As many as 700 wells have been discovered in just one section of Mohenjodaro, leading scholars to believe that the 'cylindrical brick-lined wells' were invented by the people of the Indus Valley civilisation. Throughout history, the region which is now Ahmedabad, has played a crucial role. Lothal was one of the most important cities of ancient India during the Indus Valley civilisation, and happens to be the world's earliest-known dock.

### The city

To fully understand the uniqueness and the significance of Ahmedabad in India and her history, one has to visit the city. The city was settled around River Sabarmati and now has two distinct characteristic zones on the east and west of the river. East Ahmedabad boasts of older Ahmedabad, home to *Pol*s (small settlements), *Darwajas* (city gates) and myriad other architectural marvels bearing testimony to the Hindu-Muslim cultural fusion.

The city that has developed on the west of the river Sabarmati is more recent, bearing modern constructions and new-age developments. It is more of a planned city with extensive residential and commercial pockets.





#### The Sidi Saiyed Mosque *jali*

Just by walking through the streets of Ahmedabad, you will see and feel the unison of Hindu, Jain and Islamic craftsmanship, and on a smaller scale, British architecture as well. The 15<sup>th</sup> century Bhadra Fort, the Jhulta Minar or swaying minaret, and the Sidi Saiyed mosque, one of the finest specimens of Indo-Saracenic style give us a taste of the city itself. Then there are the Town Hall, Akshardham Temple, Lal Darwaja, Amdavad ni Gufa, Kankaria Lake, etc.

Of little wonder then that prior to the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe to Ahmedabad, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had written a letter to the Sunni Waqf Board, seeking information on the historical and architectural significance of Sidi Saiyed mosque so that the PM could narrate its grandeur. And, when PM Narendra Modi took the Japanese PM to the famous mosque, he described the significance of the 16<sup>th</sup>- century mosque – symbolic of Ahmedabad's rich cultural history – to his Japanese counterpart. The *jali* of this mosque is also an icon for the city of Ahmedabad.

#### Slice of history

Possessing a landscape where the present blends



**The Kumbharwada at Sarkhej Roza, Ahmedabad**

seamlessly with history while boldly paving the way for the future, Ahmedabad's mien stands unique, owing little to European domination. Established in the year 1411 AD by Sultan Ahmad Shah of Gujarat, Ahmedabad was a product of the Sultan's ambitions to form a trading rival to the Hindu trade centre of Asaval. Later, Ahmedabad was taken over by the Mughals, the Marathas and the British.

Most Indian cities are, as a rule, compared to Western





Amdavad ni Gufa, an underground art gallery

prototypes, but Ahmedabad is, to a huge extent, an exception: And, a proud one at that. From being one of the oldest trading points in India to becoming the focal point of the Indian freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi, and then becoming a model for sustainable development in modern India, Ahmedabad has now become the nation's first World Heritage City.

### Gufa - an architectural marvel

Among the more famous structures in Ahmedabad is the Amdavad ni Gufa – an underground art gallery. Designed by architect B.V. Doshi, the gallery represents a unique juxtaposition of architecture and art. The cave-like underground structure known as a *gufa*, in Gujarati, has a roof made of multiple interconnected domes, covered with a mosaic of tiles, while on the inside, irregular columns support the domes.

### Pols - organic settlements

Popularly known as the Walled City owing to the myriad *Darwazas* that pepper the old city, Ahmedabad is known for 'pols' – cluster housing arrangements that comprises many families of a particular group linked by caste, religion or profession.

A *pol* would have a gated entrance and earmarked passages with a few 'classified' pathways known to the residents only. This is considered by most academicians



The Jhulta Minar or swaying minaret





**Lothal, one of the earliest known docks of the world**

as a vibrant evolution in urban living that permits the amalgamation of the old with the new. The houses in the *pol*s are made of intrinsically carved woodworks with columns and fresco work done around walls or ceilings. The oldest *pol* in Ahmedabad is known as the 'Mahurat Pol' and built adjacent to Manek *chowk*. Most *pol*s harbour small cottage industry units and house *khakhra* makers, book binders, toy makers and more, thereby lending a splash of colour to life there. Festivals like Navratri and Uttarayan are famous. Enthusiasts from across the world converge to Ahmedabad during this period to partake in the revelries.

### **The Bohemians**

Speaking of inclusion, it would only be fair to give due credit to 'Gulbai Tekra' – a vibrant community zone in the midst of Ahmedabad, housing members of the Bawre community. The nomadic community members arrived in Ahmedabad a few generations earlier from Rajasthan, as they claim, and have retained their colourful mien in attire and attitude. It is, for this reason, that Gulbai Tekra is popularly known as Hollywood. The inmates of Gulbai Tekra aren't any less filmy and the comparison is only fair, maintain locals!

### **Bridging the west and the east**

Any description of Ahmedabad would be incomplete without mention of its bridges. It may be recalled that prior to the British period, people would cross the river on boats from areas like Shahpur, Usmanpura and Vadaj. When the waters would be low, they would wade across the river. And, it was only around 1869 -70 that a wooden bridge was built called *Lakkadiyo Pul* that was narrow, and could not be used by motorised transport.

However, within five years of its construction, a flood led to the bridge being destroyed. It was then that a Gujarati engineer was appointed to build the bridge again. For building the bridge, a special type of iron was imported from Birmingham, UK. And, while ships carrying the iron cargo sank on two occasions, the third time around, the iron reached India and was used in the creation of Ellisbridge. It was said the bridge had enough iron to build three more bridges. And then, there were Gandhi Bridge, Subhash Bridge, Sardar Bridge, Nehru Bridge and Ambedkar Bridge, constructed over the years to join the west side of the city to the east.

### **Ahmedabad earns a place in history**

Ahmedabad played an important role during the



**The Ellisbridge, constructed with a special iron imported from the UK**

country's fight against the British and post Independence, it has become an important educational hub harbouring some of the best academic institutes in the country. So, when in July 2017, Ahmedabad was declared a World Heritage City, the first in India, it was a moment of extreme pride and relief that Ahmedabad was given its due place in history. It was given this tag at the 41<sup>st</sup> session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee meet in Krakow, Poland. Close to 20 countries that included Turkey, Lebanon, Tunisia, Portugal, Peru, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Finland, Azerbaijan, Jamaica, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, South Korea, Croatia, Angola, Cuba and, the host country of the UNESCO session, Poland, supported Ahmedabad's nomination. India's permanent representative at UNESCO, Ruchira Kamboj said the city has stood for 'peace' and 'unity' for over 600 years, while being one of the 'finest examples of Indo-Islamic architecture and Hindu-Muslim art'.

What was interesting was the fact that in this moment of history, Ahmedabad outperformed Mumbai and Delhi – the other front-runners for this title. Ahmedabad has never been a major tourist attraction like Mumbai or Delhi. The references to the city are made generally for political, commercial or academic reasons. In 2013, the World Heritage Expert Committee established by the Ministry of Culture approved

Delhi and Mumbai as final submission for UNESCO's World Heritage status.

In between this clash of the titans for cultural supremacy, Ahmedabad was hardly in the picture. The Ahmedabad dossier faced several roadblocks even with the expert committee that felt the dossier was incomplete despite an 'excellent' documentation. With uncertainties about UNESCO's acceptance of a third dossier, Ahmedabad's dossier was left in lurch, to be decided by the Ministry of Culture.



**The Ratan Pol in Ahmedabad's Walled City**





**The serene Kankaria Lake**

The next turn of events, came as shock and surprise to the committee and everyone else involved. The government chose Ahmedabad, over Delhi and Mumbai, as its nomination for UNESCO's World Heritage City category. "While Delhi's proposal has been stuck with the Urban Development Ministry since last year, Mumbai's proposal was not very strong. So we have decided to nominate Ahmedabad, which has a clear-cut proposal," the Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma said.

Both Delhi and Mumbai had executed strategic PR campaigns but several factors led to turning down of proposals of the two mega cities. In hindsight, development and consequent restrictions on the same were the major reason why Delhi and Mumbai were left out. Once a city is given the status of a heritage city, several restrictions are imposed on development, redevelopment and affiliated activities.

Both Mumbai and Delhi could not have afforded that, which is why Ahmedabad was chosen and the city had substantial heritage on ground to speak for itself.

There are more than 250 world heritage cities in the world and India did not have even one, till now, despite being home to some of the world's oldest civilisations and cultures. The critical factor being that India could not have afforded to curb developmental demands in its 'heritage rich' cities.



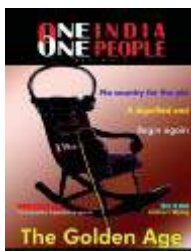
And also, to think of it, very few cities in India would have a heritage as rich and varied as Ahmedabad. ■

Gajanan Khargamker is the chief editor of DraftCraft – a media-legal firm that tackles offbeat issues and subjects the mainstream media tend to overlook for want of space and initiative.

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**Senior Citizens**



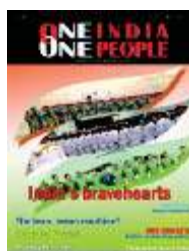
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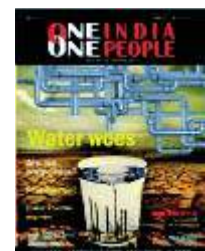
**Defence**



**Oceans**



**Water woes**



*“I decided to begin the movement in schools because that is where these problems begin and my effort would be that much more important to me and to the society at large.”*

**Bobby Chakraborty** is a man with a mission. We may meet successful young men and women who have ventured into unknown areas of human enterprise and shone in their chosen fields. We have heard of youngsters using their physical and mental challenges as assets, and not as liabilities. But here we have a young man in his mid-thirties, tall, handsome and healthy, who has taken on a mission in life not many will venture into. He is the pioneer in the building of a movement for the eradication of smoking, drinking and drugs among different groups, having begun with schools right across West Bengal. Here, he speaks to **Shoma A. Chatterji** about his campaign.

**There must have been a spark that set the whole thing off. What was it?**

I lost an uncle, talented, good-looking and affectionate, when he was 29. He was a drug addict. That was the trigger that set my activist juices flowing. I was an active member of the anti-addiction drive in school which continued when I did my marine engineering, and even when I served in the merchant navy. In 2002, I took a very bold step by quitting the merchant navy and jumping into films and television. I looked around to find that almost everyone in the industry, from the director to the spot boy smoked and drank. This strengthened my determination to continue with my movement.

**But you needed to get the entire activism organised, right?**

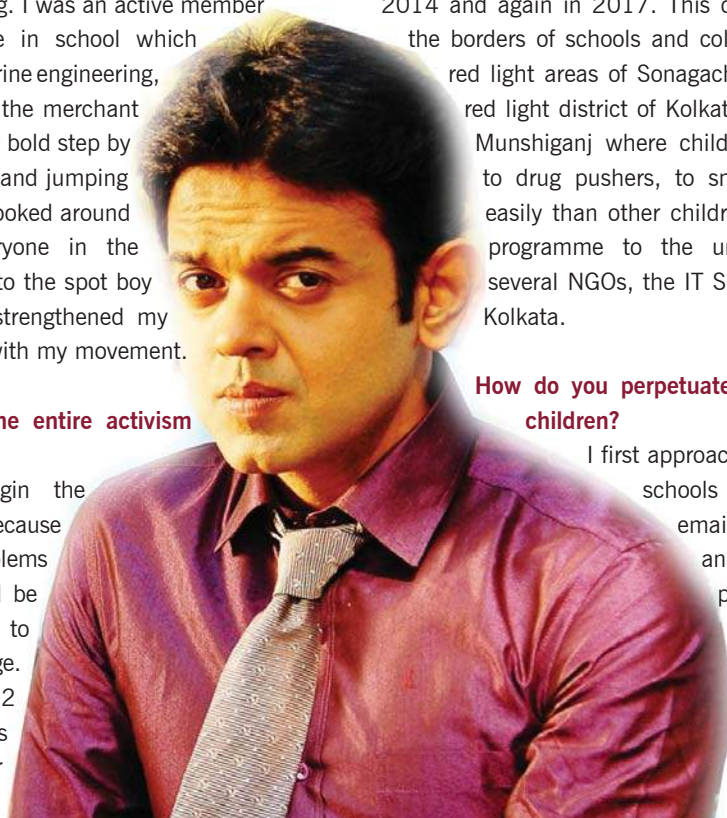
Right. I decided to begin the movement in schools because that is where these problems begin, and my effort would be that much more important to me and to the society at large. It took shape in June 2012 with a group of 250 students sponsored by an NGO in their indoor centre at Sonarpur.

**How many schools have you covered till now?**

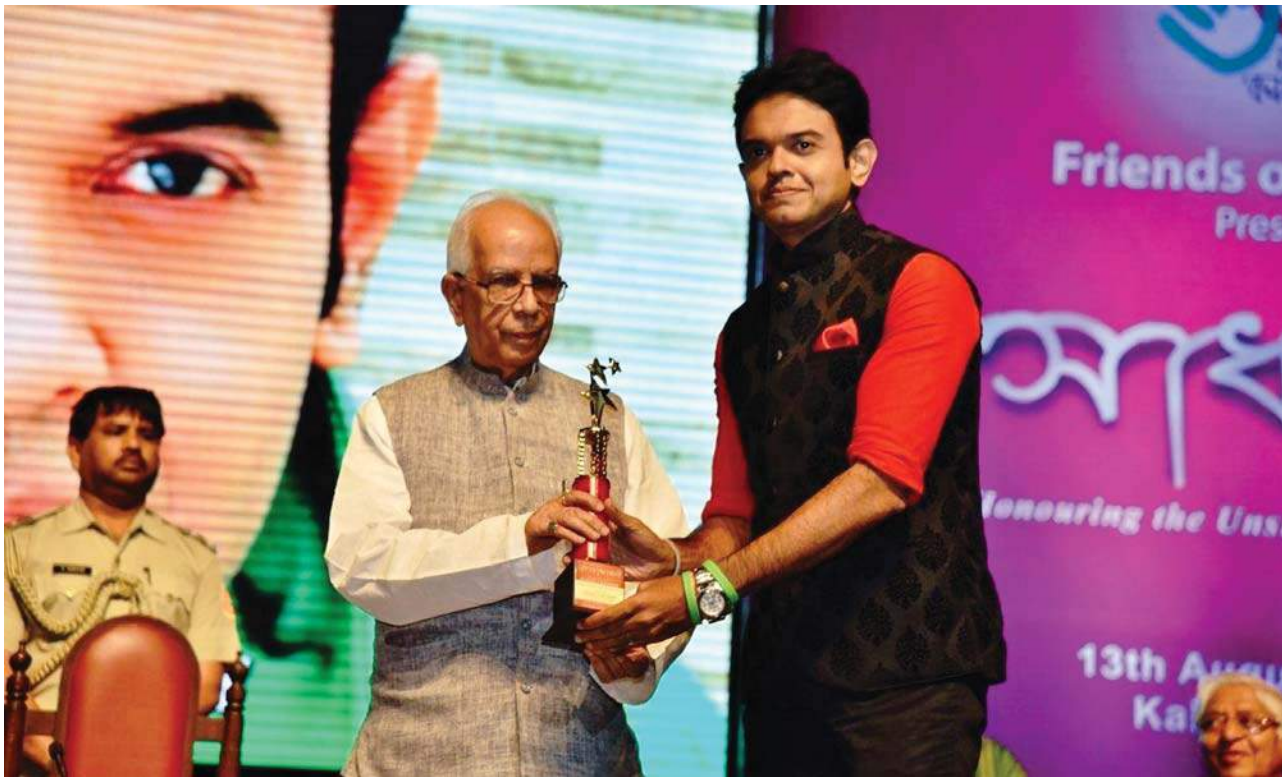
I must have covered a little more than 200 schools not only in West Bengal, but in a few places beyond West Bengal such as Gwalior and of course, in the USA, not once but twice, in 2014 and again in 2017. This campaign has now crossed the borders of schools and colleges and entered into the red light areas of Sonagachhi, which is the notorious red light district of Kolkata, along with Kalighat and Munshiganj where children are prone to fall prey to drug pushers, to smoking and drinking more easily than other children. I have also carried my programme to the underprivileged children in several NGOs, the IT Sector of TCS in Sector 5 in Kolkata.

**How do you perpetuate the message among the children?**

I first approach the principals of different schools either through phone or email followed by direct contact, and try to persuade them to permit me to conduct a two-hour interactive session with the kids, trying to instil in them an awareness about addiction and substance abuse of every kind such as cigarettes,







**Bobby receiving the Asadharan 2016 award from the Governor of West Bengal, Shri Krishna Tripathi**

*hookah*, alcohol and drugs. The children span the classes seven to twelve. Then I interact with them to check their attentiveness during my demo and now this has become more than just a session against drug addiction, because it teaches the child to rule the mind, to learn the value of life, health and family. This mission is neither a business proposition nor a political propaganda, because I stay away from any party representation in any way. I do not charge any fee for the demonstrations and the sole purpose is to raise social awareness against addiction and substance abuse.

**You have a special facebook page for your campaign?**

This special page has more than 1800 members, almost all of them students I met in their respective schools. Many of those who have passed out of school have remained with this movement and with me. Their commitment does not begin or end with posts on the page, but extends to help me actively in my campaigns. Among them the first name is of Arjun Sarkar, my brother, who studies computer engineering. South Point High School students Saurav Banerjee and Utsav Dan, Agnirudra Sarkar of Calcutta Boys School, Devjit Chatterjee of DAV Public School, Debraaj Chowdhury, Arghya Dev and last but not never the least, Nirmalya Sarkar of Kendriya Vidyalaya and Kunal Dey of Sarada

Prasad Institution Utladanga, who helped me greatly in my visits to the schools in the Sundarbans. They often volunteer to come along with me to different schools, help me set up the proscenium for the workshop, document facts and help me in my presentation. I call them the soldiers in my army, spreading peace and harmony of a different kind.

**I want this movement to carry on...even when I am not there...but who is going to take it forward with as much passion and selflessness as it demands? I hope it does not end with me. But I believe that all of us can spread our wings beyond our immediate families to bring a change. Life is short and as we realise that the clock is ticking away, we begin to understand that we must give back to the society that has given us so much....**

**Any anecdotes from children who have had a bad family experience with smoking or alcohol?**

So many that I can write a book on those experiences put together! Once, a boy of around 14 in a reputed school came up to me and said that he drinks regularly from his father's bar at home, and has become an addict but wants to come out of it. I contacted his father, a noted man in the city, and told him that in his desperation to show off his affluence with a bar right at home, he had no idea that it might lead his 12-year-old boy to alcohol. It took time for him to take this in, but he relented later and also called me up to tell me that he had removed the bar from his home. I am still in touch with the boy and he has come out of his addiction for good.

**What about teachers you would like to mention who helped you in the campaign against any kind of abuse in schools?**





**Bobby talking to a group of people from the community**

There are many teachers and principals who have helped me by inviting me to their schools again and again. But the one name that stands out is that of Mr. Nitai Naskar, retired headmaster of Teghariya Bidyapith, Sonarpur. I met him for the first time in June 2013 when I went for a campaign when he was the acting headmaster. But he took my mission forward to as many as 41 rural and suburban schools all around 23 Parganas (South) tirelessly, selflessly and passionately. He is 77 now, but his drive is tremendous. I wished to felicitate him with a token of gratitude because I know how next to impossible it is to convince authorities and personnel to organise anti-addiction sessions. I know how challenging it is to garner support and cooperation for this kind of social work even when it is for free. I finally got the opportunity to honour him just before the Durga Pooja this year in our Anti-Addiction Campaign (AAC) in his own school, where he was once the headmaster.

#### **How were the two US trips on invitation from different schools and colleges in 2014 and 2017?**

For both the trips, I am deeply grateful to Dr. Sanku Mallik, scientist at North Dakota State University and his wife Ipsita Malik, who is a microbiologist at the same University, without whom neither of my US trips would have happened and succeeded the way they did. This time, I also got great help and encouragement from Dr. Khwaja Hossain and Mrs. Jolly Green, the mother of Sreejon Lala who passed away in a tragic car crash when he was only 17. They helped spread my mission in the US. I had made a 14-minute musical drama video called *My Wonderful World* as part of my presentation in the US with some soldiers from my

army. This 2017 visit is very special to me because, I got invitations from two of the largest universities in the US namely, the Minnesota State University and the Mayeville State University, in addition to the invitation from one of the largest schools in the US the Chaney Middle School. The experience and the feedback for the presentations and the musical drama were spell-binding.

#### **Tell us about the awards that you have been bestowed with.**

In October 2015, I received the prestigious Shrestha Samman award, and in August 2016, I received the very honourable Asadharan Award. Both were handed over to me by the Honourable Governor of West Bengal Shree Krishna Tripathi, and the recognition was for being a young “Changemaker” of society.

#### **How do you visualise the future of this movement?**

I want this movement to carry on...even when I am not there... but who is going to take it forward with as much passion and selflessness as it demands? I hope it does not end with me. But I believe that all of us can spread our wings beyond our immediate families to bring a change. Life is short and as we realise that the clock is ticking away, we begin to understand that we must give back to the society that has given us so much....■



**Shoma A. Chatterji 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. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for ‘commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues’ among many awards.**

# Judgments so bold

*The Supreme Court has been busy upholding citizens' rights, thus also opening the door for healthy discussions about privacy and rights, says C.V. Aravind.*

**I**N recent times, the apex court in the country, the Supreme Court, has covered itself with glory with a couple of judgments that could have a far reaching impact, *vis a vis*, the fundamental rights available to citizens as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

The first was the abolition of triple *talaq*, for long the scourge of Muslim women across the country, a provision that provided for instant divorce by the husband by uttering the words, '*talaq, talaq, talaq*'. By a majority judgment in suits filed by aggrieved women, the court ruled triple *talaq* as illegal, and through its edict advised the government to pass suitable legislation to this effect.

The second judgment which was unanimous, was delivered by a nine-member Constitution bench headed by the Chief Justice of India, Justice J. S. Kehar, and this re-affirmed the provisions of Article 21 of the Constitution, and deemed that 'privacy' is a fundamental right, protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and liberty. The landmark judgment came in a suit filed by Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (retd.) of the Karnataka High Court, and in the 547-page order, the learned judges decreed that privacy is a constitutionally protected value, and that as it is not a right granted by the state, the state cannot take it away.

All the earlier judgments in similar cases, some even dating back to the emergency days, were superseded and declared null and void. This decree could have a broader bearing on civil rights as well as the law under Section 377 criminalising homosexuality. Incidentally, a High Court order de-

criminalising homosexuality had been overturned by the Supreme Court earlier. The right to privacy has also been brought on par with other rights such as right to life, and has been deemed as a part of freedom rights like the right of speech, movement etc., enshrined in Article 19 of the Constitution, and on similar terms with the right to human dignity.

## The thin line of privacy

This judgment should ensure a paradigm shift in the manner in which the government deals with personal information. A case in point is the matter involving 'Aadhaar', the uniform identity card which requires extensive profiling of the holders and was envisaged to cover every man, woman and child in the country. When the UPA government set up the UIDAI to issue Aadhaar cards, the BJP then in the opposition deemed it as a fraud on the people of the country. This despite the fact that the card was intended only to ensure that the government benefits, and subsidies did not find its way into accounts other than those for whom they were intended.

In what can only be described as a virtual somersault, the NDA government in power headed by the BJP has made the possession of the card, which was optional and not compulsory in the beginning, as essential for several services including inter alia filing of IT returns, opening of bank accounts, booking air tickets etc. While almost the entire population has been covered

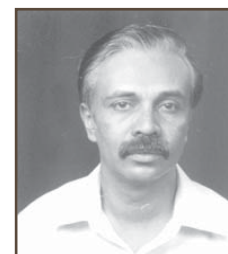


The Aadhaar card has now become essential to avail most services

through Aadhaar, the fear that the data could be leaked has not subsided, and with several agencies now in possession of these extensive profiles, including iris recognition, biometric impressions etc., the risk is greater. While the government has been initiating steps to secure the data, fool proof security is yet to become a reality. This new judgment could curb the government's overzealousness to make Aadhaar compulsory, as it could impinge on the individual's right to privacy.

The judgment has added relevance in the present day environment where restrictions are slowly being put in place over matters like what an individual should eat, how he or she should dress, how one should behave within the four walls of his house, etc. A relook might also be needed in the matter of LGBT rights as they too could fall within the purview of the judgment and restrictions

might intrude into the privacy of the citizen. ■



C.V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.



# A heaven on earth

*Think Kashmir, and visualise its Himalayan slopes and forests, and nature so wild and beautiful it takes your breath away, says Bittu Sahgal.*

**A**MIR *Khusrau* put into words what anyone with a beating heart feels when stepping into the heaven that is Kashmir: “*Agar Firdaus bar rōy-e zamin ast, hamin ast-o hamin ast-o hamin ast,*” (If there is a heaven on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here).

For my family and me, Kashmir has been home for decades. In the 1980s, when Dachigam was still relatively unknown, I was privileged to trek the Himalayan forests in the company of the legendary forest guard Qasim Wani. We would spend hours birding, watching the antics of *langurs* and waiting with baited breath for sightings of brown and black bears and, of course, that magical creature, the *hangul*.

I also recall sitting late into the night with the late Mir Inayet Ullah in the company of General R. K. Gaur and Brig. Moti Dar (who went on to become Vice Chief of the Indian Army), speaking about the good fortune of breathing in Himalayan air, drinking water straight from the river, and listening to the rutting calls of the *hangul* deer.

## Wild wonderland

Every Kashmiri child now knows that the crystal waters that flow from Upper Dachigam, through the Dagwan river to the Harwan Reservoir and then into the Dal Lake, are vital to the health (and economy) of Srinagar. As the life-giving Dagwan makes the journey from its glacial source in the high Himalaya, it also feeds countless creatures, great and small, including snow leopards, brown and black bears, the endangered *hangul* deer (*Cervus elaphus hanglu*), amphibians, reptiles fish, birds such as the *Koklas* and *Monal* pheasants and uncountable smaller life forms including



**Nestled in glorious valleys crafted over millennia, the Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir has plenty to offer the visitor – from scrub forests and meadows to subtropical pine and broadleaf forests that play host to myriad wildlife. (Photo credit: Shams Ul Haq Qari)**

insects and spiders, some surely yet to be discovered by science.

As may be expected, Dachigam is fiercely protected to safeguard this ecological wonderland, however, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) encourages trekkers, birders and naturalists, and issues permits liberally, provided they have advance information. Speaking for myself, I have never once been to Kashmir without walking Dachigam's wilds!

But there is vastly more to J&K than this. The state supports as many as 73 mammalian species, 358 species of birds, 68 species of reptiles, 14 different amphibians and as many as 158 types of butterflies. It's a wealth that cannot be measured in financial terms.

I have walked up from Sangargulu to Marsar above the tree line, over the ridge to Tarsar and then followed the road to Pahalgam situated on the banks of the Lidder river. En route I was able to see the living heritage that is the

Overa-Aru wilderness and I gave thanks for being alive when such riches were there to experience. But walking at such altitudes is not exactly easy. The legs do complain, but a 15-minute halt, some hot-butter tea and conversation with the ever-friendly *Gujjars* at their temporary camps... and you are good to go again.

And then there is Gulmarg, which more often than not triggers thoughts of skiing in people. That no doubt is a lot of fun, but for me the real heart of Gulmarg lies in its grassy flower meadows, its picture-postcard, conifer-lined forested trails, the incredible birding experiences to be had and, with luck, sightings of musk deer, *langurs*, black and brown bears and more. Come winter and Gulmarg's slopes are virgin-white. I once followed musk deer and leopard spoor in the snow, uphill, for over two kilometres, until I got to the site of the kill... blood and fur strewn about. But I never actually saw either animal as the

**(Continued on page 31)**



# Nag no more

*Are you a nagger, or are you the nagged? Either way, it is an unpleasant habit. How about growing out of this habit and becoming a more understanding person?*

**A. Radhakrishnan tells you how.**

**T**HERE was a retired military officer who loved fishing. Once when in his boat he heard a voice say 'pick me up'. He looked around and found no one. He heard it again and noticed a frog floating on the top. 'Pick me up, then kiss me, I'll turn into the most beautiful woman you have ever seen. I will be your bride and everyone will be envious' said the frog. He merely picked it up and put it in his pocket. The frog persisted. The officer told her, 'I had rather like having a talking frog than a nagging wife!'

The dictionary meaning of nagging for purpose of this article is 'constantly harassing someone to do something'. Every household experiences this where one partner tries to dominate the other subconsciously, or while trying to get a point across. The word, derived from the Scandinavian *nagga*, means "to gnaw". Nagging is as old as families. Solomon the Wise in all his wisdom, with his thousand wives, laments, 'a nagging wife goes on and on like the drip drip of the rain' and he continues in his book Proverbs, that "it's better to stay outside on the roof of your home than to live inside with a nagging wife".

## The nag factor

To be honest, almost all of us are nags, without even realising it. And the worst part, your partner may be dealing with your nagging silently, until one day, he/she decides to react. Women are more likely to nag both men and women, while men are more likely to nag only men, studies show. Perhaps the reason why women are stereotyped as nagging people all the time.

Nagging, in interpersonal

communication, is repetitive behaviour in the form of pestering, hectoring, or otherwise continuously urging an individual to complete

previously discussed requests or act on advice.

Nagging by spouses is a common marital complaint. Husbands' nagging usually involves finding 'fault with their dinner, with the household bills or with the children', along with 'carrying home the worries of business'. Like any facet of a relationship, nagging is a two-way street.

*Wall Street Journal* reporter, Elizabeth Bernstein defines nagging as "the interaction in which one person repeatedly makes a request, the other person repeatedly ignores it and both become increasingly annoyed". Thus it is a form of persistent persuasion, more repetitive than aggressive, and an interaction to which each party contributes.

"Nagging takes the form of verbal reminders, requests, and pleas", according to a therapist. "You can say it in a number of different ways, but when you say it over and over again, that constitutes nagging." Though initially the nagging interaction starts out in a calm and polite manner, it is more likely to become aggressive in nature as the persuader becomes more repetitive.

Psychotherapist Edward S. Dean, M.D. finds individuals who nag often 'weak, insecure, and fearful ... their nagging disguises a basic feeling of



**No one likes to be nagged!**

weakness and provides an illusion of power and superiority'. Most nagers don't even know they nag – they think their nagging helps, explains Weiner-Davis, family therapist. "A helpful reminder becomes a stinging nag when the person who is being nagged gets offended. How the behaviour gets labeled depends on how the person hears it, not on how the person who says it, feels."

Jamie Turndorf, PhD, a couple's therapist opines, "Because many women find it difficult to directly communicate their needs, they fall into the fatal trap of whining and nagging about what they aren't getting rather than directly stating what they want, need, or expect from their partner. Unfortunately, that doesn't put a man into a giving mood, and a vicious cycle is born: The more her man starves her of what she wants, the more she nags and the less likely he is to be responsive to her wishes."

Warns Turndorf, "Modern danger is no longer the ferocious tiger. It's the angry wife or girlfriend. When she comes at him baring her teeth, berating him with criticisms, and nagging his head off, his body sees danger and switches into the fight-flight mode. Since he doesn't want to fight her, he flees instead." Heather Hatfield,

### Are you a nag?

Key signs that you are turning into one!

- You're not getting through to your partner, despite asking again and again and getting increasingly frustrated.
- Your partner becomes increasingly defensive each time you ask for something.
- The things that bother you tend to grow in scope - you're more bothered by more things, more often.
- The weaknesses in the relationship, such as what your partner isn't doing despite your attempts at effecting change, become the focus, rather than the strengths in your relationship.
- You've said the same thing five different ways, five different times, and yet you keep on going. Isn't that the most obvious sign?

freelance health writer, suggests that instead we find more effective ways

to communicate in a relationship, and leave the nagging behind.

"Try taking action and skip the nagging" suggests Weiner-Davis, "Active listening skills allow couples to learn how to talk to each other in such a way that they are heard. Too often, when couples talk to each other about heated issues, they are too busy defending themselves. Nagging isn't necessary if they can learn the tools for fair fighting, and both spouses can be heard. When the urge to nag strikes, focus on the positive experiences you've had in the past with your partner, when something other than nagging elicited the response you were looking for. Learn from that situation, and change future situations accordingly so you don't need to nag."

"Start out by doing what your spouse is asking to you to do - that might nip it in the bud," Weiner-Davis says. "Another alternative would be for the person who is getting nagged to avoid

getting angry or nasty, which doesn't work well. Instead, have a heart-to-heart about what it feels like to be constantly hounded about something, but in a loving way, instead of a defending way." When these techniques fail, or when nagging consumes a relationship, therapy might help.

"Bottom line: Good relationships are based on mutual care taking," says Weiner-Davis. "You really have to look out for your spouse. You have to put your spouse's needs before your own and that might mean doing something you're not really crazy about doing. And when you have to nag, that's a sign mutual care-taking is not happening." ■



**A. Radhakrishnan** is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer, insomniac and social media lover who loves to make people happy.

## A heaven on earth

(Continued from page 29)

leopard had dragged its kill beyond a point where I could safely tread. All the while, up and down the mountainside, the tap-tap-tap of woodpeckers and the sight of ever-present *choughs* and large-billed crows kept me company.

Even if walking is not your thing, cable cars can carry you to stunning points such as Khilanmarg and Kongdori from where incomparable views remind you of just how insignificant you are when compared to the vastness and beauty that surrounds you. The ever-present pony and horse-*wallahs* are also willing to transport you effortlessly to accessible places. Imagine birding from horseback!

### Wetlands and more

But wait... Kashmir is not just forests and Himalayan snows. There is something utterly hypnotic about punting around in one of Kashmir's many wetlands. Hokersar, a relatively-small (1,375 ha.) Ramsar Site of global importance, is one of the finest birding

spots I have ever seen. Just 10 km from Srinagar, on a good day you could tick off something like 40 or 50 different species if you stayed long enough in the right season! Another miraculous wetland is Wular, one of India's largest (18,900 ha.), most spectacular bird havens, which also offers sustenance in the form of fodder for livestock, food and livelihoods for thousands. Both these wetlands are threatened by the usual perils of low-lying places - pollution, encroachments and attempts to reclaim the swamps for construction. Young Kashmiris, however, are aware that these are the very defence mechanisms they will need for their survival, particularly in light of the flood-prone nature of the Happy Valley.

In the lower reaches, such wildernesses as Jasrota in the Kathua district, and Ramnagar and Nandi in Jammu are desperate for an injection of both visibility and resources. Tourism, well-managed and controlled, should be able to provide jobs and livelihoods to lakhs of life-loving Kashmiris, but

this will take vision, foresight and statesmanship on the part of the political and administrative system at work.

Further afield, distant Ladakh's cold deserts are home to all manner of exotic lifeforms in Protected Areas such as Hemis, Kishtwar and sanctuaries such as Karakoram and Changthang, where snow leopards, brown bear and ibex rule the slopes, with large herds of wild asses laying claim to the stunted meadow grasses. This natural paradise also supports such rare and endangered creatures as the Tibetan gazelle, the Black-necked crane and Pallas' cat that only the very adventurous have ever had the privilege of seeing.

Without a question, this exquisite state should be on everyone's bucket list. There are parts of it I have not yet



explored, but I intend to correct that situation this year, without fail. ■

**Bittu Sahgal** is the editor of *Sanctuary Asia* magazine.

# Mother Courage!

*A play by Bertold Brecht, which was adapted recently for Indian theatre, may have lost some of its impact in translation, but is still a worthy watch, says Prof. Avinash Kolhe.*

**B**ERTOLT Brecht (1898-1956), an important playwright of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been performed regularly of late on Mumbai's theatre scene. Even the 'Aadyam', an Aditya Birla initiative to support good theatre, found it meaningful to back the production of Brecht's *Mother Courage and her children*, directed by Quasar Thakore Padamsee. Quasar took the English version of Eric Bentley and indianised it. This play was staged recently at the NCPA's Homi Bhabha theatre.

## Who was Bertold Brecht?

Brecht was a left-leaning playwright who could not breathe freely in Hitler's Germany, and left it in February 1933 to migrate first to Prague, then on to Denmark, and finally to USA in May 1941, where he stayed till 1949. He expressed his opposition to Fascism and Nazism through his plays like *The Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and her children*, *The Caucasian Chalk circle* and *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*.

While in USA, he was suspected of pro-Left sympathies and had to appear before the infamous HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) headed by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Brecht was hounded for quite some time and came back to East Germany in 1949, which then was under Soviet Union. Initially, like all left-leaning writers and intellectuals, he had high hopes from the Red government, but soon felt disappointed, especially after the East German government ruthlessly put down the uprising in June 1953. His famous poem *Solution* captures his



A still from the play *Mother Courage and her children*

viewpoint about the Left government in East Germany. In this poem, he said:

"After the uprising of 17<sup>th</sup> of June/  
The Secretary of the Writers Union/  
Had leaflets distributed in Stalinalee/  
Stating that the people/ Had forfeited  
the confidence of the government/ And  
could win it back only/By redoubled  
efforts/ Would it not be easier/In that for  
the government/To dissolve the people/  
And elect another?"

## The seminal war

The backdrop of Brecht's *Mother Courage and her children* is the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) that had rocked entire Europe, and was fought between the Protestants and the Catholics. In the Indian version, this has been replaced by fundamentalists v/s extremists. The play covers a 12-year period in the Thirty Years War and centres around a middle-aged woman with two sons

and one daughter. She is wily, cunning and wants to profit from the war. She has been making a living by running a mobile canteen and is travelling with the Protestant army. She is in a hurry to make a bumper profit as the war progresses, but in due course realizes that war is a dirty business as it claims her two sons and she has to helplessly see her daughter raped. This is where the sub-title of the play 'Everybody loves a good war' makes sense. In the end, nobody profits from war and common people suffer, as they do even today. This is the timeless message of Brecht's play. The play also tells the story of hope in times of conflict, of resilience in the face of loss and of survival. In the end, mother is the only person from her family who manages to survive.

## The play and its relevance today

The play opens with a large canteen-





**This play was performed as a trilingual play**

wagon. It is loaded with Mother Courage's wares and possessions, pulled by her two sons, Swameed and Alif. They are of mixed parentage. Swameed's father is a Gujarati while Alif's is a South Indian. There is a dumb daughter Kamrin. It is an irony of life that Mother Courage loses her children to the very war she expects to profit from. It is a trilingual play in which Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati are liberally used.

Quasar Thakore Padamsee has scored a coup of sorts when he managed to persuade Arundhati Nag, 62, from Bangalore, to play the role of Mother Courage. Arundhati had played this role some thirty-odd years ago in the Kannada adaptation of this play. It is sheer pleasure to see

this senior thespian on stage after a long time. She carries the important role of mother effortlessly. Arundhati has an able team to support her in Abhishek Krishnan who plays Alif, the elder son, Junaid Khan who plays Swameed, the second son, and Bhavna Pani, who plays the daughter. Then there are other members of the team, Aseem Hattangady, Asif Ali Beg, Bhushan Vikas and Trupti Khamkar who deliver credible performances.

Special mention must be made of lights (Arghya Lahiri) and costumes (Meghana Khanna).

The play is quite timely in this age of war-mongering. However, in terms of pace, the play needs to be tightened a bit. Also, the change of locale from Europe to the Indian sub-continent reduces the impact of the play; the original is quite focused in its intention and the history of religious wars in Europe makes the original a gripping piece of art, whereas the Indian adaptation loses in impact as the fight between the fundamentalists and extremists does not engage the audience as much. And yet, this play is worth a watch. ■



**Prof. Avinash Kolhe is Asst. Professor in Political Science at D.G. Ruparel College, Mumbai.**

## WHO AM I?





## DISASTERS IN HISTORY-5

# YOUNG

## China's Sorrow

**M**OTHER Nature hath no fury like that of a flood. In the history of mankind, floods have claimed more lives than any other natural disaster. The worst flood of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred in central China in 1931, killing more than 3 million people.

China is no stranger to floods. Its major rivers – Huang He and Yangtze are prone to flooding with devastating consequences. Huang He is dubbed as China's Sorrow.

The year 1930 was marked by drought and severe snowstorms in the winter. The thawing of the ice and the heavy rainfall in the spring of 1931 added to rising levels of the burgeoning rivers. Come July, the land received torrential rains and disaster struck. Over the next few months, the Huang He, Yangtze and Huai rivers overflowed. Dikes that had been constructed on the rivers to control the waters were washed away. As much as 87,000 sq. km went under the waters of Huang He while the Yangtze claimed over 1000 sq. km.

August was the worst. Thousands drowned in their sleep, while millions were rendered homeless. Rice fields were completely destroyed, crushing the main food supply. Major cities like Hunan, Hankou, Wuhan,



including Nanking, China's capital at the time, became floating islands. Even after the waters receded, many died of starvation and disease.

### Did You Know?

During World War II, the Chinese troops were ordered to breach the levees of the Huan He in order to stop the advancing Japanese troops. The resulting flood was massive causing untold misery.

### Fast facts:

- Though the Yangtze has flooded more often, the Huang He's catastrophic floods have killed more people.
- Over 6000 km long, the Yangtze is the longest river in Asia and the third longest in the world. There are 50,000 dams along the Yangtze and its tributaries!
- The world's top five flood disasters with the greatest human toll have all occurred in China.

## AMAZING LIVING WORLD

**T**HE Portuguese man o' war or bluebottle is a jellyfish-like marine animal found in tropical waters around the world. It has a translucent, blue-tinted air bladder resembling a sail and hence is named after a type of Portuguese warship.

The bluebottle is not a single organism but made up of a colony of organisms called zooids. Each zooid has a specific function and they work together to

perform various tasks.

Bluebottles usually move in groups of thousand or more, drifting along with air currents, since they have no independent means of propulsion. When threatened, the animals deflate the gas-filled air-bag, thus enabling them to submerge. Their venom can paralyze and kill small fish.

## Deadly Sailor







## CURIOSITY

## What are Kokeshi Dolls?

**T**RADITIONAL hand-carved Japanese dolls made from cherry wood, maple wood or dogwood are known as Kokeshi. The dolls have no arms or legs and have an enlarged head. The body has a floral design in black, red or yellow. The eyes, nose and mouth are thin painted lines. The doll is finished with a glossy layer of wax.

Kokeshi were first made by potters in the Tohoku region which was famous for its mineral springs. The technique spread to other spa towns between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

There are eleven types of traditional Kokeshi depending on the patterns,



shapes and techniques of making. The most popular style is Naruko, originating from a town where a

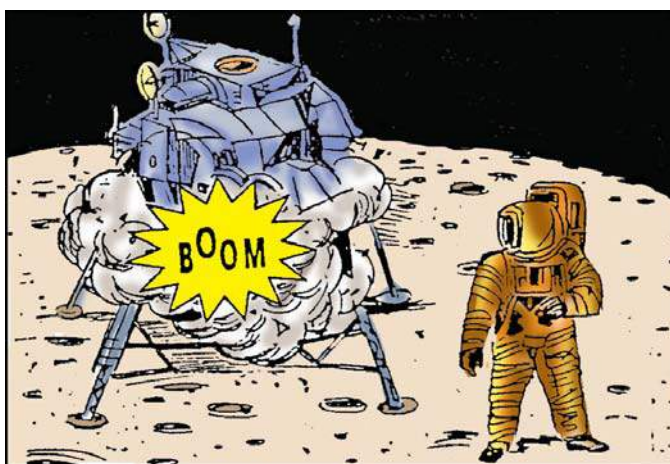
Kokeshi festival is held every September. Old dolls are burned here on a pyre in a moving ritual.

## STORY TRAP

### Stranded on the Moon

Something's not quite right here. Can you put your finger on it? It'll help if you know your science.

It was a great moment in my life. The lunar module



landed on the moon at 11.30 in the morning.

It was a perfect touchdown. The sun was shining brightly as I stepped out of the vehicle. I took a few steps forward and went down on my knees. Tears of joy clouded my vision as I

gathered a handful of moon soil. Just then I heard an ear-shattering explosion. I turned, and to my horror, saw that my lunar module had exploded. I was all alone on the moon. Whom could I ask for a lift, I wondered...

another.

The astronaut could not have heard the explosion behind him; there is no atmosphere on the moon and so sound cannot be carried from one point to

Answer:

## PUZZLE

### Work it Out

Mr. and Mrs. Sharma had reservations for dinner at a restaurant for 7.00 pm. However, the



restaurant mixed up their names while taking the reservations and they could not be seated on time. With the help of the clues given below, can you figure out the exact time they got a table?

1. They sat down within two hours of their reservations.
2. All three digits in the time that they were seated are different.
3. The second two digits in the time are equal to the first digit plus four.

Answer: 8:12 pm

# DIWAN PURNAIAH

The loyal Diwan of Mysore State (1746-1812)

**T**HERE is a folk song in Kannada that says *Punya Madidare Purnaiah navarnaguti*. This means that if you do good deeds you will become Purnaiah. So who is Purnaiah? And why is his name synonymous with good deeds?

Purnaiah was a Diwan, an important minister of Mysore State from 1799-1811. He served Hyder Ali, his son Tipu Sultan - Muslim rulers of Mysore kingdom, and finally Prince Mumtaz Ali Krishna Raja Wodeyar. His clear cut logical thinking and his administrative skills were well known. In fact, the British requested him to accept the Diwan position after the death of Tipu Sultan, when the state of Mysore was in political turmoil.

Born into a poor family in Tirukambur village of Tiruchirappalli district in 1746, his childhood was steeped in poverty. His father was a Sanskrit scholar who died when Purnaiah was 11. At the age of 14 Purnaiah joined a merchant Ranga Shetty as a clerk. There he came in contact with Annadana Shetty who used to supply groceries to Hyder Ali's palace. He soon caught the eye of Hyder Ali who recognised his skills with accounting. Hyder Ali recruited him and he led the accounts department. He was a trusted and loyal employee of Hyder Ali and often used to accompany him to the battle field.

When Hyder Ali died in 1782 and his son was not present, he made sure to keep the death of the king a secret. He sent a message to Tipu Sultan speedily and managed to avoid riots and violence in the State due to the death of the king.

In Tipu's times he was the head of the treasury department. He was a lone Hindu in an otherwise dominant Muslim court. Yet he stuck to his religion of belief, and refused to convert. According to the accounts of Francis Buchanan, a surgeon of Lord Wellesley, the Governor General of India, Tipu once asked Purnaiah why he didn't take up the Mohammedan religion. For this Purnaiah said, "I am your slave" and keeping his *pheta* (turban) down he walked away. It was his way of saying that though he was loyal to the ruler, the subject of his

religion was not open for discussion.

However, he was much trusted by Tipu and was a part of his inner cabinet. In fact, Tipu Sultan entrusted the care of his elder son to Purnaiah's hands during his last battle fought with the British. In 1799, after Tipu's death, the British offered to lend him protection and to also extend it to Tipu's son if he helped in the administrative matters. Thus he became the first Diwan of Mysore State after the fall of Tipu, at the insistence of the British.

The region after Tipu Sultan's death was not stable.

Mumtaz Ali Krishna Raja Wodeyar was still a minor.

So he had to be guided by Purnaiah. Purnaiah looked after the state matters assisting the dowager queen Lakshammanni.

His job was a tough one. He had to fill the empty treasury of the Mysore, pacify the army, look after the Wodeyar family, and fulfil the expectations of the British. He also had to deal with suspicions of the royal family. After all Purnaiah was hitherto loyal to the Muslim kings.

Yet, he rose to the occasion quite admirably. He helped in the restoration of law and order and helped in re-establishing the army and also strengthened the revenue department.

In 1810 the Wodeyar king came of age.

In 1811 the Diwan resigned citing health and age as reasons. People who did not like him and were jealous of his growth spread rumours that he had cheated on money matters. The dowager queen who had believed and supported him had died the previous year. In 1825 Governor General Minto proved that the honest Diwan had not cheated on any money matters. Though the Diwan was rewarded with grants for his services, he did not live to enjoy these privileges. He died in Srirangapatna in 1812. ■

—Usha Hariprasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at Citizen Matters. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.





# MARSHAL OF THE AIR FORCE ARJAN SINGH, DFC

Most distinguished Air Chief Marshal (1919-2017)

**A**RJAN Singh was born on 15 April 1919 at Layalpur, and was educated at Montgomery. He was selected for the Air Force while studying at the college and completed his training at the Royal Air Force (RAF) College at Cranwell, UK. He was commissioned in December 1939 and was posted to No 1 Squadron, Indian Air Force (IAF). The unit was equipped with Westland Wapiti aircraft and was tasked to support ground operations against hostile tribes in Waziristan on the North Western border. After a brief stint with No 2 Squadron, he returned to No 1 Squadron which was by then been equipped with Hurricane aircraft. The squadron moved to Burma on 1 February 1942 and Squadron Leader Arjan Singh took over the command of the unit in February 1944.

The squadron was engaged in the task of photo-reconnaissance and support for army operations and achieved high standards of courage and efficiency, which was well appreciated by Air Vice-Marshal Stanley Vincent. On one flight, they noticed a concentration of Japanese troops and river crossing equipment. The timely information provided the likely crossing place selected by the Japanese and it changed the course of history. On another occasion Arjan Singh observed troops on a hill overlooking the airfield, in strange uniform. On taking a closer look, he recognised them to be Japanese soldiers. He immediately took the entire squadron to attack them. The relentless action by his squadron turned Japanese retreat into a rout. Admiral Mountbatten flew to the site to personally pin the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) on Arjan Singh. He was the first Indian pilot to be so honoured by the Supreme Allied Commander. The citation read:

"Squadron Leader Arjan Singh is a fearless and exceptional Pilot, with a profound knowledge of his specialised branch of tactical reconnaissance and he has imbued those under him with the same spirit. The success of No. 1 Squadron Indian Air Force reflects the greatest credit on him."

He attended Staff College, UK, Joint Services Staff College, UK, and Imperial Defence College, London. He was head of operational command in the rank of Air Commodore from 1949 to 1952, and took over as Chief of AIR Staff (CAS) on 1 August 1964 in the rank of Air Marshal. He had flown over 60 types of aircraft including pre-World War II bi-planes to Gnats and Super Constellations. He almost faced a court martial for flying low in Kerala to raise the morale of IAF crew. He maintained that such feats were essential for the making of a fighter pilot. Pakistan launched a major attack by armour on 1 September in Akhnur sector. It posed a severe threat to India and the Army requested for air strikes against the Pakistani tanks.

The strike by the IAF shattered the Pakistani tanks. It is a matter of great credit that the IAF pilots faced the enemy's superior planes with courage. General war broke out on 6 September. The Gnat fighters of the IAF gained the reputation of being 'Sabre Killers' even though the Sabres were technically superior. A person of few words, soft spoken and amiable, he was a man of firm action. He did not hesitate to dismiss three senior officers for poor performance in the 1965 War.

They were just directed to request for retirement. During his tenure as CAS, the IAF was equipped with new generation of supersonic fighters, strategic reconnaissance aircraft and assault helicopters.

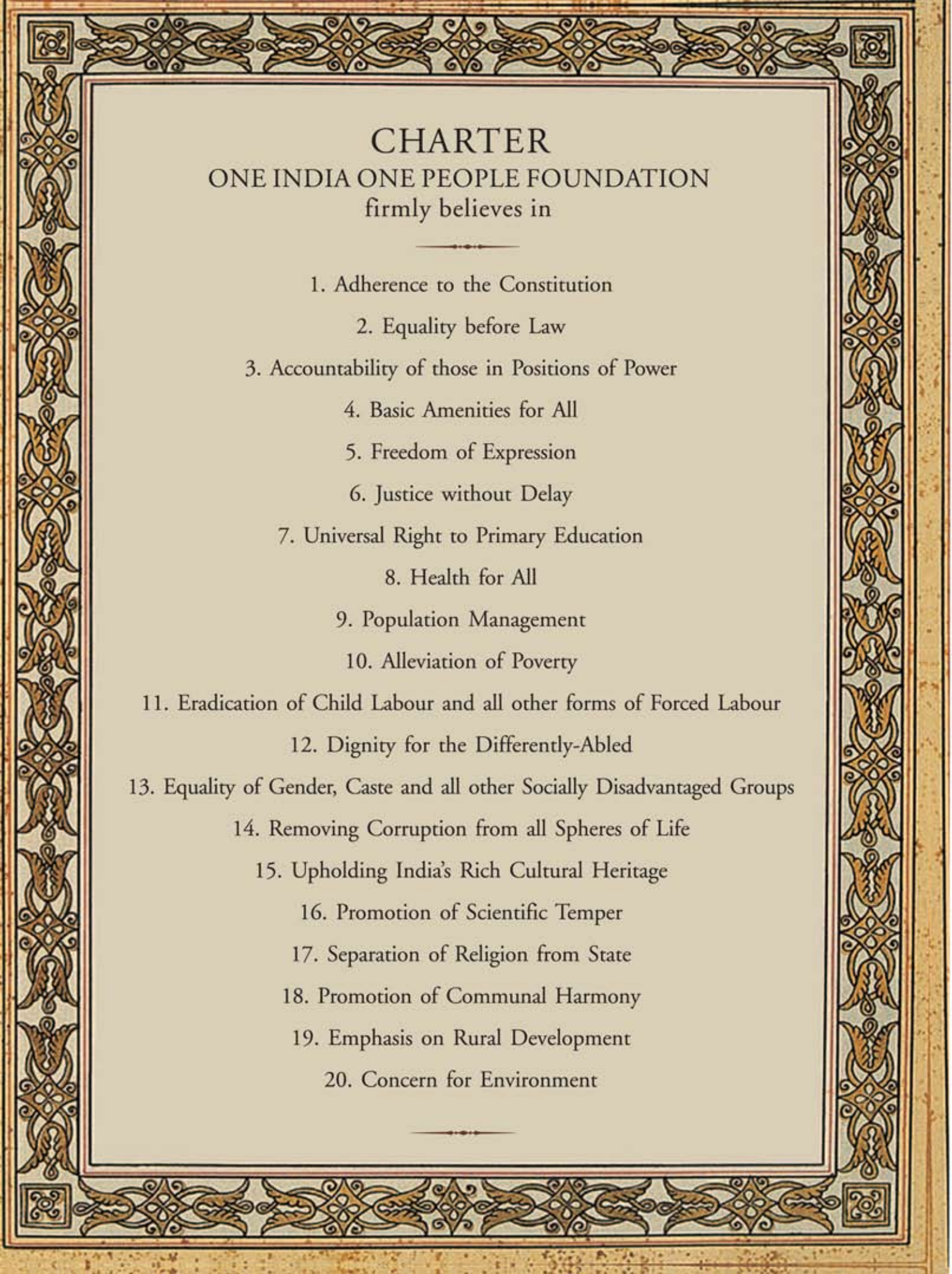
In recognition of his leadership and service to the country, he was promoted to the rank of Air Chief Marshal, the only CAS to hold that rank. He was also awarded the honour of Padma Vibhushan. He retired on 1 August 1969. After retirement he was appointed Ambassador to Switzerland in 1971, High Commissioner to Kenya in 1974, and Lt Governor of Delhi in 1989. He passed away on 16 September 2017 at the Army Hospital, Delhi, and his last rites were conducted at Delhi with full state honours including a fly past. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)









# CHARTER

## ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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1. Adherence to the Constitution
  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
  7. Universal Right to Primary Education
  8. Health for All
  9. Population Management
  10. Alleviation of Poverty
  11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour
  12. Dignity for the Differently-Abled
  13. Equality of Gender, Caste and all other Socially Disadvantaged Groups
  14. Removing Corruption from all Spheres of Life
  15. Upholding India's Rich Cultural Heritage
  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?*

*In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.  
Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.*



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1930 – February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE