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Corporate Social Responsibility



WITH CSR, INDIA HAS LED KINDLY LIGHT

BUILDING RURAL INDIA, BRICK BY BRICK

CORPORATE FUNDING FOR HEALTHCARE

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UDVADA

A SNEAK PREVIEW OF PARSI HISTORY

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With CSR, India has led kindly light

*By imposing a legally-binding obligation on select categories of companies to undertake CSR projects to further social welfare, India has become the frontrunner of social responsibility. It is the only country that has a law in place that mandates and regulates CSR for 'qualifying' companies registered under the Companies Act, 2013, informs **Manu Shrivastava**.*



During the pandemic, big Indian companies diverted their CSR funds for COVID-19 relief activities

In April 2014, following the amendment to the Companies Act, 2013, India became the first country in the world to make Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandatory.

The amendment requires companies with a net worth of INR 5 billion (US\$70 million) or more, or an annual turnover of INR 10 billion (US\$140 million) or more, or net profit of INR 50 million (US\$699,125) or more, to spend two per cent of their average net profits of three years on CSR.

This meant that, as part of the CSR compliance, businesses that qualified for CSR would have to 'invest' their profits back into the society and could do so in any area of choice including gender equality, education, healthcare, etc.

By imposing a legally-binding obligation on select categories of companies to undertake CSR projects to further

social welfare, through the enactment of the Companies Act, 2013, India took a big leap and became the frontrunner of social responsibility. Today, India is the only country that has a law in place that mandates and regulates CSR for 'qualifying' companies registered under the Companies Act, 2013.

Eyeing sustainable development

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) make a robust framework for companies in India to pin their CSR agenda on. Both were conceived around the same time and have similar end goals or larger objectives.

As a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, India is committed to furthering and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On 25 September

2015, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution 70/1, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The document lays out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that aim to mobilise independent and collective global efforts to achieve critical goals such as ending poverty, fostering peace, safeguarding the rights and dignity of all people, protecting the planet and more.

India is home to 1.3 billion people – one-sixth of all humanity – and plays a very important role in the accomplishment of SDGs, the success of the 2030 Agenda.

In July 2020, in its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) – that serves as a basis for the international review of the progress on the SDGs – India termed the presentation 'Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local' and made a paradigm shift to a 'whole-of-society' approach, with the Government of India engaging subnational and local governments, civil society organisations, local communities, people in vulnerable situations and the private sector.

India is resolute in its commitment to achieve the SDGs that converge with the national development agenda and its motto of *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas*. The government engagement with the private sector is being done through CSR initiatives in a big way as both share common goals.

Global health crisis

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs issued a notification in March 2020 stating corporate expenditure made towards COVID-19 related activities to fight the pandemic will be considered valid under Corporate Social Responsibility activities of the company.

In January 2021, in another notification by the Ministry, it was stated that 'spending of CSR funds for carrying out awareness campaigns / programmes or public outreach campaigns on COVID-19 vaccination programme is an eligible CSR activity under item no. (i), (ii) and (xii) of Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 relating to promotion of health care, including preventive health care and sanitisation, promoting education, and, disaster management respectively'.

In July of the same year, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs issued a circular stating 'spending of CSR funds for COVID-19 vaccination for persons other than the employees and their families, is an eligible CSR activity under item no. (i) of Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 relating to promotion of health care including preventive health care and item no. (xii) relating to disaster management.'

The novel coronavirus that gripped the world and hit even the most advanced of nations brutally, redefined the definition of 'normal' among other things. At the time, in India, individuals, governments, civil society and companies, came forward and contributed in prevention and rehabilitation in whichever way possible.

Big Indian companies started to divert their CSR funds for COVID-19 relief activities and partnered with other catalysts and change-makers to make sure relief work doesn't stop.

Companies came up with innovative ways to fund relief activities and earmarked huge CSR sums for the same. This included donation of face masks, sanitisers, hand gloves, etc., in residential areas and for the COVID-19 frontline workers and / or pledging funds for the distribution of these materials.

Many companies also came forward to build make-shift quarantine facilities and covid care centres including offering their venues and premises to be used for these purposes.

Then there were those companies that made sure food and other essential products are accessible, physically and financially, when the country was in lockdown. Many made arrangements for meals and others distributed ration packets to the needy.

During the unprecedented public health emergency, many hospitals faced shortage of medical supplies, equipment, medicines, etc., and companies came forward to meet those demands. A few even reached out to the families of the frontline workers who lost their lives during the pandemic.

The CSR trends

In Financial Year 2020-21, a total of 17,007 companies spent funds on CSR. The total amount spent on CSR activities in the financial year was INR 24, 865.46 Cr. and these activities covered 39 states and Union Territories. Additionally, a total of 36,865 CSR projects were underway in 14 development sectors in India in FY 2020-21.

A closer look at the CSR spent in India in FY 2020-21 shows that the sectors that attracted some of the highest CSR funding were rural development; health, eradicating hunger, poverty and malnutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation; environment, animal welfare, conservation of resources; education, differently-abled, livelihood; heritage, art and culture; and, gender equality, women empowerment, old age homes, reducing inequalities.

The top ten Indian States with the highest CSR spent in FY 2020-21 were in decreasing order of CSR spent Pan India (centralised funds), Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Telangana.

The CSR spent of Non-PSU (Public Sector Undertaking) Companies in FY 2020-21 was a whopping INR 20,416.62 Cr (82 per cent) while the PSU Companies contributed INR 4448.84 Cr. (18 per cent) to the total CSR spent in India.

The number of companies that exhibited CSR compliance 'more than prescribed' was a lot more than those which didn't comply or complied to less than the prescribed CSR amount. The number of companies with 'more than prescribed' CSR compliance was the highest and stood at 9,374 followed by the number of companies that executed 'less than prescribed' CSR compliance and this was 3,291 companies. The number of companies with 'zero spent' stood at 2,926 companies and, in the end, the number of companies whose CSR compliance was 'exactly as prescribed' was 1,416 companies.

In FY 2020-21, the top ten companies with the highest CSR spent, in descending order, were Reliance Industries Ltd (INR 922 Cr.), Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (INR 674 Cr.), Tata Sons Private Ltd (INR 545 Cr.), HDFC Bank Ltd (INR 534 Cr.), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd (INR 531 Cr.), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (INR 445 Cr.), NTPC Ltd (INR 418 Cr.), Infosys Ltd (INR 361 Cr.), ITC Limited (INR 335 Cr.) and Wipro Ltd (INR 246 Cr.).



Manu Shrivastava is a journalist and lawyer with DraftCraft International and Co-Convenor of #TheWomanSurvivor, #MeTooAtHome and #MeTooBeyond-Borders initiatives

CSR as safety shield for environs

Ruchi Verma explains how many business groups are investing in initiatives, as part of their CSR, to align their business and environmental activities. Optimal resource management, lowering carbon footprint, use of sustainable products and incorporating more renewable sources of energy for day-to-day living and working, etc., are prominent among them.



Tata Steel reinforces its commitment to Sustainability on World Environment Day 2021

One of the biggest challenges of this century that has caught the attention of world leaders, activists and citizens the world over is the twin-pronged environmental protection groups, governments and corporate groups have come together to tackle the challenge.

The gravity of the situation can be gauged by understanding the work and reach of the many entities and collectives that are working independently and together to control the damage caused by human and industrial activities.

Global forum for climate change

In 1992, during the Earth Summit held at Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established an international environmental treaty to combat 'dangerous human interference with the climate system',

through various means including stabilising the greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

The treaty called for 'ongoing scientific research and regular meetings, negotiations, and future policy agreements designed to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner'.

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was signed, making it the first real implementation of the decisions made under the UNFCCC. It was then superseded by the Paris Agreement that came into effect in 2019. As of now, the UNFCCC has 198 signatories.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) which is the

primary decision-making body has been meeting every year to measure the progress made and to decide the future course of action. Despite protests around the world and the framework in place, several key nations that have a significant role to play in tackling this challenge, are not adhering to their individual commitments to reducing emissions. Here, the role of industries that are big emitters and corporate groups is important to adopt and further sustainable development.

Environment-friendly CSR initiatives in India

After the law on CSR was enforced, several corporate offices in India chose to divert the mandatory amount towards activities to promote environmental awareness, prevent environmental degradation and further efforts towards combating climate change.

Many business groups are investing in initiatives, as part of their CSR, to align their business and environmental activities. Optimal resource management, lowering carbon footprint, use of sustainable products and incorporating more renewable sources of energy for day-to-day living and working, etc. to name a few.

Today, CSR is being used and implemented extensively and incorporated by small and big businesses alike to make sure one and all are benefitted. The awareness and ‘demand’ for sustainable development have also made sure that policies are in place to provide a nurturing environment for such initiatives. This is why more and more CSR funds are now being diverted towards initiatives furthering environmental protection and slowing down climate change. This includes promoting research, spreading awareness, education, advocacy, furthering sustainable living, and more.

Environment and sustainability

There are many aspects of environmental protection and CSR activities are funding a wide range of such activities. For CSR activities in the area of environmental protection, some of the major components are environmental sustainability; protection of the natural and native flora and fauna; maintaining the natural form and composition of an ecological zone including its soil, water and air; ensuring and maintaining ecological balance; promote afforestation and more.

So, maintaining a balance between the environment and the living organisms in it to further an unhindered ecological flow is essential and is known as ecological balance. It's also important to curb the depletion of natural resources, especially non-renewable ones. Another major problem that is affecting cities in India is waste management and several initiatives are striving to control the environmental and health problems emanating from improper waste disposal such as diseases, toxicity, pollution, etc.

Human activities have depleted natural resources that must be maintained and protected for future generations. CSR executed by entities across India have taken initiatives to mitigate the harmful effects of human activities on the environment.

Several CSR activities also focus on controlling deforestation, poaching, destruction of forest reserves, illegal trade of wildlife and their products, etc. Animal welfare is also an important component of this sector and includes maintaining ecological balance for animals' food, shelter and other needs.

Protecting natural resources

Soil, water, and air are essential for survival and it's important to protect these natural resources for the present and future generations. It's the overuse of resources and disruptive human activities that lead to their depletion and deterioration. Today, disposal of trash in water bodies, untreated sewage, spraying of pesticides and fertilisers on the soil leading to soil

contamination, soil erosion, natural events of extreme nature or natural calamities, etc., are wreaking havoc on the natural resources present on Earth.

Across India, CSR activities are funding projects in research and development and implementation to stabilise fragile ecosystems and preserve natural resources. These projects, among other things, spread awareness; encourage research; initiate best management practices for waste disposal and industrial waste treatment; promote sanitation in cities and towns; encourage use of organic, natural and eco-friendly products for agricultural activities, etc.

One of the most important segments of CSR for environmental protection is agroforestry. Agroforestry is a cultivation practice or a land use management system in which trees or shrubs are grown around or among crops or pastureland. Here, cultivation of shrubs, trees, crops and livestock is done in a systematic manner and together for higher yields.

This system of cultivation ensures there is enough supply for the rising demand for related products like fuel, timber, fodder, fibre, food, etc. In this, CSR activities are undertaken to ensure sustainable practices are incorporated to prevent the degradation of resources and to ensure there is a regular flow of products.

Companies take initiative

Several Indian companies take the initiative to promote the management of and awareness about the conservation of natural resources. TATA Steel, for example, along with the State of Odisha incorporated the target ‘Mission 2020 for Agricultural Development’ with the sole purpose of creating provisions for poor farmers to improve their lives by ensuring food security and increasing employment opportunities. At the time, the aim was to increase the income of some 7,000 households by training them in modern and sustainable irrigation practices and in horticulture among other practices.

The initiative also formed self-help groups for better project implementation and to ensure the women are given employment opportunities. The initiative converted three-acre cropland through sustainable irrigation facilities that benefitted 344 farmers.

On the other hand, leading beverage maker, Coca Cola initiated CSR activities at its behest in the area of waste disposal management and segregation of waste. The mission named ‘Alag Karo Har Teen Din Bin’ was initiated in Gurugram which produces 600 tonnes of waste and was not segregated and not disposed of in an eco-friendly manner.

This initiative aimed at spreading awareness among 1,50,000 people in 60 selected areas and 9,000 households that segregated the waste at the source itself. Additionally, awareness programmes were organised in schools and commercial outlets in the zone to educate about and promote waste management systems and recycling of waste.

Ruchi Verma is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Building rural India, brick by brick

Vedika Jain sees the rural sector showing a shift in focus with increased urbanisation and modernisation. Rural development focuses on developing infrastructure such as irrigation facilities and electricity for increased employment and economic opportunities, education, public health and sanitation, easing credit availability, women empowerment, etc.



Mahindra's Integrated Watershed Management Project helps conserve over 10 million liters of water per year

A rural area can be defined as a place, as per the latest census, which meets the following criteria: A population of less than 5,000 people; Density of population less than 5,000 people; Density of population less than 400 per sq km; and, more than '25 per cent of the male working population' engaged in agricultural pursuits.

Rural development refers to the host of activities enhancing the quality of life and financial security of individuals living in rural areas and remote areas. With more than two-third of India's population dependent on agriculture as source of livelihood, rural development, till today, forms a significant share of the overall developmental activities in the country.

This sector is also experiencing a shift in focus with increased urbanisation and modernisation. Rural development focuses on developing infrastructure such as irrigation facilities and electricity for increased employment and economic opportu-

nities, education, public health and sanitation, easing credit availability, women empowerment, etc.

Improving knowledge and skills

ICICI Academy for Skills – Rural Initiative is a CSR programme initiated by ICICI Bank that aims 'to improve the knowledge and skill base of agrarian population and provide them with multiple sources of income'.

ICICI Foundation along with ICICI Bank launched this initiative to further economic inclusion of the villages in India and expand the reach of CSR activities of ICICI Group to new target segments.

In India, a significant number still live in villages and is dependent on rural and agrarian activities for livelihood. The group's comprehensive programme focuses on the socio-eco-

economic development of villages.

The CSR initiative aims at ‘making the local economy vibrant; improving the income level of villagers through focus on locally relevant skills; making the villagers financially independent; and restricting migration’.

The idea is to train villagers in skills that will ensure sustainable livelihood. The bank provides credit linkages to the trainees and facilitates market linkages to ensure a steady market for the products and services of the trainees.

At the same time, the bank facilitates financial inclusion as it provides digital banking platforms and a host of other channels and products. After the completion of the training, participants are provided with long-term handholding and support for sustained impact.

The programme has a market settlement ratio of over 72 per cent with more than half of all the trained participants being women. The initiative has helped more than a thousand villages across India.

Helping fishing communities

In Gujarat’s Kutch district, Mundra Port - the largest private port of India located on the north shores of the Gulf of Kutch near Mundra – is a major economic gateway that caters to the northern hinterland of India with multimodal connectivity. The deep draft, all-weather port is the largest commercial port in India with state-of-the-art infrastructure, largest coal import terminal which gives faster cargo evacuation and minimal turnaround time.

Here, the CSR wing of the Adani Group aims to empower the fishing communities living in Kutch region near the Mundra port as part of a long running livelihood project. The fishing community of the zone are vulnerable and directly impacted by climate change that affects their livelihoods, food security and health.

The area owing to its location faces issues of salinity ingress. At the same time, excess use of fishery resources and degraded ecosystems also threaten the existence and livelihood of the fishing community.

The CSR project here has adopted a multi-pronged focus approach to resolves issues of the fragile community. These include: livelihood, women empowerment, quality education, skill training, health and infrastructure development.

So, the fishermen are given better equipment and also trained in fishing-related activities. They are also exposed to and trained in alternative livelihood opportunities such as nursery development to reduce dependence on traditional sources that are vulnerable and prone to destruction owing to climate change. Another important aspect of the project is women of the community who are trained in financial literacy and other vocational works to empower them financially.

Here, as part of the CSR project, free education is provided to the children of the community. Over the decade, the work initiated by Adani Foundation has affected more than ten thousand fisherfolk families and over 40,000 person-days of work has been provided to them as supplementary livelihood opportunity.

Strengthening the foundation

The Mahindra & Mahindra group has done exemplary work in the area of rural development through its Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP). IWMP is a Private Public Partnership model with the Government of Madhya Pradesh in Bhopal, and in Hatta with the National Bank for

Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), to increase the groundwater table of the region.

The programme was implemented in 48 villages (35 villages in Bhopal and 13 villages in Hatta) to help improve the agricultural productivity and overall standard of living of the people of the region and has benefitted about 38,000 villagers of the zone.

The Mahindra group, through Mahindra Hariyali, planted more than 1.5 million trees – of which 1.13 million trees were planted in the Araku Valley. The idea behind plantation was to aid the building of green cover in the area and protect the biodiversity of the region. The trees planted in Araku Valley also help the tribal farmers and offer them livelihood support.

On the other hand, the Holistic Rural Development Programme (HRDP) - HDFC Bank’s flagship project within the CSR umbrella, Parivartan, was developed keeping in mind the fact that rural development is crucial for the nation’s overall economic development.

In India, the rural population is predominantly engaged in agriculture and highly dependent on rain-fed irrigation. The programme initiated by HDFC Bank not only identifies the essential and critical needs of each village that has been adopted by the programme but also facilitates interventions to further these goals. The interventions are designed in consultation with the villagers and other stakeholders who will directly benefit from the efforts.

Like most projects undertaken for rural development, the knowledge and involvement of the stakeholders is of utmost importance.

Healthcare in rural areas

CSR projects have played a very important role in bridging the infrastructure gap between rural and urban India. Today, with the right support from government initiatives and policies, the gap is reducing and more and more people are reaping benefits of welfare schemes.

Hero MotoCorp’s CSR projects are also transforming rural landscape and doing it with the support and participation of the stakeholders themselves. The regions of the country where the business group has been implementing its CSR activities are those that lie within the operational area of the company’s plants and manufacturing units.

The initiative called Hero ‘We Care’ tries to make a positive influence on the aspects of healthcare and basic infrastructure needs like access to power and water in these areas through the CSR projects.

Here, the CSR department works with implementing partners and agencies to implement the project goals that include making rural women self-reliant and encourage entrepreneurship among them.

There is a big focus on providing basic healthcare facilities in the villages. The idea is to make villages self-sustainable. Some of the major activities undertaken as part of CSR initiative include rebuilding public health centres, developing and rebuilding community health centres, increasing access to clean drinking water by rebuilding hand pumps and providing water filters in areas where groundwater is not present or accessible, etc.

Vedika Jain is a legal researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

Corporate funding for healthcare

Laying out the vast expanse of the healthcare sector, **Nandini Rao** points out the significant role India has been playing in the domain with both public and private players delivering through CSRs. An important fallout is an overwhelming percentage of healthcare systems are now rebooting their digital tools and upgrading their infrastructure.



Zydus Hospital, Dahod - a CSR project initiated by Zydus Lifesciences Ltd

The healthcare sector in India is increasingly becoming focused on innovation and technology. India is a frontrunner when it comes to healthcare management. More than 80 per cent of healthcare systems are aiming to increase their investment in digital healthcare tools and upgrade their infrastructure in the coming five years.

Contrary to common understanding, healthcare industry is much more than just hospitals and healthcare centres. It also comprises telemedicine, medical devices, clinical trials, outsourcing, medical tourism, health insurance and medical equipment.

In India, the healthcare delivery system is both public and private. The former i.e. the public health care system is where the government through its entities and agencies offers infrastructure and services. This includes the primary and basic healthcare facilities, also known as, Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) in rural areas. The secondary and tertiary healthcare institutions in towns and cities also are part of the public healthcare system in India although they are limited in number.

The private sector, on the other hand, are primarily owning and running the secondary, tertiary, and quaternary care institutions in the country with a major concentration in metros, tier-I and tier-II cities.

Changing scenario post Covid

The Covid-19 pandemic was a critical event for many industries including the healthcare sector. The government efforts were supported by private initiatives during the time. In FY 2020-21, healthcare was only behind the education sector vis-a-vis CSR donations, with about 26 per cent of India's CSR going to health and nutrition.

Today, healthcare has become one of the largest sectors of the Indian economy, in terms of both revenue and employment. It has been growing at a CAGR of 22 per cent since 2016, employing 4.7 million people directly. The sector has the potential to generate 2.7 million additional jobs in India between 2017-22 that amounts to over 5,00,000 new jobs per year.

The growth of the Indian healthcare sector is being driven by several factors that include a growing middle class, an increase in the proportion of lifestyle diseases, growing population, aging demographics, increased emphasis on public-private partnerships and most importantly an exponential rise in the adoption of digital technologies that includes telemedicine. This has also increased the interest of investors, FDI inflows and lately CSR donors.

During the pandemic, several organisations diverted their funds towards healthcare initiatives as part of their CSR activities. In Gujarat, for example, the healthcare sector received 55 per cent of all the CSR funding of the financial year 2020-21.

From assisting government departments during the pandemic to the post-pandemic recovery phase, corporate funding in the form of CSR went a long way. Interestingly, in the recovery phase, CSR activities have been focussing on creating long-term impact and the healthcare CSR trends in India have changed for the better.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd (ONGC) along with ONGC Foundation and PM CARES Fund initiated several activities as part of the COVID-19 relief activities. Apart from contributing to the PM CARES Fund, the group provided financial assistance towards cold chain logistic support for the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

Developing healthcare infrastructure

A CSR project by Reliance Industries Ltd. for Healthcare Infrastructure Development with implementing partner Reliance Foundation contributed towards preventive and public healthcare initiatives.

As part of this project, the company strives to address the preventive primary healthcare needs of the serving population (underprivileged rural and urban population) through four static medical units in Mumbai and six mobile medical units at select locations in Mumbai, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

Six fully-equipped Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) with state-of-the-art technology including cloud-based software to store patient information are now serving these areas. The MMUs provide necessary care free of cost at the doorstep through periodic visits. In the last year, 75,510 patient consultations have happened across Mumbai, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

The Static Medical Units (SMUs) across Mumbai provide diagnostic facilities along with consultation with a focus on chronic lifestyle diseases like hypertension and diabetes. In addition to this, trained doctors and medical personnel attend to the primary medical care needs of patients.

Reliance Foundation's Drishti programme is aimed to assist the visually-impaired from the underprivileged segments of society. Over 14,000 corneal transplants have been done of which 1,200 were done in 2020-21.

In another Healthcare Infrastructure Development project initiated by Infosys along with implementing partners Infosys Foundation, the company contributed to CSR towards the following projects: Construction of the 800-bed Infosys Vishram Sadan at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS); Construction of a 300-bed hospital block at the Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences & Research; Construction of the 600-bed Infosys Asha Nivas dharmashala at the Tata Memorial Center; and, construction of a 100-bed maternal and child care hospital.

Providing quality medical education

In a CSR project initiated by Zydus Lifesciences Ltd. - formerly known as Cadila Healthcare Limited, an Indian multinational pharmaceutical company headquartered in Ahmedabad and primarily engaged in the manufacture of generic drugs – a hospital building was constructed in rural Gujarat.

Along with Zydus Foundation, the project aimed to serve and cater to the needs of the patients and provide the best medical education in the rural interiors of Gujarat. The foundation set up the Zydus Medical College and Hospital at Dahod.

The new hospital building comprises five modular Operation Theatres. Also, a Thalassemia Centre at ZMCH has been set up and the number of beds for Sickle Cell and Haemophilia has been increased. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Zydus Hospital in Dahod increased the number of beds at the quarantine facility to 306, from 100 beds in 2020, of which 100 were ICU beds and 206 were oxygen beds.

Reducing the financial burden

In a healthcare initiative by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited called 'Project Dil Without Bill', the group provides support for heart surgeries, at no cost, for low-income group people with heart ailments especially the children.

As part of the project, the group has organised health camps to raise awareness and identify patients with heart ailments and, in the process, has helped thousands of families over the years. In FY 2019-20, 600 successful heart surgeries were carried out.

Another initiative by the same group, Project Suraksha focuses on the prevention of HIV/AIDS among truckers and surrounding communities. It entails spreading awareness and educating the members about safe-sex practices and providing diagnosis and treatment of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) through their clinics on highways known as Khushi clinics.

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC), on the other hand, supported the setting up of National Cancer Institute in Nagpur - a 455 bedded quaternary care oncology centre – to provide world-class oncology treatment facility at affordable rates to the general public of the region.

The state-of-the-art radio diagnostic equipment and construction of the first floor and ground floor of the institute was funded by ONGC.

Due to the prevalence of oral cancer cases in Nagpur, the corporation decided to support this collaborative project to set up the cancer institute at Nagpur.

Nandini Rao is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Entitling women, the corporate way

Ritika Seth laments that despite the constitutional safeguards, laws and policies in place, there is little evidence on ground of women being treated as equals in the society. She makes out a case for holistic approach towards women empowerment across spheres and observes that CSR funding is bridging the gap between law and policy and their implementation.



Hindustan Unilever Ltd.'s 'Project Shakti' has nearly 1,36,000 Shakti entrepreneurs aka 'Shakti Ammas' across 18 Indian states

The Indian Constitution provides equal rights to all citizens of India including men, women and children. The Constitution not only guarantees equality to women but also empowers the State and its agencies to make provisions and take measures, if there's a need, for affirmative action towards women.

India is home to one-fifth population of the world's population. Despite the constitutional safeguards, laws and policies upholding women's rights there is still a lot to be done to guarantee equal status to women in society.

There's a need for a holistic approach towards women empowerment in the areas of social, economic, political and health in India. CSR funding has come a long way in bridging the gap between law and policy and their implementation.

Empowering women is essential for a healthy society and a healthy family unit. There are several NGOs and self-help groups working in the area to bring about change and then there are CSR activities ensuring social welfare and upliftment of women.

In sync with SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals - a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a 'shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future' – were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), to be achieved by 2030.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its

17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders, embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind. SDG 5 is to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.'

Gender equality and women empowerment, however, are integral to all the other 16 goals. UN Women's 2018 flagship report 'Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda' features data, stories, videos and publications that illustrate how and why gender equality matters across all the Sustainable Development Goals, and how the goals affect the real lives of women and girls everywhere.

Skill development important

Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) - India's largest Fast Moving Consumer Goods Company with a heritage of over 80 years in India and touches the lives of two out of three Indians - has been active in several gender equality-based projects that focus on skill development of women, rural livelihoods and women empowerment.

As part of 'Project Shakti', activities have been undertaken to financially empower and provide livelihood opportunities to women in rural India. Here, the women are trained for familiarisation with the company's products and basic tenets of distribution management. A team of Rural Sales Promoters (RSPs) coach help Shakti Entrepreneurs in managing their business.

Project Shakti has nearly 1,36,000 Shakti Entrepreneurs aka 'Shakti Ammas' across 18 Indian states. The most important achievement of this project has been that it has helped foster an entrepreneurial mindset among these women. Other than that, the programme has helped Shakti Entrepreneurs in gaining skills of selling products, communication skills, self-confidence, etc.

Godrej Consumer Products Limited's 'Project Salon-I' is a vocational training programme for women, designed to train young women in the basic grooming and beautification skills of beauty, skin, hair care, and mehndi application.

The women are also trained in life skills and entrepreneurship development to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship and self-reliance. The programme aims at employability, entrepreneurship, and empowerment of women.

Self-sustenance key to growth

The Self-employment and Skill development initiative of CCL Products India Ltd. - founded in the year 1994 with the vision of creating only the finest and the richest coffee in the world - has worked in the areas of girl child education, provision of safe shelters, making them skilled and economically self-sufficient, among other achievements.

The company, with support from other foundations, has provided vocational training to women including tailoring, beautician courses, fashion designing, jewellery making, jute bag making, etc. The initiative has impacted thousands of women across 70 villages near Hyderabad. As part of the self-sustenance programme, the company also provided sewing machines and set up jute factories for rural women in the area.

Hindustan Zinc Limited's flagship CSR Project called 'Project Sakhi' is aimed to mobilising rural women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in order to facilitate capacity building of these women in the areas of leadership, skill development and entrepreneurship.

As part of this project, there are more than two thousand SHGs, about 200 Village Level Organizations and seven Federations with a membership of more than 27,000 women. Such training programmes and capacity building initia-

tives are key to inculcate self-confidence in women.

The leadership skills imparted to women as part of the project through training and capacity building have given fruitful results as they have given platform and a strong foundation for the grooming of future leaders.

Addressing nutritional concerns

The Women and Child Development (WCD) department is working closely with many corporate groups for key projects in the country. The focus areas of these projects range from malnutrition to skill development.

Britannia Nutrition Foundation has collaborated with the WCD for taking initiatives to reduce child malnutrition in Melghat Region in Maharashtra by putting 'concentrated efforts to address the problem of child malnutrition' in Melghat region of Amravati district. This area, with a predominantly tribal population, comprises the two Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) project blocks of Dharni and Chikhaldara.

Another project with Reliance Foundation focusses on developing Kitchen Gardens across Maharashtra to reduce malnutrition and improve health and nutrition of women and children in the state.

The Reliance Foundation Team is carrying out orientations / workshops, trainings and handholding support for establishment of these demonstration Kitchen Gardens. In time, these demonstration Kitchen Gardens shall serve as training centres for the rest of the Anganwadis in a block.

In another CSR initiative of JSW Foundation in collaboration with the WCD, child malnutrition among the Anganwadi children in Jawhar Taluka of Palghar District will be tackled. The Suddirha Bharat Abhiyan will be implemented through Nutrition Surveillance including technology based growth monitoring; Growth promotion through complimentary meals; Watershed development and farm- based productivity enhancement for the long-term solution through livelihood generation and food security; and, long-term institutional strengthening processes.

Another CSR project, a flagship programme of Subhash Chandra Foundation under the aegis of Subhash Chandra led Zee Entertainment, called 'Program Sarthi', works on different verticals in the area of gender equality.

These include women empowerment, social justice issues, alternative livelihood, health and education by raising social awareness on the rights and duties amongst the people. Program Sarthi has been successful in preventing female foeticide and child marriage in several areas and has successfully conducted in the area of women empowerment.

The project started in the central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, later being rolled out in neighbouring states of Bihar and Jharkhand. The intervention areas include Education (RTE, restart education for dropouts), micro entrepreneurship, preventing domestic violence as part of the social justice vertical and child immunisation and awareness and early diagnosis under the health segment.

The programme seeks to create a nation where citizens are well informed about their rights and duties; empowered enough to raise their voices against the problems faced by them, which are then effectively addressed and resolved.

Ritika Seth works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

CSR push in boosting Right to Education

Focusing on the higher trajectory of Education sector in the country, **Anushka Singh** asserts that CSR initiatives are providing much needed fillip despite the multiplying population. With great business and investment potential, she says the education market in India is expected to amount to US\$ 225 billion. The FDI equity inflows from April 2000 till March 2022 stood at 7.72 billion.



Ultratech Cement Limited, part of the Aditya Birla Group has been providing CSR funding in the education sector

CSR initiatives in India are vitalising the education sphere in India, starting from pre-primary to higher education. India has the largest population in the world in the age bracket of 5-24 years with 580 million people in the bracket. This presents a huge opportunity in the education sector for private entities and for corporate groups.

India has over 250 million school going students, more than any other country and the applications for the 'Study In India' programme increased by 146 per cent in 2021 – an indicator of the reach and potential of this sector.

Education sector in India presents great business and investment opportunities. In the next three years, the education market in India is expected to amount to US\$ 225 billion. The FDI equity inflows from April 2000 till March 2022 stood at 7.72 billion.

A booming sector

Indian edtech startups have received a total investment of US\$ 3.94 billion across 155 deals in FY22. India also had its

first unicorn when, in June 2022, edtech platform PhysicsWallah raised US\$ 100 million in a Series-A funding round from WestBridge Capital and GSV Ventures, valuing the company at US\$ 1.1 billion.

India holds a special position in the global education industry where the country has one of the largest networks of higher education institutions in the world. The education sector in India provides huge growth opportunities with a whopping demographic advantage – a 27 per cent population in the age group of 0 – 14 years.

The government expenditure in the education sector in India can be seen as follows: From the year 1952 to 2014, the total government education investment grew from 7.92 to 15.7 showing the importance of education in the entire scheme of things for the government. Also, from the year 1952 to 2014, the total GDP percentage increased from 0.64 to 4.13 indicating the total amount of income being invested in the development of education in the country.

CSR projects invest huge sums

Reliance Industries Limited tops the list, with the education CSR spend of ₹ 526 crores, when it comes to funding CSR in education. Reliance Foundation Education and Sports for All supports the education of underprivileged children by partnering with social organisations and civil society and working at the grassroots level.

Through these initiatives, focus is given on encouraging children's engagement in sports, literacy and life skills. The technology-embedded 'Digital Learning Van' has been providing quality education to more than 4,000 children from ten government schools in Mumbai and Thane districts and has been a key component of this initiative. In an impact that many will envy, these CSR initiatives have impacted more than two lakh children.

Scholarships have been a useful medium for identifying and promoting talented and driven children who struggle to move ahead owing to personal and financial situations. The Dhirubhai Ambani Scholarship aims to promote academic and leadership excellence and is awarded to meritorious students who emulate the vision and values of the founder of Reliance Industries Ltd., Dhirubhai Ambani.

This scholarship has so far provided financial support to more than 12,000 deserving students to pursue graduation. Of these, almost half of the students are girls and one-fifth scholars are specially-abled students.

Education for social change

Indian Multi-national Corporation that provides information technology, consulting and business process services, Wipro Limited spends a significant portion of its CSR budget towards education and skill-building initiatives. The IT giant has an education initiative that works for children with disabilities and integrates teaching with assistive technology, health and nutrition.

Another initiative, Systemic Reforms in School Education programme, was started in 2001 to support organisations that are engaged in the primary education segment and doing it well. The programme also encourages other grassroots and social organisations to adopt and implement education projects.

Azim Premji University has several need-based scholarships and offers courses that strengthen India's education sector and overall development. The university's commitment to use education as a vehicle for social change is exemplary.

India's biggest sustainability education CSR initiative - Wipro Earthian - is also the company's flagship CSR programme where Education meets Sustainability. The programme aims to involve young people and educate and motivate them to be sensitive to the environment and protect it with innovative solutions.

Santoor Women's Scholarship has been supporting girl child education in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka.

Providing education infrastructure

India's biggest cement company Ultratech Cement Limited which is part of the Aditya Birla Group has been providing CSR funding in the education sector.

The School Education Programme, in keeping up with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal 'quality education', carries out enrolment awareness programmes and events, offers education material such as books, study material, uniform, etc., offers scholarships (merit and need based assistance), facilitates specialised coaching and exposure visits.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) has also undertaken a wide range of initiatives to promote education in the country, specifically in pockets where infrastructure is poor or missing.

Under the education-oriented projects, efforts are made to strengthen educational infrastructure to ensure increased attendance and enrolment of students. This is done through the construction of classrooms, construction of school toilets, creating drinking water facilities for students, etc.

Digital education is the need of the hour and the education-oriented CSR projects funded by ONGC focus on enhancing access to quality education by setting up of 'smart classrooms.'

Education for all

The CSR arm of telecommunication services giant Bharti Airtel, Bharti Foundation, has also been very active in the education sector and supports a wide range of programmes in primary, secondary and higher education in India.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when all the schools were shut, imparting quality education to children was a huge challenge. At the time, Bharti Foundation's school education programmes provided support to teachers to instruct ways and means to effectively engage with children 'virtually' and from home.

It's an extremely difficult task to hold a child's attention and that too through a digital device or gadget is even more challenging. The Satya Bharti Schools' teachers also worked closely with parents to make sure there is optimum learning and effective learning through digital mediums, as was the need during the pandemic. They used all digital and virtual modes that were available to establish a strong communication channel.

The Satya Bharti School Programme was launched in 2006 to provide 'free quality education to underprivileged children in rural India across six states and with a focus on the girl child'.

Under the Satya Bharti Quality Support Program, the Foundation has been working with the government to improve overall schooling experience and improve the quality for government school students. The foundation is also active in the area of higher education. The CSR initiatives of Bharti Foundation include partnerships with higher education entities.

Grasim Industries Limited's CSR initiatives lay special focus on the education of the girl child. It supports girl children in government schools, offers educational scholarships, facilitated special coaching for entrance exams such as the JEE and NEET, etc. Through a Public-Private Partnership mode, the company helped 169 students from a government school to learn English. Grasim Industries, through its various initiatives, is educating more than 49,000 students through scholarships, schools and adult education programmes.

Anushka Singh works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

CSR and its legal import

Sakshi Agarwal specifies that philanthropy is not the only concept behind CSR. It has now been brought in the ambit of the Companies Act of 2013 to give it a legal connotation as well. It is now mandated as a way of conducting business by a company as a result of which there is visible and substantive contribution towards social good and uplift and wherein the idea is also to share the burden of the state in serving public at large.



The objective of CSR is to share the burden of the State in serving the public at large

Following historic amendments to the Companies Act, 2013, India became the first country in the world to mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In India, like many other countries, 'giving back to the society' has traditionally been seen as a philanthropic activity.

Big industrial and business groups have always donated, done charity, contributed to society and supported communities with humanitarian works. However, this was to their whim and fancy till 'philanthropy' was made mandatory to specified companies.

In 2013, with the introduction of Section 135 in the Companies Act, 2013, India became the first country to have statutorily mandated CSR for specified companies. The Companies Act, 2013 requires companies with a net worth of INR 500 crore or more, or turnover of INR 1,000 crore or more, or a net profit of INR five crore or more during the immediately preceding financial year, to spend two per cent of the average net profits of

the immediately preceding three years on CSR activities.

The Companies Act also enumerates the various activities and initiatives that can be undertaken and the manner in which the companies can undertake social and humanitarian projects and programmes to legally qualify as corporate social responsibility.

On 29 August 2013, the Companies Act 2013 replaced the Companies Act of 1956 and with it, other than the introduction of Section 135, far-reaching changes were introduced in the way the company is formed, governed, administered, incorporated, etc.

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India notified the Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 along with Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014.

(Continued on page 26)



UDVADA

A sneak preview of Parsi history

*Udvada nestled in coastal Gujarat is not a tourist hub as such but it holds a religious significance for the Parsis who treat it like a pilgrimage. For, it is the first of their eight sacred fire temples. The place with its own historic flavour and earlier a grazing ground for camels, now serves as a great opportunity for photographers, history lovers and those who evince interest in architecture. The authentic Parsi cuisines is an added bonus, says **Richa Kumar**.*

Text : Richa Kumar

Pix : Manu Shrivastava



Atash Behram in Udvada, Gujarat is the first of the eight fire temples (holy place of worship) of the Zoroastrian religion in India (pic –internet)

A quaint coastal town in Gujarat's Valsad district, Udvada is an important destination for the followers of Zoroastrianism in India and across the world. The Udvada Atash Behram, also known as the Iranshah Atash Behram, is the sacred fire housed in a temple in Udvada and holds utmost religious significance for Zoroastrians. It is the first of the eight fire temples (holy place of worship) of the Zoroastrian religion in India.

Udvada literally translates into 'grazing ground of camels' which is what the land was before being inhabited and later becoming a fishing town. Situated in Pardi taluka in South Gujarat's Valsad district, Udvada (also spelled Udwada) is a very important centre for the Parsis. The town is located 24 km from Valsad city on the west coast of India and is about two square kilometre in area.

The Parsis are an ethnoreligious group of the Indian subcontinent and followers of Zoroastrianism. They are the descendants of the Persians (meaning 'from Persia' or present-day Iran) who migrated to India during and after the Muslim conquest of Persia (Iran) to escape Islamic persecution and preserve their Zoroastrian identity.

Hindu king grants refuge

In Iran, the Zoroastrians gradually became a marginalised community following the Muslim conquest of most of Greater Iran in the 7th century and, by about the 10th century, the formerly Zoroastrian-held territories had become largely Islamic. When the Sassanian Empire in Iran (which had endorsed Zoroastrianism as the state religion) fell to the Arab Muslims in 642 CE, a group of Zoroastrian migrants fled from Iran (Persia) to seek refuge from religious persecution. The group fled from Greater Khorasan, and after being denied refuge everywhere else, finally reached the west coast of India, in Gujarat, where they sought asylum from a local Hindu king, Rana Vijayaditya Chaulukya (Solanki) aka Jadi Rana, whose reputation of being fair preceded him.

The name 'Jadi Rana' being a corrupt version of 'Rana Vijayaditya Chaulukya (Solanki)' which, from Vijayaditya became Jyaditya and then Jyadi before getting corrupted to Jadi. The title 'Rana' signifying a king was added to the name.

According to *Qissa-i-Sanjan* (Story of Sanjan), a 16th century lore on the life of the early Zoroastrian settlers in India,



Entrance to the Atash Behram

when these refugees first arrived on the shores of Sanjan that lies about 30 km south of Udvada, the king presented them with a glass of milk filled to the brim to connote to the refugees that there was no space for new settlers.

The Zoroastrian refugees then responded by adding a spoonful of sugar to the milk, demonstrating that they would be 'like sugar in a full cup of milk, adding sweetness but not causing it to overflow.'

The benevolent king granted the Zoroastrian migrants shelter and allowed them to live and practice their religion and traditions freely. He laid down a few conditions that included the Parsis will not perform any religious conversion, will adopt the local language (Gujarati), the local traditional attire - the saree and not bear any arms henceforth.



Narrow, quiet bylanes of Udvada



A Parsi woman at the Atash Behram

The oldest fire temple

After settling, the Zoroastrians requested the king and sought his permission to establish a Fire Temple there, the first. The Zoroastrian refugees who fled Iran had carried ash from a sacred fire, which a priest is said to have then used for the bed of the Sanjan fire when it was consecrated.

Atash Behram, a first-grade fire temple (fire drawn from sixteen sources) was established in 721 by enshrining the holy fire. The consecration ceremony involved rites that lasted for many months. The temple flourished and so did the community that gradually developed strong roots in the region.

A few centuries after their arrival, Sanjan was attacked by the Delhi Sultanate troops when Sultan Mahmud invaded Gujarat in 1297. The Parsis had to flee again, this time to nearby Bahrot caves, located 14 km south of Sanjan. The Parsis took the sacred fire with them and kept it in the caves for 12 years.

When conditions improved, the priests shifted with the holy fire to a village called Vandsa where they lived for 14 years. A pilgrim from Navsari, Changashah who was also a benefactor,

convinced the priests to move to Navsari which they did in 1419. In Navsari, a town near Surat, they stayed for 300 years till 1740 when their existence was, for a brief period, threatened by the *pindharas* (nomadic robbers).

Eventually, the Sanjan priests left Navsari with the sacred fire and housed it in one of the two *agiaris* (the first level of fire temples) in Valsad. And, in 1741, they moved to Udvada which was under the Sanjan community and where, a year later the Zoroastrians built the Atash Behram consecrated in 1742 by two high priests (Dasturs) who had carried the fire from Navsari.

That fire, which would be moved to Udvada in the 18th century, is today considered to be the most important of its kind on the Indian subcontinent. The Atash Behram, meaning the 'Victorious Fire', is the most sacred of the Zoroastrian fire temples.

Visiting the fire temple

The Udvada Atash Behram is one of nine Atash Behrams worldwide, eight of which are in western India (four in



A local lodging place in Udvada

Mumbai, two in Surat, one in Navsari, and the one in Udvada), and one of which is in Yazd, in central Iran. Zoroastrian pilgrims from all parts of India, Iran, Pakistan, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other parts of the world where Zoroastrians have settled, visit the temple on pilgrimage. These also include newly-wed couples who visit Udvada on pilgrimage.

Other than the Parsis who visit the town for religious purposes, non-Parsi tourists too have started visiting Udvada recently to experience the zone that has simply paused in history. Non-Parsis, however, are prohibited from entering the temple even its premises.

The Atash Behram is now maintained by the descendants of the first Shehenshahi Zoroastrian immigrants in India. These include nine families of priests who were descendants of the three priests who had retrieved the sacred fire from Sanjan to safety. Two high priests or Dastur of the temple are chosen by a rotation system among these nine families.

The last two high priests serving together were Dr. Dastur Hormazdyar Mirza and Dastur Kaikobad. Upon his death,



Shop selling machis outside Atash Behram



The sleepy town of Udvada is a maze of narrow lanes lined with Parsi bungalows

Dastur Hormazdyar was succeeded by his son, Dastur Peshotan Mirza, and after the demise of Dastur Kaikobad his son Dastur Khurshed. The rest of the seven Atash Behrams in India have had the tradition of having only one high priest in every temple.

In 2007, the Indian government and the government of Gujarat set aside ₹ 15 million, as part of a development plan, to retain the heritage status of the fire temple and the Udvada town that comprised preservation of heritage buildings including the fire temple in Udvada.

Construction company Shapoorji Pallonji has been undertaking much-needed internal renovations at the Atash Behram since 2018 that had been a cause of concern for the community since long. The Iranshah Atash Behram building and the other structures in the complex were in need of extensive restoration and conservation work.

At the Iranshah Atash Behram, the original temple was refurbished in 1894 with the contributions of Bai Motlibai Manockjee Wadia from Bombay, daughter of late Jehangirjee Nasserwanjee Wadia, in memory of her husband, late Manockjee Naorojee Wadia. The temple structure is adorned beautifully, is



Udvada Railway Station



A common feature of the houses in Udvada is extensive metal grillwork that can be seen from the gates to the doors, railings and window grills

spacious and has the Dasturji Kaiyoji Mirza Hall.

Every year, on the ninth day of the ninth month in the Shahenshahi (imperial) version of the Zoroastrian calendar, ceremonial celebrations are held at Atash Behram to commemorate its founding. Parsi pilgrims from all over the world visit the temple on that day.

Additionally, on the 20th day of every month, special ceremonies are held as this day, according to the Zoroastrian calendar, is dedicated to the divinity Verethragna (Avestan, Middle Persian Wahram, hence Behram), hypostasis of victory.

The Parsi New Year is also celebrated in Udvada and that is when a large number of devotees make a beeline to the coastal town. On such occasions, the Udvada shrine comes to life and a large number of Parsi pilgrims can be seen celebrating, buying sandalwood, flowers and other ritual items to offer to the fire. The *boi* ritual, for example, involves enthroning of the (machi) of the fire which is done with nine sticks of sandalwood of 45 centimetres each.

A slice of history

Zoroastrian Heritage Museum at Udvada, sponsored by the Government of Gujarat, contains summaries of the teachings and beliefs of lord Ahura Mazda. There are write-ups that inform the reader about the history of the Parsis. Then there are explanations of the rituals and ceremonies performed by the Parsis during Navjot, on Navroze, etc. The museum also houses information on prominent personalities from the Parsi community in India and their brief biographies.

The sleepy town of Udvada is a maze of narrow lanes lined with Parsi bungalows most of which now lie vacant while others, in need of repairs. Most Parsi mansions in Udvada have high ceilings, an *ot/a* or a porch where one can sit and relax, beautifully-carved teak doors, ornate wrought-iron gates, a courtyard, etc. Another common feature of the houses in Udvada is extensive metal grillwork that can be seen from the gates to the doors, railings, window grills, etc.



Parshi homes in Udvada

Most Parsi homes in Udvada have frozen in time and are a reminder of the village's past. Almost all the old Parsi homes have wooden recliners, old cupboards made of teakwood and a characteristic double mirror, four-poster beds, other antiques and old photographs scattered across the tall walls under the high ceiling homes. Sloped roofs with ornamental skirting are also a unique feature of these centuries-old homes. The Dastur Cottage is the place from where the Dastur Street begins, home to the priests and ending up at the Atash Behram.

The architecture of the Atash Behram temple is also a reflection of the Parsi heritage. Built by Dinshaw Dorabjee Mistry from Mumbai, the temple structure is spacious with the main hall of 50 feet by 25 feet with Minton tiles paving the floor of the main hall. The urwisgah which is the place of the rituals for worship, can be accessed from the doors on the right at the entrance. Other than a huge portrait of Zoroaster that is fixed in the main hall, there are portraits of important priests and religious organisations that have significantly contributed to the establishing of this temple.

Udvada is also the religious centre of the Ilm-e-Ksh-noom, a very small Zoroastrian sect that was founded in the early



Another quiet, narrow bylane in Udvada



Udavada Gram Panchayat Office

20th century. The sect garnered a following among the prominent Unvala family of Udvada (from which the term 'Unvala sect' is also used for the observers of the Ilm-e-Kshnoom). These followers then attempted to establish new standards of worship at the Atash Behram and eventually took the caretakers of the Atash Behram to court.

The legal battle led to the nine families also gaining a legal footing and in 1936 when the two priests of the Atash Behram died, the Unvalas refused to accept their nominated successors. The Ilm-e-Kshnoom wanted to establish their priest as another 'high' priest of the Atash Behram. At the time, a highly-respected theologian Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla was called upon to intervene. The issue was finally settled after over 25 years of discord.

Itinerary for the tourists

The coastal town of Udvada is situated on the mouth of Kolak River with a hill on its outskirts. It is situated close to the union territories of Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and is connected by road and rail to nearby zones. The town is served by Udvada Railway Station for passenger trains and Vapi Railway Station for mail express and superfast trains including Shatabdi, which lies on New Delhi – Mumbai main line. The nearest airports are in Surat and Mumbai.

Located at a distance of 26 km from Valsad, Udvada is also easily accessible by road. The motorable distance between Surat to Udvada is 114 km. The coastal town is situated 182 km towards North of Mumbai and is a further eight km off the national highway NH8.

Other than the Atash Behram, Udvada Beach is the other main attraction of the town. The beach can be reached by walking through the narrow lanes of the village. Those arriving in the town by road can reach Udvada beach after a thirty-minute drive from Daman's Devka beach.

Udvada is not a tourist hub and is mainly visited by Parsi pilgrims. So, there are not many 'touristy' things to do in and around the town.

The zone, however, presents a great opportunity for photographers, history lovers and those who have an interest in architectural intricacies. Udvada is one place, however, where one can relish authentic Parsi food. There are a rare few local restaurants that offer Parsi food such as Dhanshak, Fried Boi (Mullet Fish), Vindaloo Fish Curry, Sali Marghi or Ghosht, etc. There is also an Irani bakery in Udvada, where one can buy fresh mawa cake, nankhatai, khari, cashew biscuits and a host of sweet and savoury biscuits and bakery items.

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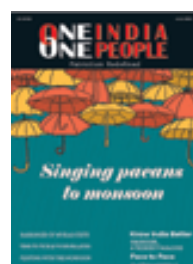
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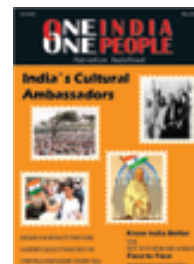
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Defining CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a means through which a company incorporates into its planning, actions and activities, environmental, social and human development concerns, to ensure that the operations it runs and its activities are ethical and benefit the society.

As commonly misunderstood, CSR is not just charity or donations but it is a way of conducting business by a company as a result of which there is visible and substantive contribution towards social good and uplift.

The objective of corporate social responsibility is to share the burden of the State, primarily the government and its agencies, in serving the public at large. The 'burden' to provide social services to be shared by specified companies as laid down in the law.

Another important explanation around CSR is the allowance of the expenditure as business expenditure or not. If CSR expenditure is put under the business expenditure bracket, then this expenditure will have to be subsidised by one-third of the amount, thereby defeating the purpose of the Act in the first place.

So, an explanation was inserted in the Act specifying that 'any expenditure incurred by an assessee on activities relating to CSR shall not be deemed as expenditure incurred by the assessee for the purpose of business and profession'.

CSR expenditure made by a company are philanthropic in nature and not 'wholly and exclusively' business expenditure. So, the CSR expenses made by a company are not eligible for deductions under the Income Tax Act, as per the legislation.

At the time of proposing the Corporate Social Responsibility Rules under Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013, the Chairman of the CSR Committee explained the Guiding Principle as well:

'Corporate Social Responsibility is the process by which an organisation thinks about and evolves its relationships with stakeholders for the common good and demonstrates its commitment in this regard by adoption of appropriate business processes and strategies'.

The evolving law

The mandatory CSR provisions were made effective from 1 April 2014 for specified companies that exhibited a certain profit, turn-over or valuation. The Act also defined the constitution and the functions of the CSR Committee.

As per the Act: *The CSR Committee of the Board shall consist of three or more directors, out of which at least one shall be an independent director. Foreign companies shall constitute CSR Committee with at least two persons in which one must be a resident person, authorised to accept notices / documents served on the foreign company and the other as nominated by the foreign company. Unlisted public company (UPC) or a private company, which otherwise does not require an independent director on its board, shall not need an independent director for the purposes of this committee. Any private company which only has two directors on its board shall have the said two directors in the CSR committee.*

The Corporate Social Responsibility Committee shall -

(a) *formulate and recommend to the Board, a Corporate Social*

Responsibility Policy which shall indicate the activities to be undertaken by the company as specified in Schedule VII in areas or subject, specified in Schedule VII;

(b) *recommend the amount of expenditure to be incurred on the activities referred to in clause (a); and*

(c) *monitor the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy of the company from time to time.*

Most recently, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs notified the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2022 (2022 Amendment Rules) to the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014 (CSR Rules) on 20 September 2022. The 2022 Amendment Rules will operate prospectively and not retrospectively.

Ensuring accountability

The Act also lays down the penalty in case of violation of the provisions of the law: *If a company contravenes the provisions shall be punishable with fine which shall not be less than fifty thousand rupees but which may extend to twenty five lakh rupees and every officer of such company who is in default shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which shall not be less than fifty thousand rupees but which may extend to five lakh rupees or with both.*

In January 2021, the government introduced significant changes to the rules in an attempt to make companies more accountable and transparent and to offer flexibility in CSR spending. The government notified sections of the Companies Act prescribing a monetary penalty for contravention of corporate social responsibility obligations of companies.

The penalty, amounting to at least INR one crore for the defaulting company and at least INR two lakh for each defaulting officer, was introduced in 2020, and came into effect in January 2021, to replace the imprisonment provision (maximum three years) for defaulting officers that was brought in earlier.

It was after protests from many corporate entities that the government decided to remove the imprisonment clause from the Act. The changes introduced also mandated companies to register their entities conducting CSR, conduct impact assessment of large projects and offered more leeway in the utilisation of CSR funds in the spirit of 'ease-of-doing business'.

As a result of this, today, companies that are qualified for CSR spending are allowed to spend more than the mandated two per cent of their net profits on CSR in any year and the excess amount spent can be set off against the CSR spending obligation in future years, with certain conditions and riders.

Sakshi Agarwal is a legal researcher with www.thewomansurvivor.com – an initiative of DraftCraft International to protect and empower women by bringing on one platform the latest on rights and issues, strategic case studies, state initiatives and informed legal opinions.

“Life’s short; we need to make it purposeful”

Ujjain-based **Mamta Sangte** is an epitome of women power. A Black Belt holder, she has trained young girls in martial arts, all for free. She has also imparted this training to 250 women ‘safai karamcharis’ in Delhi after the Nirbhaya tragedy.

Her commitment to uplift underprivileged is remarkable. She has made thousands of women self-dependent by providing them vocational training and starting self-saving initiatives. Mamta also holds the distinction of being the first woman representative from Madhya Pradesh at the world trade fair in Delhi in 2006. During lockdown, she helped many affected families and was honoured for her humanitarian work. Her *rakhi* bonding with border brothers is unique too.

An array of awards and honours have been bestowed upon her: State-level Vijayaraje Scindia Samaj Sewa Award (2009); The Most Inspiring Woman of India 2021, presented by Swaran Bharat Pariwar; Nari Shakti Samman 2022; Best Businesswoman Award three times (once awarded by Sushma Swaraj); Star Health & Allied Insurance Co. Ltd, Ujjain award for social service during lockdown; Corona Sewa Samman 2021 by Sewa Bharti Ujjain; Indore Shiromani 2020-21..... the list is almost endless.

In an interview with **Tuhina Banerjee**, she talks about the causes she espouses.

Excerpts:

How was your childhood like?

When I was in class 9, my father fell ill and lay bed-ridden. My mother used to do manual labour to raise six of my siblings -- four sisters and two brothers. I felt I should also contribute to family's income and started teaching girls from slums and poor families in Sewa Bharti. They used to pay me Rs 100 a month. The Sewa Bharti people told me to get more kids so I could earn more. So, I searched for more such girls and collected them there. Today, there are 50 Sewa Bharti kendras all across Ujjain. We give training in sewing, stitching; hold coaching and also provide jobs to the girls.

How did you get into martial arts?

I saw my brother learning martial arts and I told my father I wished to do something similar. He agreed and thus I started attending martial arts classes still very young. I didn't have fees to pay for the martial arts training. I told my sir -- the instructor -- I couldn't pay and he said not to worry. Gradually, with a lot of practice, I became a Black Belt. Sir had ensured that I take the state-level exam for Black Belt referee. After I cleared it, I started giving martial arts training for free in schools, mostly government ones.



Mamta Sangte

And how did you go to trade fair in Delhi?

The work at Sewa Bharti also continued. We tried to make women self-dependent by starting self-help groups. We gave them training in pickle, papad and murabba making. Also, in batik printing, making dupatta, handmade decorations and paper envelopes. It got noticed.

The social welfare minister in Madhya Pradesh was highly impressed with my work and sent me to International Trade Fair in Delhi. I was the first woman to represent MP at the event in 2012. After getting exposure there, I organized 40-45 fairs where we gave loans to the needy.

You also trained women safai karamcharis in martial arts in Delhi.

Yes. It was after the Nirbhaya tragedy that I was invited to impart martial arts training to women safai karamcharis. I gave training to 250 of them. I stayed in Delhi for one month. I also gave martial arts training free in 1,200 school and colleges after the incident. I was also included in a group formed by the Collector to



Bonding with the jawans on the borders

catch eve-teasers during Kumbh Mela, while donning plain clothes.

You encountered many personal tragedies too. Did they deter you?

My father passed away in 1997. My younger brother died in an accident within three months of my father's passing away. On August 15, 2017 one of my brothers died due to heart attack. When my mother died in September the same year, there was no one to perform the last rites and light her pyre. I did it and incidentally, it was for the first time that a woman from the Valmiki Samaj performed such a ritual.

But personal tragedies on steeled my resolve further. I realized life is short and we need to make it purposeful.

Covid hit the poor the hardest. What was your contribution during this crisis?

During lockdown, the daily labourers lost their jobs. They didn't know what to do. For two years, I ensured that 5,000 daily labourers-- from vegetable vendors, scrap dealers to auto drivers -- got ration every day. I roped in many charity organizations and raised funds. There was a time when I got too engrossed in the work that I didn't go home for almost two months. I had taken down the mobile numbers of all the labourers and the address of those who didn't have a handset. Steadily, their lives came back on track.



Ensuring that the poor and unemployed got their ration during the pandemic



Sangini, her group dispatched 5,000 rakhis (through Speed Post) to jawans stationed on India`s borders

You seem to have a great bond with jawans deployed on the borders.

I have travelled many border areas and developed a proximity with them. For the last 12 years, our group Sangini has dispatched 5,000 rakhis (through Speed Post) to our 'brothers' stationed on the borders. In 2010, I went to Wagah border. I also visited the Naxalite-hit Narayanpura area. Last year, I went to the Uri sector. At all these places, I tied rakhi to my border brothers. Tears roll down the cheeks of many soldiers when we tie rakhi on their wrists. It is an emotional moment.

Which other places have you taken your charity to?

During the Uttarakhand floods in 2013, I started from MP with a truckful of essential food commodities. Beyond a certain point,

the administration refused to let us go further with the truck. They said, "You leave the stuff, we will do the needful." But I wanted to ensure it reaches its destination and the right beneficiaries. It was then that the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans came to my rescue. They drove the truck through a different route and reached the stuff to those who needed it the most.

I have also travelled to Kashmir (during 2014 floods), Kathmandu (during 2015 earthquake), Kerala (during 2018 floods) and Uddhampur to dispatch relief aid.

I recently got an invitation to visit villages near the Line of Control (LoC) from the BSF to give training to women so that they can generate jobs for themselves and get self-employed. It is a big challenge for me and I will be happy if I am able to help them out and chart a new path for them.

Why didn't you get married?

I think I am wedded to my causes. I am 45 and I have devoted my life for the country. I want to do more and more so that I am remembered as a champion of social causes that I stand for.

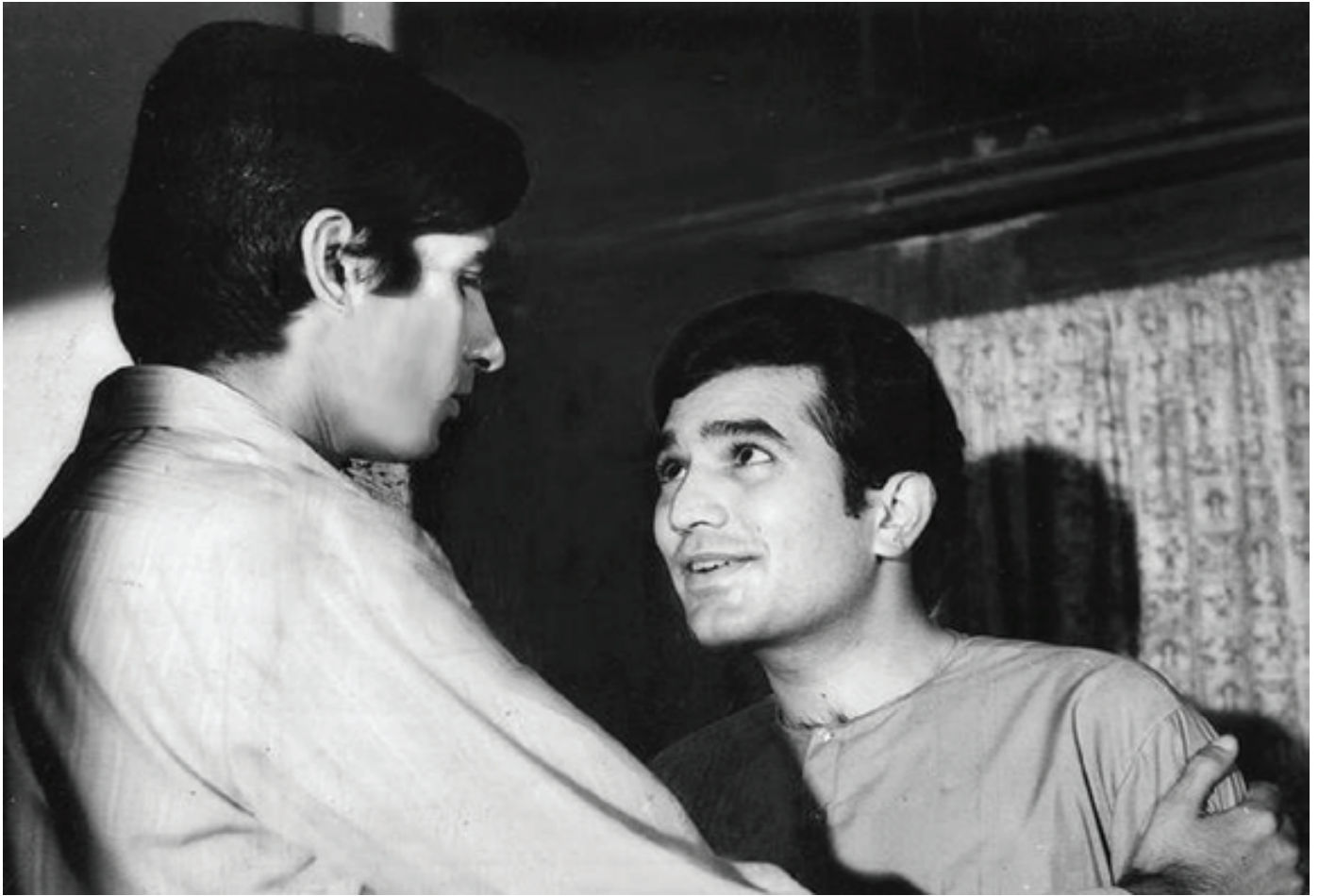


The writer is a freelancer who specialises in lifestyle and wellness issues.



Amitabh@ 80 : His genial roles were as resonating

Shoma A. Chatterji feels that the “Angry young man” label identified with thespian Amitabh Bachchan has not been very fair as he essayed many roles that were in complete contrast to that image. In this profile, she lists some of his films where the actor was a revelation and struck the same emotional chord with the audience.



Superstars Amitabh and Rajesh Khanna in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's 'Anand'

I have always felt that identifying the screen persona of Amitabh Bachchan with the label of the “angry young man” is unfair because even in his heyday when the angry young man was an image he seemed to have blended into, he was equally, if not more impressive in films where he played differently and did not subscribe to the “angry young man” not physically as we witnessed him in films like *Deewar*, *Zanzeer*, *Don*, *Trishul*, *Agneepath*, and so on. There are films like *Namak Haram*, *Mili*, *Chupke Chupke*, *Do Anjaane*, *Kabhie Kabhie*, *Jumana* and many others. Here are four examples.

Anand (1971)

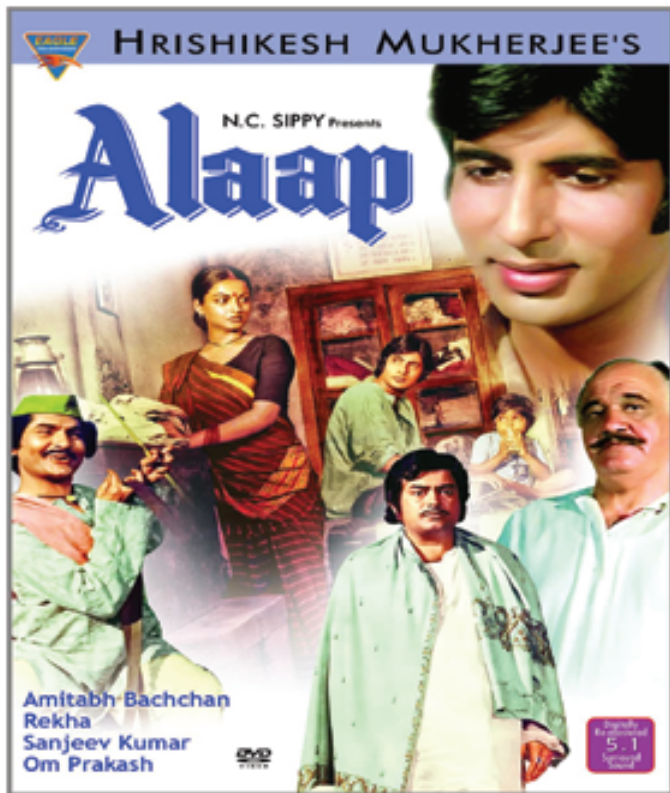
He first drew notice with Hrishikesh Mukherjee's film *Anand*, a tear-jerker featuring a young man dying of “lymphosarcoma of the intestines” which is colon cancer. Rajesh Khanna, then the top star, played Anand. Offering him support was Dr. Bhaskar (Amitabh Bachchan) who began treating Anand. This

was an Amitabh who was a radical contrast to the Bachchan we got to know later. He was extremely thin, emphasized by his height, dark skin and a rich baritone that said little but meant a lot.

The quiet, dignified and silent Bhaskar offers a dramatic contrast to the chirpy, talkative and loud Anand whose name spells out the joy and cheer he spreads around wherever he goes. It is only towards the end when Anand dies that Bhaskar breaks down and screams at Anand to talk, talk and talk and disturb him the way he did. It gives us a glimpse of the restraint Bachchan could put into practice even at that early stage of his career though he was pitted against the hottest star of Indian cinema at that time.

Abhimaan (1973)

In some circles, the story went that the film was probably a throwback into the sad married life of Pandit Ravi Shankar



Alaap Poster

and his talented first wife Annapoorna Devi as it was rumoured that Annapurna Devi, the daughter of Ustad Allaudin Khan and sister of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan was certainly more talented than her husband Pandit Ravi Shankar. But the story of *Abhimaan* is different. The only similarity lies in the fact that in the film, Uma (Jaya Bachchan), it is discovered, is much more talented than her husband Subir (Amitabh Bachchan), a famous singer with fans chasing for autographs. When she begins to sing in public, her husband is ignored completely and he does not like this. From this point on, the film moves in a completely different direction and turns into a melodramatic tear-jerker with a happy ending. The music is archived as the best among R.D. Burman's oeuvre. Amitabh gave a sparkling performance as a famous public figure sucked into his own fame suddenly finding himself sidetracked by the very fans who chased him once, now chasing his wife. He cannot take it and his pregnant wife goes back to her village. This weakens the film for its overplaying the sentimental melodrama. Jaya Bachchan's magnificent performance as the quiet, submissive yet talented Uma makes the film a memorable one.

Alaap (1977)

Alaap is one of the most emotionally rich portrayals of the conflict between a rich advocate and dominating father Triloki Prasad (Om Prakash) and his younger son Alok (Amitabh Bachchan) who is passionate about a dedicated career in Hindustani classical music. His father wants him to join the family business. But Alok prefers to pull a *tonga* for livelihood over joining his father's practice. He leaves his father's abode and finds life extremely difficult with only music as his means of survival. Om Prakash and Amitabh Bachchan are perfectly matched as father and son walking in diametrically opposite directions but hating it all the time.

Music, aptly created and composed by Jaidev forms the backbone of the film both physically and metaphorically. Rekha, who stands behind Alok and who he subsequently marries, plays the marginalised heroine as Raadhiya with minimum glamour to throw up a beautifully understated performance. The story is inspired by a work by Harindranath Chattopadhyay. The father is

against any kind of musical career because he believes this has had an 'unhealthy' impact on his son of a famous courtesan and Ustads. So, he arranges to strip them of their livelihood. Alok leaves home and hearth for his music and also as his voice of protest against his father's injustice towards those who inspired him.

Alok finds himself in dire circumstances that escalate when he discovers that he has tuberculosis and is not able to use his voice. Hrishikesh Mukherjee created two different climaxes, one tragic and the other a happy one that ends with his father coming to take him away for treatment. But despite this subtle, low-key treatment, *Alaap* turned out to be a commercial failure.

Main Azaad Hoon (1989)

Directed by Tinnu Anand, *Main Azaad Hoon* is an Indianised, updated adaptation of Franc Capra's Gary Cooper-starrer *Meet John Doe* which gave birth to the phrase "John Doe" used when the name of a possible culprit is not identified. Amitabh's character does not have a name right through the film. He is christened "Azaad" by an ambitious journalist Subhashini (Shabana Azmi) who finds the gem of a column for her newspaper bylined by the common man "Azaad." The column becomes an overnight hit and the mass readership demands a meeting with Azaad not knowing that he does not exist except as a fake name in a faked newspaper column. But he wins them over with his common-sense homilies.

Amitabh plays a penniless drifter who does not know what hit him when he finds that everyone wants to meet and hear him on a public platform. He has a friend (Annu Kapoor) equally in the doldrums who warns him not to listen to Subhashini but he does not and launches himself into a future he never bargained for. He gets involved in the problems of the place such as the village where drinking water is highly polluted, where workers in the local sugar mill are ruthlessly exploited, where student demonstrations are nipped in the bud by the dictatorial Establishment, where student power can be harnessed for sound social causes and where change can be effected if the people unite and act.

In one of her columns, Subhashini writes, on behalf of *Azaad*, that he will jump off the highest tower of the city on a given date as his mark of protest if the situation which the tower threatens to displace the slumdweller and demolish the school where the slum kids study is not remedied immediately.

What holds the film together is the magnificent performance by every single actor with Bachchan topping the list. This is one of Bachchan's most outstanding performances till 1989. The other pillar of support was the theme song penned by the late Kaifi Azmi, and the number was sung by Bachchan himself. Repeated through the film, it spreads the spirit of unity and action for the maximum good of the maximum number. Sadly, *Main Azaad Hoon* was a commercial failure. But it fetched Amitabh Bachchan his first National Award along with *Agneepath* in 1991.



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.

A tale of lottery winners

*Winning a lottery jackpot is the stuff of wild dreams. Then, how can a lottery winner wish he had not won? **Lina Mathias** muses over some aspects that come to mind on the plight of a lotter winner.*

There must be few other earth-shakingly thrilling moments in life than being told that you have won a massive lottery jackpot. In fact, the first-person accounts of many lottery winners detail a similar sequence: wild joy followed by doubt about the authenticity of the news given to them.

The winner of the Onam lottery festival in Kerala this September is a 32-year old autorickshaw driver from Thiruvananthapuram. On 18 September, Anoop was told that he had won a mind boggling ₹ 25 crores. After tax deductions and the lottery agent's commission, Anoop will receive ₹ 15.75 crore. The Kerala government which monitors the lottery schemes in the state under strict regulations, has offered to give him financial management lessons in regard to the winnings.

However, Anoop's disbelieving happiness lasted only until the news began spreading widely and quickly. He was besieged literally and figuratively with requests for financial help on all sides by those he knew and those who were complete strangers. So much so, that in the interviews he gave in late September to the media, he said that he had to flee from one relative's house to another to escape these people.

"I wish I hadn't won," were his sad words. On second thoughts, he says he would have been content with the third prize.

We do not know what the state of Anoop's affairs are at present. But the change from extreme joy to such a sense of helplessness would have certainly made a philosopher of most people. The author may be forgiven a few reflections whilst dwelling on this.

Such examples of everyone avoiding a person who is short of financial resources and in debt only to run after him or her when fortune smiles on them, are not rare. This is similar to the case of people who have struggled and faced humiliation and hardship for years in pursuit of their goals. Whilst they are pursuing their dreams (they are lucky if there is anyone who believes in them), most people around look upon them as time wasters who are deluded. The scenario completely changes, however, when they taste a certain amount of success. Then everyone is suddenly "proud" of them, congratulates them, wants a selfie with them and in short, is a very good friend.

Another aspect is the definition of "luck". As the joke goes, don't merely pray hard that you win the lottery; first buy the ticket. Anoop said in the interview that he had been buying lottery tickets for nearly two decades before he finally won the jackpot.

Then again, we are often exhorted to share our good fortune. To what extent does one share the good fortune of a lottery jackpot? A little before Anoop's win, Mohammed Bava a resident of Kasargod in Kerala also won a massive lottery jackpot.



Lottery tickets

Like Anoop, he too was in debt and according to media reports had almost sold his house to fend off debtors. Again, the wise tell us that a person who has a little is more fearful of losing it than the person who has absolutely nothing to lose. The latter finds it easier to be charitable than the first.

Media stories and videos of euphoric lottery winners must also be driving other lottery ticket holders to disappointment and even, extreme frustration. "When will I be in that space?" must be a recurring question. Like the oft repeated line, "Mera number kab ayega?" Those given to moralising could be forgiven for thinking wryly that for every winner there are lakhs and lakhs of hopefuls who turn away disappointed.

Ultimately, all of us can take inspiration from Louise Hay's quote: "Life is a lottery that we've already won. But most people have not cashed in their tickets."

Here, too, for those fond of musing and mulling, the part about "already won" might be debatable. What about the millions of people who have been handed cards by fate those are decidedly unfortunate? Can they be accused of not cashing in their tickets when the tickets are duds?

But perhaps we shall reflect on that another time.



Lina Mathias is a senior Mumbai-based journalist and former executive editor, Economic and Political Weekly.



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A grandeur that needs protection

*The Himalayas are geologically young and fragile formations, prone to disturbances and landslides. Most of this region is highly seismic and hence calls for policies that are protective towards the environment, particularly forests and rivers, asserts **Bharat Dogra**.*



The Himalayas

The Himalayas stretch majestically for nearly 2500 km across 13 Indian states and union territories. Nearly 50 million people live here, but the number of people whose life is closely influenced by the Himalayas is many times more, with a heavy concentration in the densely populated Gangetic plains.

For all their outward grandeur, the Himalayas are geologically young and fragile formations, prone to disturbances and landslides. Most of this region falls in the highest seismicity zone. Hence policies for this region should take extra care to be protective towards the environment, particularly forests and rivers, towards the people living here and the much larger number influenced by what happens in the Himalayan region.

At the national level, people tend to discuss the Himalayan region in terms of tourism and pilgrimage destinations, but greater attention should be given to the lives and livelihoods of common people living in the Himalayan region as well as the need to protect environment in such ways that the impact of Himalaya locally and more widely remains protective. Cooperation with other Himalayan countries should also be based on sharing such concerns with them and minimizing conflict to the extent possible given the geopolitical realities.

The Himalayas with their varying heights and slopes, peaks and valleys are suitable for preserving rich biodiversity. The traditional farming practices have made good use of this to

provide a diversity of nutritious food, which is particularly rich in millets and herbs. Some farm scientists who were trained in green revolution monocultures could not appreciate these strengths and so very disruptive new crops and technologies were introduced at some places. Fortunately, this mistake has been realised and corrective measures are being taken to switch to more organic and natural methods of farming. This is a welcome step, but often a holistic approach is missing in these efforts.

Forests are crucial for protecting Himalayan ecology, but with due care and understanding, they can also play the most important role in supporting sustainable livelihoods of local people. This would be based on providing people livelihoods in protecting forests and biodiversity, regenerating mixed natural forests with due place for more soil and water conserving trees like the oak, and giving people much better rights over sustainable use of minor forest produce. A rural economy based on such protective livelihoods, fruits and dry fruits, organic farm produce in raw and processed forms, supported further by eco-friendly tourism and pilgrimage can provide a stable livelihood base without endangering environment.

Unfortunately, not just tourism but even pilgrimages are getting highly commercialised, with record numbers of helicopter sorties bringing pilgrims to their favoured shrines. Instead of allowing all this to be guided mainly by commercial factors, we must bring in important factors like protecting environment and promoting livelihoods of common hill people.

There has been a lot of controversy around several big development projects, particularly dam and highway projects. A time has come when the government should make room for a completely unbiased evaluation of the overall impact of these projects so that future policy is guided entirely by the most unbiased conclusion that can be drawn from the experiences so far. There are several concerns—loss of forests and trees, destabilisation of slopes and land-slides, displacement of people among them—but a particularly serious concern is that of avoiding any massive disasters.

The role which hydel projects had played in aggravating the highly disastrous floods in Uttarakhand in 2013 has been widely discussed and even a committee appointed at the initiative of the Supreme Court had drawn attention to this. We cannot forget that about 6,000 human lives were lost in these floods, perhaps more. Therefore, priority should be to avoid big disasters. More than one officially appointed committee has drawn attention to very serious risks associated with the Tehri Dam Project in Uttarakhand, for instance, and we should not ignore or neglect such well-documented warnings, supported by scientific evidence and voiced by eminent experts.

Sunderlal Bahuguna, who died last year, had devoted his entire life to protecting Himalayan ecology as well as sustainable livelihoods. He used to say—Ecology is permanent



economy. He went on long foot marches to hundreds of villages to find practical ways of applying this principle. He as well as his companions contributed much in this direction.

They emphasised that ecological tasks cannot be taken up in social isolation. Hence, they placed equal emphasis on justice for women and pleaded for wider social roles for them. Women have justified this trust by playing very important role in the Chipko movement, anti-liquor movements and peace initiatives in the region.

These activists also emphasised equal opportunities, inter-faith harmony and empowerment of Dalits. Their work is a valuable guide for evolving a socio-economic and ecological agenda for the Himalayan region, integrating many-sided justice with environmental concerns.

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

SATYA PRAKASH (RAJU) SRIVASTAV (1963-2022)

He brought humour to the mundane

Satya Prakash Srivastav, alias Raju Srivastav was a popular TV host, comedian, film actor and politician.

Raju took stand-up comedy door to door. He specialised in finding humour in everyday situations. At one point India's highest-paid observational comedian, he even performed abroad. It was always a laugh riot around him.

He had artistic traits rooted in him and despised vulgarity urging comedians to practice self-regulation. As youngster, he loved to mimic film stars, especially Amitabh Bachchan. He donned the same hairstyle and put up his posters in his room. At school, he mimicked his teachers and at home mimicked Indira Gandhi by listening to her voice on the radio, as there was no TV at home. While everyone would laugh, his mother would remind him that life as a clown would not work.

Getting paid ₹ 50 for a performance at a neighbour's home, sparked the urge to pursue stand-up comedy as a profession and acting in films and TV. Comedy as an art was not appreciated then. Many of his relatives, unhappy with his decision, felt it would dishonour the family.

Born in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur in a middle-class family, his father Ramesh Chandra Srivastava, was an acclaimed part time poet and government employee. Completing his education, Raju moved to Mumbai in the 1980s to fulfill his dreams and saw extreme ups and downs, even working as an auto driver. He shaped his career at events impersonating Amitabh Bachchan. Later, his first audio jokes cassette Hasna Mana Hai, gained a lot of attention. He also took to writing, performing stand-ups.

He made his Bollywood debut with Tezaab in 1988 and went on to act in 30 films, in miss and blink but memorable roles which included Baazigar, Journey Bombay to Goa: Laughter Unlimited, Main Prem Ki Deewani Hoon, Aamdani Atthanni Kharcha Rupaiya, Maine Pyar Kiya, Big Brother, Barood: (The Fire) – A Love Story', and Toilet: Ek Prem Katha (2017), Abhay, Firangi, and Big Brother.

On T.V., Raju was seen in Dekh Bhai Dekh,

Shaktimaan, Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain, and Happu Ki Ultan Paltan and Tea Time Manoranjan.

In 2005, Raju participated in a stand-up comedy show called The Great Indian Laughter Challenge - Season 1 on TV. That's where he evolved as Gajodhar Bhaiyya, (the name of his barber when young), he was the second runner up. He later won the title of The King of Comedy in its spin-off show The Great Indian Laughter Challenge – Champions. He went on to do more than 2,800 live shows.

In Bigg Boss 3, in 2009 he got evicted after two months. In 2013, Raju along with his wife participated in Nach Baliye season 6, a couples' dance reality show. He was also seen in popular shows like Comedy Nights with Kapil and The Kapil Sharma Show, Gangs of Haseepur, Mazaak Mazaak Mein, a Hindi reality television talent competition and Comedy Ka Maha Muqabala. He was last seen on the comedy show India's Laughter Champion on 30th July 2022 as a special guest.

In 2010, Raju's take on Dawood Ibrahim went viral and got him death threats. In 2021, he got a call from Pakistan to stop making fun of Pakistan.

Raju was fielded by the Samajwadi Party in 2014 for the Kanpur Lok Sabha seat but he quit and joined the BJP. Appointed the brand ambassador of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Film Development Council, he was allotted a 106-acre plot in Varanasi for a Film City. Raju's net worth was around Rs 20 crore through hosting, advertising, reality shows and stage shows.

Raju was admitted to AIIMS Hospital in Delhi after a heart attack on 10th August, when working out at a gym. After an angioplasty, he was put on ventilator for 42 days, but passed away. Raju leaves behind wife Shikha, a daughter and a son.



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance writer, poet and short story writer.

CAPTAIN ANUJ NAYYAR MVC (1975-1999)

Hero of Pimple II triumph

Anuj Nayyar was born on 28 August 1975 and grew up in Delhi. His father, Satish Kumar Nayyar, worked as a visiting professor in Delhi School of Economics while his mother, Meena Nayyar, worked for the South Campus library of Delhi University. He was a bright student who performed well in academics and sports. Nayyar received his high-school education in Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. He graduated from the National Defence Academy and was commissioned into 17 Jat Regiment in June 1997.

In May 1999, a tip-off by a local shepherd to Captain Saurabh Kalia led to the exposure of infiltration by Pakistan in Kargil. The Indian Army realised that the intruders were Pakistan Army and para-military personnel dressed as locals. The plan was to occupy about 15 to 20 peaks. The terrain was rugged with very few tracks and covered with snow making movement difficult. Pakistan Army believed that the Indian Army would be slow and limited. Apart from keeping the plan top secret, the Pakistan Army also undertook certain steps to maximise deception. No new administrative bases for the intrusions were created. Along the ridgelines, there were the logistic lines of communication and the nullahs (small streams) were far away from the tracks.

In early May only Zoji La pass was opened for the troops. If the actions of intruders were effective then it would allow Pakistani troops to secure some dominating heights from where movement on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway 1A might be prohibited. Armed personnel from Pakistan were occupying heights. Climbing and neutralising them was tough, militarily and physically. The Pakistani army was aiming for an upper hand in Kashmir and plunging the Indian subcontinent in brief and limited war and raising the spectre of nuclear war.

In May 1999, Operation Vijaya was launched by the Indian Army and about 200,000 troops were mobilised. On 13 June 1999, the first major ridgeline to fall was Tololing in the Drass sub-sector which was captured after weeks. It was followed by capture of Tiger Hill and Point 4875. Point 4875 was re-named as "Gun Hill" in honour of the astounding performance of the Gunners in the Drass and Mashkoh

sub-sectors.

Nayyar's first major operation involved securing Pimple II, a peak on the western slopes. In a last-ditch attempt, C Coy, 17 Jat, of which Nayyar was the second-in-command, decided to secure the peak without waiting for any aerial support on 6 July. Anuj packed his bag even before he was asked.



With his company commander injured, command devolved upon him. As the unit advanced under heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire, the lead section reported the location of 3-4 enemy bunkers. Nayyar destroyed the first bunker with a rocket launcher and grenades. He killed 9 Pakistani soldiers and destroyed three medium machine gun bunkers. The company then began its assault on the last remaining bunker, but an enemy Rocket Propelled Grenade directly hit Nayyar. A grievously injured Capt. Nayyar continued to lead his company. He succumbed but not before clearing the last bunker on Point 4875. Pimple II was captured on 8 July but Capt Nayyar paid with supreme sacrifice.

Forty-six soldiers of the Pakistan Army, an unknown number of Pakistani paramilitary troopers and militants were killed. None from Capt. Nayyar's team of Charlie Company survived the battle. The securing of Pimple Complex paved the way for the recapture of Tiger Hill that forced Pakistan to beat a retreat.

Nayyar was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra for his bravery and leadership in combat. Nayyar's father, S.K. Nayyar, was allotted a gas station in Delhi by the Government of India in recognition of the services of his son. Tejbir Singh, a fellow soldier of the Jat Regiment, named his son Anuj in honour of Nayyar. A road in Janakpuri area of New Delhi, was named as "Captain Anuj Nayyar Marg".

Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)

EUNICE DE SOUZA (194-2017)

Confessional cult poetess

Tell me Mr. Death
Date, Time, Place.
I have to look for my
Life-of-sin panties
Make an appointment
For a pedicure.

(Learn from the Almond Leaf 23)

Eunice de Souza was an Indian confessional English language poetess, literary critic and novelist. Born as a Goan Catholic and settled in Pune, she attended Sophia College, Mumbai and then earned a Master's degree in English literature from Marquette University, Wisconsin, and a PhD from the University of Mumbai.

She started teaching at St. Xavier's College (Mumbai) in 1969, heading the Department of English from 1990 for several years, and retired in 2000. She actively organised stage plays for the college annual theatre festival *Ithaka*. She was Arts columnist, Economic Times, Bombay, 1973-84 and Literary editor, Indian Post, Bombay, 1987.

Over four decades, Eunice published four notable volumes of poetry, *Women in Dutch painting*, *Ways of Belonging*, *Nine Indian Women Poets*, *These My Words*, and *Learn From The Almond Leaf*; two novellas', *Dangerlok* and *Dev & Simran*; compiled anthologies of Indian women's writing; edited volumes of folk tales, and literary criticism; poems for children, which were translated into Portuguese, Italian, Finnish and Swedish. She contributed weekly review articles on art, literature and culture for the Mumbai Mirror. She is included in Anthology of Contemporary Indian Poetry.

Anti-establishment, Eunice de Souza had a remarkably sparse style of writing, bereft of verbose ornamentation. Her expression would be a calibrated tone of restraint that made her poems read like notes exchanged between people who already knew one another well.

Her poems often seemed to scorch the page with acid irony. Quaintly admitting that with words, she stomped around, 'like a sour old puss in verse' with aplomb, she believed her poems grew calmer, more nuanced, and less one-dimensional.

Her irreverent, unsentimental poetry was imbued with a

sense of the personal, distilled from the lived experience of being a Catholic woman in a patriarchal set-up. The seemingly innocuous, unremarkable, everyday social lives of her characters were often the subject of her poems.

Reluctant to be labelled a woman poet, she however never shied away from using her poetry as a medium of social critique vis a vis women's subjugation within institutional structures of family and marriage.

Her women, perfect models of submissive compliance, epitomised the lack of agency that female subjects endure in patriarchal societies. Her persistent engagement with matrimony as the site of social hierarchies and prejudices is reflected in her poem *Marriages are Made*, where the prospective bride becomes the object of intense scrutiny.

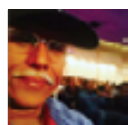
Her poem *Feeding the Poor at Christmas*, examines the performance of Christian charity, where the note of condescension towards the recipients of alms reveals it as being a self-serving, conditional, superficial exercise.

She acknowledged therapeutic value in the writing of a poetry that can contain destructive impulses by giving them form:

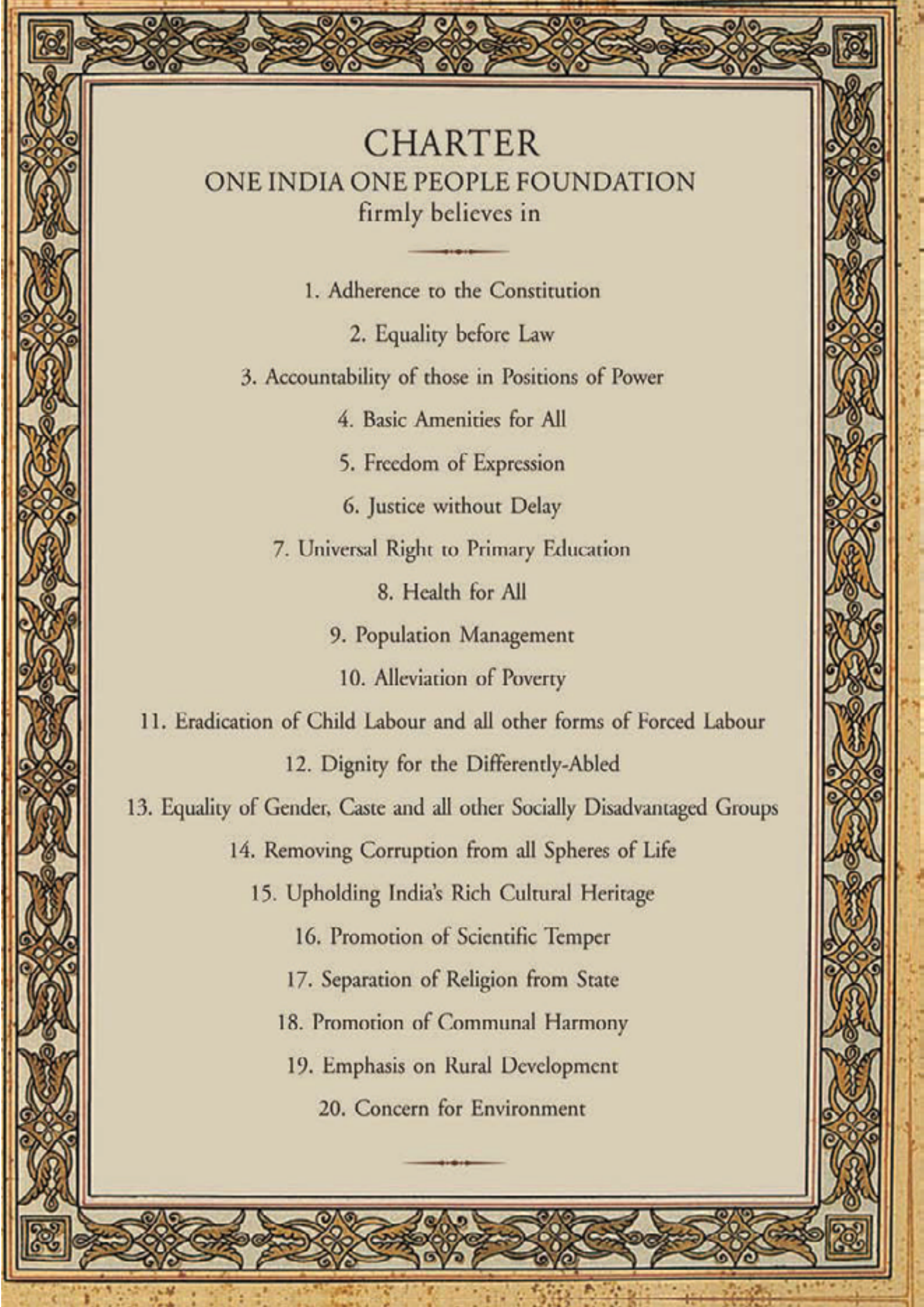
Yet the world will maul again, I know,
and I'll go gladly for the usual price,
Emerge to flay myself in poems,
The sluiced vein just a formal close.

Her work influenced younger poets to not only speak about the gendered nature of everyday experiences but also to capture the potential for strength and humour in it.

Eunice who never married, caring for her mother and aunt until their death, passed away in Mumbai aged 77 of a cardiac arrest, leaving behind a lifetime's worth of writings and will be remembered as an inspiration to younger people.



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance writer, poet and short story writer.



CHARTER

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firmly believes in

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 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE