

Volume 1 Issue 6 June 2011

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INDIA**



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An NGO working to empower marginalised communities through HER (Health, Education and Rights)

Udaan Ghar

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Empowerment
Dreams
Programme

SOW -
School
On
Wheels

Kaveri
English
School

Community
Area
Resource
centers
(ARC)

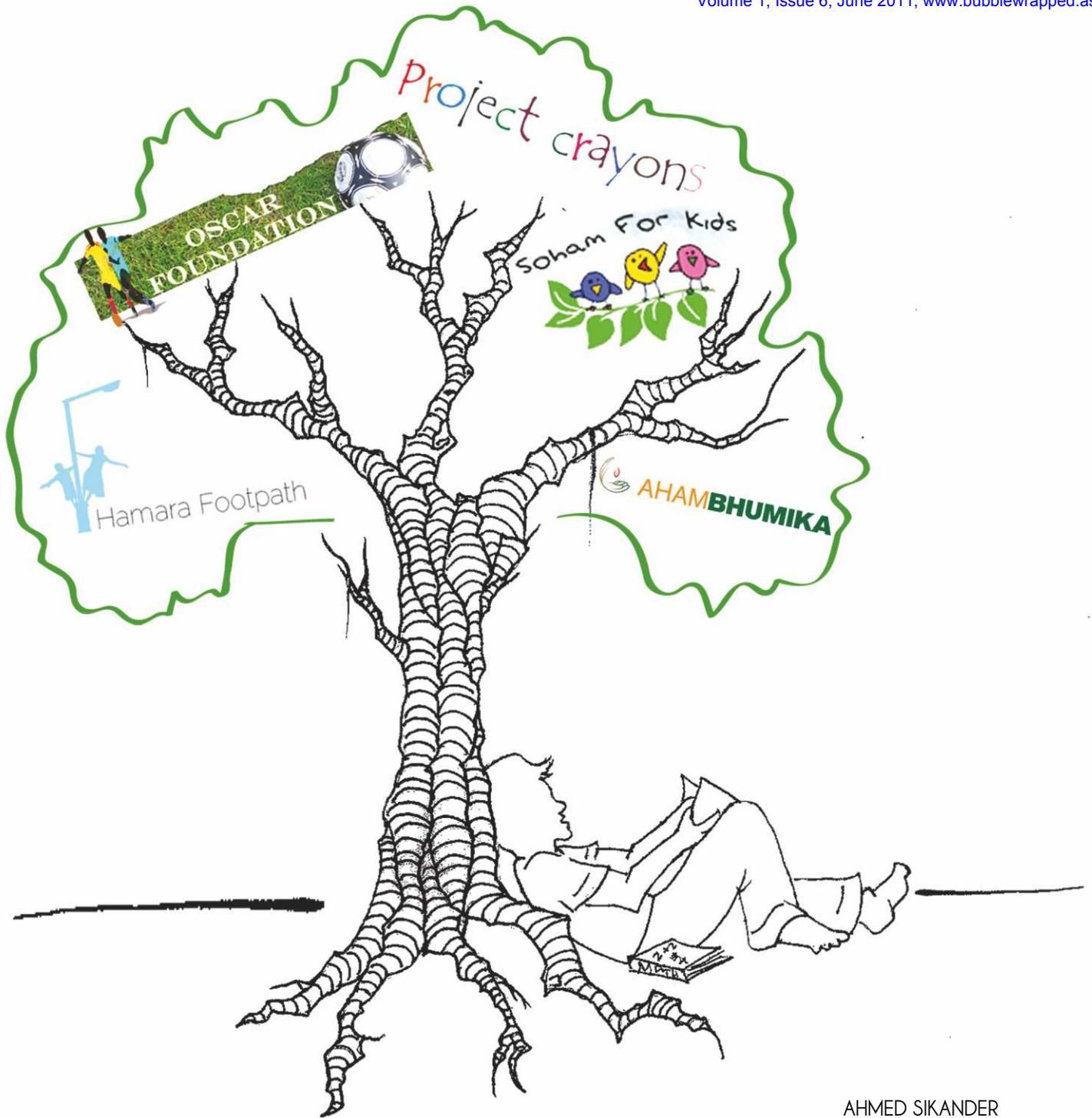
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EYE-
Employment
and Youth
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Bubblewrapped June 2011

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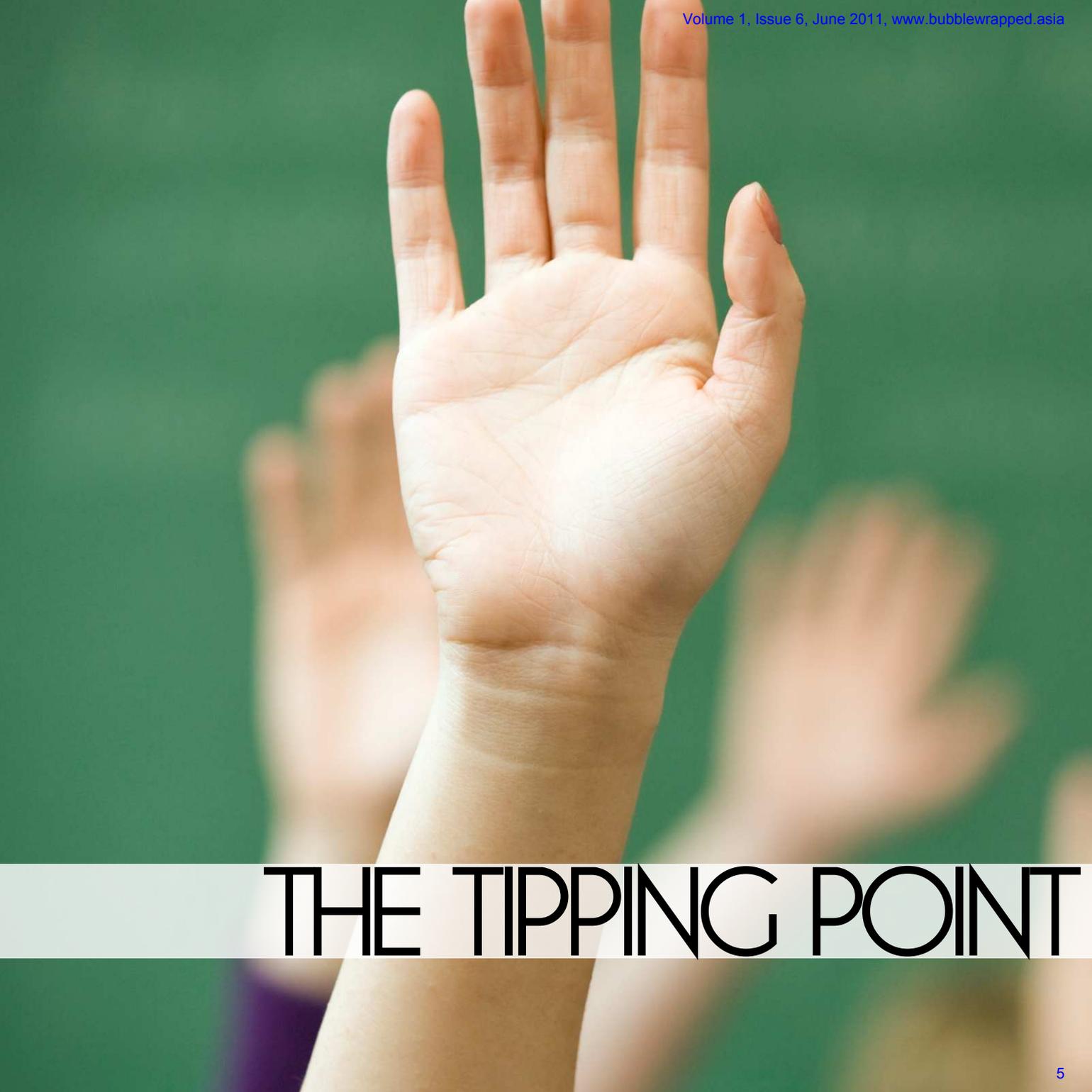
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THE TIPPING POINT





EDUCATION FOR ALL... WHERE ARE WE??

Author: Riddhima Saxena

The constitution of India guarantees all Indian children up to the age of 14 years the right to “free and compulsory” education. This promise remains on paper and is yet to fully materialise. The growth of the Indian economy in the recent past and the need to sustain it is forcing the Indian government to accelerate the process of developing all the branches of the Indian education system. However, reaching out to a billion people is no easy task and the role of non-government organisations becomes extremely vital.

The Indian education sector is plagued with many other problems. Insufficient funds, the lack of books and absence of basic facilities is just about scratching the surface. Finding skilled and dedicated teachers is a challenge in itself. A profession that was once revered and respected is today often

the last choice for most. If retaining teachers is an issue, making sure students don't drop out requires fair amount of work as well.

While the private sector is forging ahead in setting up schools with so-called 'world-class' facilities, how much of it is actually accessible by the underprivileged? If the common man (read middle and upper middle class) is throwing a fit about exorbitant school fees, how and where are the poor to send their children for education? For now NGOs propagating the ABCs of literacy seem to be their messiah.

Masoom Education

(<http://www.masoomeducation.org>)

Masoom Nikita Ketkar set up Masoom Education to ensure books become a reality for thousands of under privileged children. She worked in different capacities as a journalist, lecturer and social worker before qualifying for the Union Public Services Commission. After spending over three years in various administrative positions in DRDO, Air headquarters and NCC directorate, Nikita felt the urge to do something beyond and left the service to work for various NGOs. She spent some time at Save the Children India and Sahas Sports Foundation. It was while working on a social project she came across night

schools and it compelled her to start Masoom, an organisation focused on improving the night schools, in 2008.

Night schools are the lifeline of underprivileged youth, who have been forced to take up a job to support their families. Due to apathy of society, the government and other civic bodies' night schools have been relegated to secondary status replete with poor infrastructural facilities and teachers ill-equipped to cover the syllabus in half the number of hours. Moreover, many of the trusts which run these schools are not active anymore and these schools are in constant need of funding and a lot of external support.

In her bid to give night schools a new reality, Nikita Ketkar through Masoom Education has adopted a three pronged strategy: Educational infrastructure building and support: The organisation is working towards customising of curriculum which stresses on minimum essential learning. Since the children attending the schools have lesser number of hours compared to day school children the aim is to teach them the fundamental parts of the curriculum in the very least. Masoom is also working on incorporating vocational training which is more relevant to these students and has larger application in their environment. Hence this

component includes textbooks, notebooks, workbooks, lab kits, math kits, extra tuition classes and special moderator sessions for students appearing for SSC examination.

Capacity Building support: "One of the fundamental challenges faced is ownership on part of teachers," said Nikita. Teachers which form a vital part in the education and imparting of knowledge are well qualified but need a change in attitude and increased motivation in reducing drop-out rates amongst children. This component has training workshops for teachers and students, personalised counselling, English conversation skills, vocational guidance and nutritional support.

Advocacy: Last but not the least is Masoom's will to try to get the government to take more responsibility of the night schools and increase budgetary allocation. Night schools housed in BMC premises lack proper infrastructure such as laboratories and playgrounds and Masoom is taking up issues such as increased budgetary allocation with the government.

The Masoom Education has already adopted six night schools of Mumbai under its wings as a pilot project in November 2008. It plans to adopt all the night schools of Mumbai in a

phased manner by 2020 and then spread its wings across Maharashtra.



Soham for Kids

(<http://www.sohamforkids.org>)

“Education in India represents an extreme paradox where it is becoming a business. In India of the 200 million children, 59 million children do not have access to schooling,” said Faiza Seth, founder of Soham for Kids and an architect by profession with her own firm in London. While there are a number of expensive education institutes in India, there is a lack of subsidised or free education facilities for the underprivileged. “Also there is

little emphasis on providing good quality of education,” she added.

An Indian by origin she would visit India along with her mother and distribute clothes, food, toys, etc. to orphanages. Frustrated by the short-term effect of this approach, Faiza started a Montessori education school on outskirts of Hyderabad which aimed at providing free education, nutrition and clothing. The Soham for Kids team develops a curriculum that replaces traditional rote learning with modern academic and experiential techniques supplemented with extracurricular activities including music, dance, art, physical education, as well as quarterly education excursions and field trips. The school currently supports around 100 children and offers education up to first grade. It is looking to add grades as the students pass and move higher. The ultimate aim is to provide education up to the 12th standard.

India faces gender discrimination especially when it comes to education and a large number of Indian girls, even in urban, educated homes, are discriminated against. Women's education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside.

Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women help in the reduction of infant mortality rate. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator.



Aham Bhumika

(<http://ahambhumika.org>)

This non-government organisation in Madhya Pradesh was started by a group of professionals in 2007 when a group of professionals from the city of Bhopal decided to "Play their role" in betterment of the society. The name Aham Bhumika is a Sanskrit term meaning "My Role" and through this organisation they aim to provide basic education to women.

Subrat Goswami, one of the founders of the organisation is a government employee who along with a group of friends found that a few miles away from the capital city of Madhya Pradesh literacy is not important to the local villagers especially the women who in turn didn't feel the need to send their children to school either. The organisation's core objective is to educate rural women and young girls who work as stone crushers and in brick kilns. The "grain school" is a unique program that educates rural women in basic literacy. As an additional incentive, the organisation provides grains and pulses to their families on a monthly basis.

The women never thought that some day they would be able to learn even the basics. "Several women have completed Hindi language basics and feel more confident," said Subrat. "Now in the ration shop they don't put

their thumb impressions, they simply sign."

"The organisation so far has been providing basic literacy but intends to provide courses catering to adults which would be more useful," said Subrat. They also intend to introduce legal literacy which will make women aware of their rights.

Vocational training which is most relevant to these women to empower them economically is another aspect being looked into. "The organisation is looking to provide tailoring courses, rural teaching and nanny care amongst several others," he said. This will help bring these women into the mainstream society. However, Subrat also admits that the biggest challenge will be one of social and familial resistance due to generations of conservative and regressive thinking.



Project Crayons

(<http://www.projectcrayonsindia.org>)

"Empowering the marginalised communities through HER (Health, Education and Rights) gave birth to Project Crayons in 1999 with the belief that every child and youth should live life with dignity," said Poulomi Chithi - Chief Program Manager, Project Crayons. Devika Kulavoor, the founder and an educationist who always believed that education is the only tool that helps one to live life with dignity and hence, Project Crayons has adopted several educational programmes to tackle vast challenges encountered amongst children in pursuing their dream.

She used to watch the children from villages of Kulavoor district in rural Karnataka walk for hours to reach their school. So in the year 2000 she with a few like-minded people initiated Kaveri English Medium School in the district. Now, children from nearby and far flung villages come to the school where they can study will the 10th standard and also avail the bus service.

Another initiative is called Empowerment Dream Programme (EDP) which aims at providing scholarship and sponsorship program for deserving children from marginalised families for primary and secondary education. The project is

currently running in the Malwani slum area in Malad West, MHADA colony Andheri East, Mankhurd community and Deonar. EDP today supports 1,200 children helping them continue their education in their respective schools. The programme also provides school fees, books, uniforms, etc. per child annually. The support is an intervention with the school and with regular home visits to ensure proper utilisation of the funds.

Laying the foundation for younger kids, Project Crayons runs a kindergarten school which basically prepares the children for admission into the English medium schools and currently has 200 children enrolled into it. "Project Crayons believes in innovating techniques to impart education and reach out to as many children as possible geography notwithstanding," said Poulomi. The School on Wheels (SOW) is one such initiative wherein the organisation can support and help educate a large group of marginalised children.

There are many NGOs doing quality work for underprivileged children and have education units all around slums in Mumbai," said Chithi. "The 'Door Step School', a non-profit, too has a school on wheels program for almost ten years now. Every project has

achieved some excellent results, but the homeless population is so large and most of the children are a "mobile" lot who are working to support themselves or their families. There is a huge percentage that cannot be reached out to or their needs are not being catered to." Hence, rather than being just a School on Wheels, Project Crayon's mobile school intends to be a MITRA - a Friend targeting children aged from 6 to 20 years who are mostly drop outs, out of school or have never been to school and aims to provide education through participatory and interactive methods. The objective is that SOW will travel all over Mumbai and will be accessible to children on the pavements, slums, and in different communities. Every child will know of SOW and the initial acceptance of the buses will ultimately become a need on the streets.

The organisation is making children aware of their rights to education and hopes to integrate them in to the mainstream government education system after completing the SOW syllabus. "This model will be replicated in other cities/smaller towns that need such kind of interventions. It will be an informal institution accessible to all disadvantaged children and will educate thousands all over India," said Poulomi.

"Project Crayons in its effort to innovate is now looking to introduce Toy Curriculum," Poulomi added. The idea behind this approach is to make learning fun and Project Crayons also intends to build a toy library.

With all the efforts to develop the education system in India, issues such access, equity and quality of education in India continue to be huge challenges. Factors such as poverty and various prejudices coupled with drop-out rates among the marginalised sections of the population are contributing to it. However, the renewed emphasis in the education sector from the government and social sector at both primary and higher education can act as a catalyst to the goal of achieving universal education. 🌐





MERCHANDISING CHANGE

Retail therapy can do no wrong;
shopping can cause no harm. And
Bubble Wrapped now makes 'burning
a hole in your pocket' the
'right thing to do'.

CRAFTING A FUTURE

Author: Nikita Sawant

As craft moulds a squandered paper into art, her love for craft has moulded the squandered lives of many disabled individuals into a new life with respect and confidence. Meena Bedarkar's "Nirmalya Trust" is an organisation working towards making the lives of disabled persons useful and enjoyable. A non-profit organisation based in Pune, concerned with the welfare of the physically disabled all over India, it was started by Meena and her husband Ajit in 2003.

Meena Bedarkar, founder and Managing Trustee of Nirmalya Trust started teaching craft to the disabled 25 years ago. This small activity gave form to Nirmalya Trust as part of her growth process with her disabled



daughter Tanuja. At every turn they realised that their situation was so much more comfortable compared to that of others. Living in Pune, where medical facilities, awareness and social support was available in abundance, they felt blessed indeed! But, with each day, they also discovered that just 20 kms from Pune the situation is very different. Today, through Nirmalya they go from village to village learning about people with disabilities and giving them confidence in life and themselves.

Meena and Ajit found that though a lot of information reaches the taluka, government offices and schools, people with disabilities don't feel motivated to take action. Those who can afford it, send their disabled children to special schools often giving

up half way. Distances, ignorance, financial restraints and a general apathy towards disability cause neglect. Hence, Nirmalya's chief aim is to generate employment for the physically challenged.

Meena feels once our society starts accepting the disabled, it will be easier for them and their families to survive in the society. With these objectives in mind, she has trained the disabled at Nirmalya to be industrious, hardworking and develop a skill that will give them their livelihood the opportunity to join the mainstream with dignity. Meena accepted that her child was different from others and brought her up in such a way that today she is an active volunteer of Nirmalya. This wouldn't have been possible had she not been accepted

and categorised under the banner of being challenged.

In the beginning Meena and Ajit themselves made visits to several institutions to see if there were any physically challenged persons who needed monetary support or vocational training. Under the Earn and Learn programme of Nirmalya Trust, such persons were given training and employment. Today, Nirmalya has trained hundreds of physically disabled people and placed them in suitable working environments. For instance, the Trust started training the hearing impaired in gardening and these boys are now placed with top notch hotels.

As any initiative that sees reality in a different light, the Trust faced many challenges. But through persistent

efforts including counselling the candidates and their families these were gradually overcome. In 2006, Nirmalya started Taruvar, its paper bag unit where physically challenged individuals and volunteers make carry bags out of old newspapers. The challenged are given a stipend for this work. This is Nirmalya's contribution towards using making our world eco-friendly. This unit today employs several physically challenged persons and supplies handmade paper bags with hand-painted designs, key chains made from old newspaper, woven items like baskets, coasters and table mats to various clients. At Sunkisd Plant Nursery, another vocational training unit of Nirmalya Trust, the visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally challenged, slow-learners and paraplegics are trained to nurture plants, care for the saplings, put them in various containers and make them ready for sale. The purpose of this programme is to generate employment for the disabled and also to reiterate the fact that this outdoor activity has multiple benefits for health and environment. Support provided to the visually impaired also includes printing books in Braille, a Braille books library, recording college syllabus onto CDs and MP3 players and making available sticks, slates and other writing material for them.

Nirmalya Trust also provides two-wheeler scooters with side-wheels to paraplegics; an initiative started four years ago when Meena observed their biggest hurdle - 'mobility'. She along with her husband wasted no time in setting the wheels in motion (literally!). The Trust chose those candidates who would put the vehicle to good use as well as maintain them. Nine paraplegics have benefitted so far.

Ask her about her work and Meena says, "No matter what line of work one chooses, integration of the physically challenged into the mainstream is absolutely essential because we live in the same world! We need to change paths, create awareness and give every disabled person a chance to become a productive member of society". Every year, when Nirmalya holds its annual get-together, all the differently-abled persons who are a part of Nirmalya Trust, students sponsored by Nirmalya, candidates working at Sunkisd Plant Nursery and Taruvar (paper bag unit) as well as others who have been placed in various jobs by the Trust come together, catch up and relax.

Last year Nirmalya helped over 200 children and adults with disabilities to lead more productive, useful and enjoyable lives. Jobs will be created

and, interaction and communication will increase. Spreading awareness, giving information and guidance will lead the disabled towards education, employment and security. The disabled often don't know the facilities that are available; simple tools of support can make their lives more comfortable. 🌐







THE FACE OF CHANGE

Ordinary people who believe they are the change. We salute you!

A DIFFERENT BALLGAME

Author: Akhil Sood

Back when he was in the fifth grade at his municipal school in Cuffe Parade, Ashok Rathod, 22, would spend his breaks playing football, while his classmates would be off gambling, smoking, or drinking, sometimes all three. "During recess," says Ashok, "they would head to the Sassoon Docks and sell fish. They would make Rs. 50 to 100 an hour, giving half of that to their families and keeping the rest. They were naïve, and didn't know what to do with the money. So they ended up getting involved in immoral activities, eventually dropping out altogether so that they could make enough money and indulge their habits."

Disappointed as he was, Ashok was still too young then to make any real difference. "But in 2006," he tells us, "I saw the same cycle in motion, but with younger kids." In October that



same year, he founded the Oscar (Organization for Social Change, Awareness and Responsibility) Foundation, an NGO in Cuffe Parade that aims at reforming and giving direction to children through the innocent sport of football. "I gathered a group of 18 children, 12 of whom were dropouts. I wanted to guide them; give them focus and teach them about the perils of getting into bad habits. I wanted to teach them where to spend their money." Ashok simply asked them if they were interested in playing football. They were instantly intrigued. "We would love to," they said. "But we don't know how to play." So I told them to meet me at the ground and I would teach them. That's

how we started off," Ashok says with a sense of pride and nostalgia in his voice. Today, the Oscar Foundation trains 140 children on how to play football, dividing them into three groups categorised by age, with training held once a week. "There is a fourth group, which consists of children who show exceptional skill at the game. We train them twice a week and try to organise sophisticated camps and training regimes for them." The NGO also has a small centre in Cuffe Parade where they conduct regular teaching classes for elementary Maths, English and Hindi. "A lot of the children that we train are school dropouts, or they aren't performing that well at school. So we

provide them basic education to equip them with a basic understanding of the subjects and rational decision-making skills." Ashok has employed the services of a few college students who volunteer to teach these children, while he focuses on training them on football, along with a handful of associates who work with him on a part-time or voluntary basis.

"I never intended on making this a fully-functional NGO; in the beginning it was just a means to help those children," he says humbly. However, the Oscar Foundation is now able to rely on support from foundations such as Pravah and Unlimited India. "We pitch our ideas to them and if they like

them, they grant us fellowships which is our main source of funding." Aside from these fellowships, the foundation also charges the children a miniscule rupees 30 each month and even pays for half of any equipment or gear that they would like to purchase.

Commenting on the improvement that he has noticed in the children, Ashok says that the children are motivated by the game, which keeps them off depraved habits. "We have rules like no littering and no foul language, and the children follow them happily." He points out that while the training is very rewarding for the children, the real excitement comes from the competitions and tournaments that he enroll them in. "We provide them with old gear like jerseys or shoes and enroll them in various tournaments where they represent the Oscar

Foundation. We even organised a training camp for them in Goa, for which coaches from a UK-based organisation called Football Outreach came down to teach them advanced skills." Ashok and his crew are also currently training several other organisations venturing into sports programmes, aside from training the talented players in their own group to groom them as future coaches and trainers as well.

It's amply evident during our conversation that Ashok feels genuine warmth and affection for the children, but he does have one strict rule. "I do not tolerate misbehaviour. The children love competing in tournaments, but if I find out that any of them is smoking or gambling or anything of the sort, then they have to sit out while the other kids play in the tournaments. We

encourage them to improve, and often we play less talented kids if their behaviour has been impressive. But even the most skilled ones are benched if they misbehave; it's as simple as that. The motivation to play and compete keeps them from straying and getting tempted." 🌐

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OSCAR GROUP

ऑस्कॉर ग्रुप





THE GREEN TONE



“EK, EK, ANEK”

Author: Priya Fonseca

Kihim beach, in the Alibaug Taluka, Raigad District, approximately 120 kilometres from Mumbai is not only a popular tourist destination but also a second home and farm house address for Mumbai's swish set. A three kilometre stretch of Kihim beach has been home to a clan of Sulaimani Bohras for the last 123 years. This community, primarily the Tyabjis and their khandaan hail from early sea faring, Arab trader families who settled in Gujarat and Cambay. Some of the well known names include, Badruddin Tyabji – Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court; Dr. Salim Ali – acclaimed ornithologist and Air Chief Marshall (Retd.) Idris Latif.

In 1888, one of the forefathers of this community, Hassanali Faiz Haider, bought a Kihim estate at an auction at the behest of a friend. As news of this beautiful land spread, other members of the khandaan bought estates alongside the initial property. Spending the May holidays together at Kihim soon became a khandaani tradition that is still kept alive. My husband is a descendant of this family and we are



truly blessed to have a piece of paradise. But environmental perils are aplenty today and Kihim beach has gradually been displaying the ill effects.

Large amounts of plastic, waste, tar and dirt have been piling up along the shore over the years. After months of hearing everyone moan and complain about the dismal state of the beach, a young woman from the family, Sahar Sikander Futehally, decided to do something about it. She sent out an email to as many family members as she could inviting them to a khandaan led clean up of what is known by outsiders as the 'Bori Belt'. As Sahar says, "It started as an idea that it would be fun to clean up the beach together since we all have a long standing connection and love for the place. So I started a chain email and the response was overwhelming."

15th May was marked as 'the day' and logistics were put into place. These included creating of teams; sections along the beach; implements to clean up with - rakes, brooms, gloves and bags for garbage collection; refreshments and final disposal of the waste. Garbage disposal suggestions were evaluated keeping in mind the type of trash that was likely to come up like thermocole, medical waste, plastic and glass. The CSR division of

infrastructure giant, HCC, that has an office in Kihim was approached to assist with the clean up. The company coordinators worked with the Gram Panchayat to organise gloves, large bags and tractor-trailers to collect the bags. They also invited several school children and adults from the village to participate. Family members provided additional rakes, colour coded bags and breakfast of wada pavs, juice and tea.

At 6:00am on a hot summer Sunday, 230 people got together armed with tools to clean up five kilometers of Kihim beach from Khore Adi to Bhombad. It took three and a half hours of furious, dedicated raking, sorting and sifting by a mixed group (3 years to 75 years) to make a marked difference. Almost 300 bags of waste were collected and deposited at three designated sites off the beach. The transformation of the beach was evidence to the fact that a daunting task was overcome by the power of 'ek, ek, anek'. The direct experience also helped instil in the adults and children a sense of value for our natural surroundings.

Post event, Maher Sikander said, "This now reminds me of the old days when the beach was pristine. This is an excellent trial run and Diwali time we shall do this again so that the clean up

lasts for at least four months." Hashim Moizuddin said, "This beach used to be clean and green. Recently we have seen the level of the sea water rise and an increase in the amount of dirt collecting through the year. There are several issues that need addressing: sand erosion, sand mining, city waste disposal into the sea, careless littering, cleaning and maintenance of large ships in coastal waters and improper waste management. This family led clean up is one step in the right direction." Salman Abdulali's comment, "We should do this every year but with clear knowledge of what will become of the garbage," brings us to the vital point of final disposal. While the Gram Panchayat is evaluating methods of scientific disposal of the medical waste and plastic, they may resort to the age old accepted methods of burning or burying for the bulk of the trash. We hope that with future clean up drives, involvement of corporates such as HCC will lead to the development of a responsible system for the scientific disposal of non biodegradable waste.

Kihim beach has not looked so beautiful in a long while and though the monsoon tide will soon put paid to all the hard work, if each one keeps doing his/her bit it all adds up to a lot. As Habib Futehally said, "Teepee teepee sarovar bharaye." 

THE SAPLING PROJECT

We don't want to change the world or end economic sanctions in Zimbabwe, we are working towards a simple mission, to plant and share plant saplings with one and all in different parts of our city.

While most tree plantation drives are done in parks or forest areas, we think it's the colonies and buildings that need more trees and also one can monitor the health and progress of one's planted sapling.

The Sapling Project 4 is scheduled for 19th June 2011 and will be held across Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Delhi and Pune where we will be distributing free saplings at the following venues:

Mumbai

9am - Opp Barista, Shivaji Park

11am - Vile Parle (E),

Opp Parleshwar Temple

1.30pm - Near Infinity, Andheri (W)

3pm - Inorbit Mall, Malad (W)

5pm - Near IC Church , IC Colony,
Borivali(W)



Contact: Ranjeet - +91-9322131514 ,
Satish - +91-9833443545

Pune

7:30am - Kalyani Nagar (Jogger's Park)
8:45am - University campus/ University
Circle
9:30am - F.C Road
10:30am - Law college Road
Contact: Libu - +91-9881460654,
Pradaxina - +91-9881093149

Delhi

8am: Rose Garden, (Inside Lodhi
Gardens)

Contact: Garima - +91-9810807082

Why: Because we love the planet, it's
the only one we have. Don't you want
your children/grandchildren to breathe
in clean air?

How to be a part of it: You can plant a
sapling; sponsor a sapling for Rs 20
per sapling or both.

Cost: Nil. Plants would be given free.
You can sponsor the sapling (Neem or
Ashoka) for Rs 20 per sapling

Commitment: Take care of your
sapling for at least two years. Post that
the trees can take care of themselves. 🌱





THE WILD TRUTH



FAMILIAR TWEETS

Author: Rahul Fonseca



In a country where the national animal and national bird are endangered due to indiscriminate poaching and illegal trade, little attention is paid to less sensational species who are also heading down the same path. India is no stranger to the ubiquitous sparrow whether bathing in a puddle of water or chirping on a window sill, but recent studies have shown a sudden decline in the population. While a sparrow's nest inside your home was considered a good omen, ironically, they now can't even find crevices big enough to nest in. This loss of habitat is in no small measure due to rapid construction and a subsequent decline in green cover, especially in cities. According to Pramod Mane, President of Sparrow's Shelter, an NGO based in Mumbai, human development is largely to blame. Traditional architecture allowed sparrows to make their nests in the holes, rafters of roofs and niches of old houses. Modern urban planning and architecture, which introduced box style flats, have no such provisions.

“Cell phone towers constantly emitting radiation could have ill effects on the fertility of the bird's eggs. People now buy pre-packaged grain, which is a huge shift from old grocery stores. Earlier grain would be transported and stored in gunny sacks allowing for a little spillage, that birds would pick up,” said Pramod. Another side-effect of a bulging population that contributes to the decline of sparrows' is a dearth of small insects. This is the only food for sparrow hatchlings in their first few weeks and is becoming difficult to find because of the increasingly use of pesticides in residential areas.

While certain religious beliefs encourage feeding birds, this is usually

restricted to crows and pigeons, leading to larger populations of these species. What few people realise is that in addition to being classified as vermin being fed, crows in India prey on sparrow hatchlings and eggs, while larger birds occupy their nesting sites.

Mohammed Dilawar, a Nashik-based naturalist has been working for the cause of sparrow conservation for more than five years after reading a research thesis on the dwindling sparrow population in the UK. He soon found himself drawn to the cause of this small bird and founded the Nature Forever Society four years ago. This society provides information about sparrow habitats and behaviour, and works towards finding solutions for

many of the problems they face. Dilawar also co-ordinates a worldwide project, called Save Our Sparrows (SOS) in co-ordination with the Burhani Foundation (the arm of the Dawoodi Bohra community that deals with environmental conservation issues).

To mark the launch of SOS on 6th March 2011, the foundation distributed 52,000 bird feeders through their centres across the world. The response to the project was overwhelming as most of the centres had run out of stocks of the feeders in a few hours. “The distribution of the bird feeders was a pioneering effort, as it had never been done on this scale before. The first phase saw 52,000 families install a bird feeder. We are





happy to have such unprecedented success in creating an emotional bond between man and sparrow. This is the first step towards ensuring its survival," said Dilawar. His work is unusual and still fairly nascent. Yet, in 2008, Time magazine recognised his efforts in sparrow conservation, added him to their list of Hero's of the Environment and wrote a feature about his work.

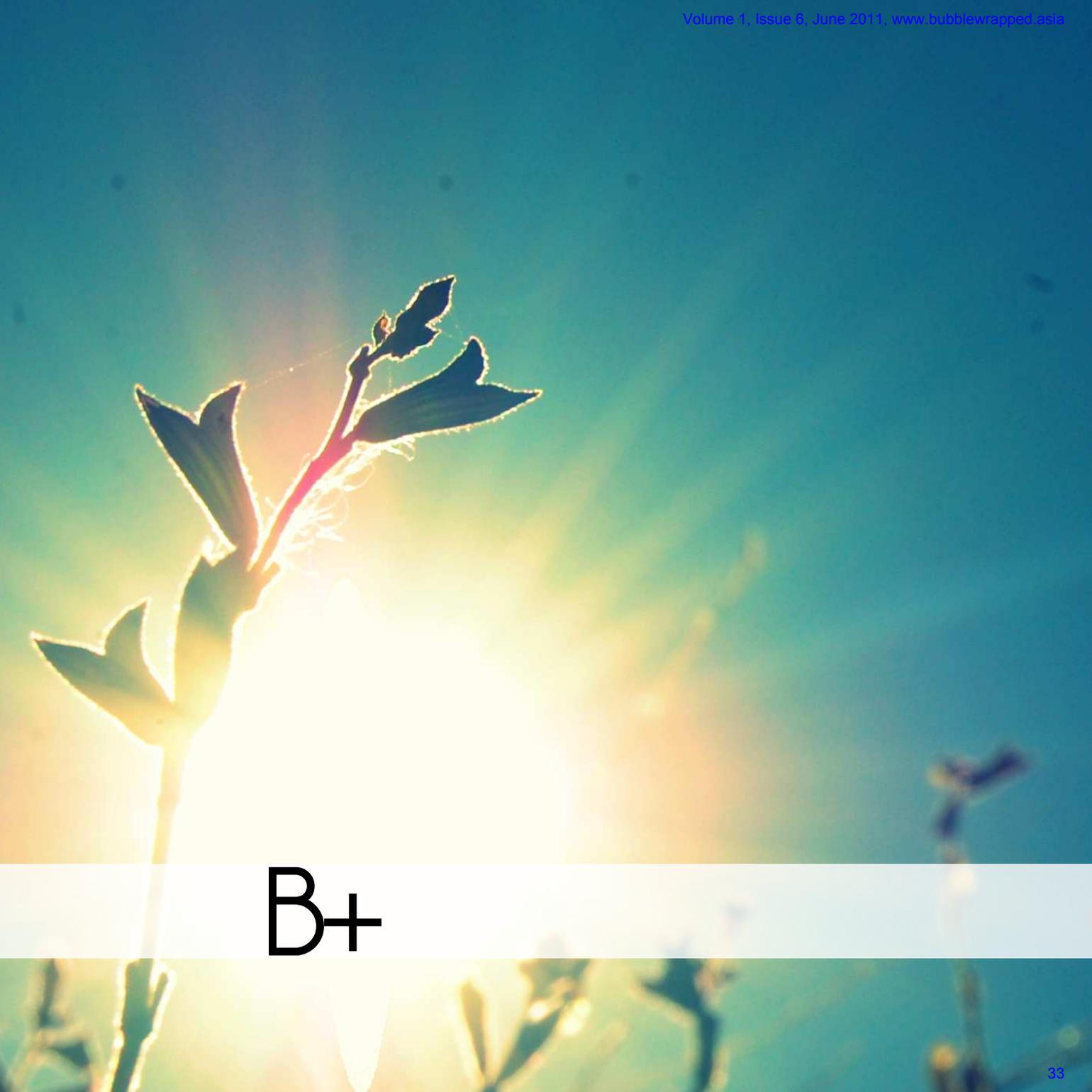
Each feeder and nesting box is made from recycled products and awareness programmes are now creating a genuine interest for using these products. The feeders can be filled with small grain like bajara or millet and hung in a balcony or open window to attract sparrows. "It may take some time for the birds to come and feed, but once the sparrows realise that there is a steady supply of food they will keep returning," said Dilawar,

adding "It's a slow process. Each species have many ecological needs for survival. Projects like these try and tackle problems, one at a time." All the projects to save the sparrow are long term ones as their effects are only seen years later. He feels that Scientists and researchers are often biased and tiger-centric, only concerned with core endangered species. Awareness needs to increase through programmes conducted in schools, malls and building societies. Unlike the Tiger Project, everyone can help in this conservation process. It requires little investment and minimal effort. The first World House Sparrow Day (WHSD) held on 20th March 2010 can be best described as a campaign by, for and of the common man to save a much-loved species from extinction. Saviour of many, the Internet has helped various projects get off their feet and gain momentum.

Websites and forums provide a platform for an ongoing fluid exchange of information without boundaries. Increasing awareness, more focused dialogue and conservation projects will go a long way to ensure there is hope for this little perching species.

The key obstacle to the SOS and similar projects is funding. You can pledge your support for the sparrow at www.worldsparrowday.org or join their Facebook group for regular updates. If you'd like to own a bird feeder, they are still available for Rs. 75 through the website www.natureforever.org and www.sparrowshelter.org. They also provide artificial nesting boxes of varying sizes for different bird types. These nesting boxes are made from recycled pine wood and cost between Rs. 250 to 2500. 🌱





B+



Ghar mein ma,
behen nahi
hai kya?

WHO LET THE SLUTS OUT?

Author: Chetna

January 2011: Constable Michael Sanguinetti speaking at Canada's York University's Safety Forum says, "women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized".

February 2011: Justice Robert Dewar while presiding over a rape case in Canada finds the defendant guilty yet sentences him to two years of probation and also remarks that on the evening of the alleged rape "sex was in the air" and the victim's behaviour and attire may have given the attacker the wrong impression. He further states that the victim was wearing make-up and had been drinking.

April 2011: Sonya Barnett and Heather Jarvis marched through Queens Park, Toronto, with approximately 4000 supporters in the first ever SlutWalk rally to protest the belief that female rape victims are "asking for it".

The space
between my legs
is private property.
Trespassers
will be prosecuted!

After marching through Canada, USA, UK, Australia, the Middle East and Europe, SlutWalk is now scheduled to hit the streets of Delhi, India. Our country has a history of cultural suppression of women and given the rising crimes against women this movement becomes increasingly relevant. In most Indian cities, it's normal for every woman to have been molested... felt up... touched inappropriately...insulted with lewd remarks. And all this in broad daylight, in public transport or in crowded streets. The rural areas are just as bad with religion and patriarchal system dictating social norms. Here's what SlutWalk Delhi's Facebook page says:

In our society, rape is touted as an act of sex and sexual attraction. It isn't. It's a heinous crime of violence... What was she doing alone at night?! Why was she wearing a skirt?! Why did she not have a male companion with her?! How could her parents let her go out of the house without her brother or father?! Why was she driving alone?! We cast aspersions on the character of the woman, and her morals. It has to be her fault, doesn't it? The men are not at fault... Women are taught, from a very early age, not to be raped... Because men will be men. No, man will never be taught NOT to rape.

One look at their Facebook wall and the debate over using the word

“SLUT” rages on. Some feel it may not allow the older generation to relate with the movement given our culture; some feel it only speaks to the urban elite and alienates the vernacular population from the debate; others feel the word pulls us out of our comfort zone and forces us to step away from what is acceptable and what is not. Whatever the argument, they are all united when it comes to accepting the core problem and realising that it's time to change.

What's the need of the hour then?

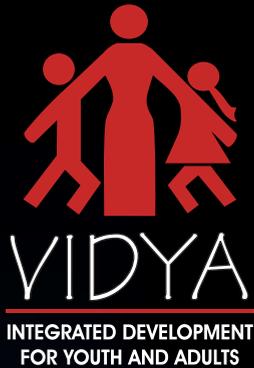
- To accept we have a problem... it's our mindset!
- To stop justifying sexual abuse, be it verbal or physical... eve-teasing or rape!
- To stop victim-blaming... it is not the woman's fault irrespective of her clothes or the time of day!

But can one rally change a billion people's mindsets? Well Rome wasn't built in a day either! This is a start and sometimes that's the most important part. So if you would like to be a part of the change log on to their Facebook page:

http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_165762856819801&id=167129340016486¬if_t=like 

**Plunging neckline...
rising hemline...
not an invite,
get it?**

**I have a right
to enjoy the
moonlight too!**



WHEN A CHILD IS BORN

Author: Elle Reynolds

Have the increasing problems of the world and lack of solutions overwhelmed you lately? No, then keep reading. If the answer is a resounding hell yea, keep going. If you're somewhere between a hell yea and a no, you really should continue.

Mumbai-based Rashmi Mishra stands firmly at the helm of one of India's better known non-profit organisations working towards empowering women and children in New Delhi, Haryana, Mumbai, and Goa. The organisation called VIDYA started as an out-of-home project to educate five young girls. Run entirely on the strength and devotion of volunteers, VIDYA, a registered not-for-profit, today claims to reach youth and women of over two lakh families.

Part of Rashmi's plan that has developed during the past two decades is to reach beyond those that

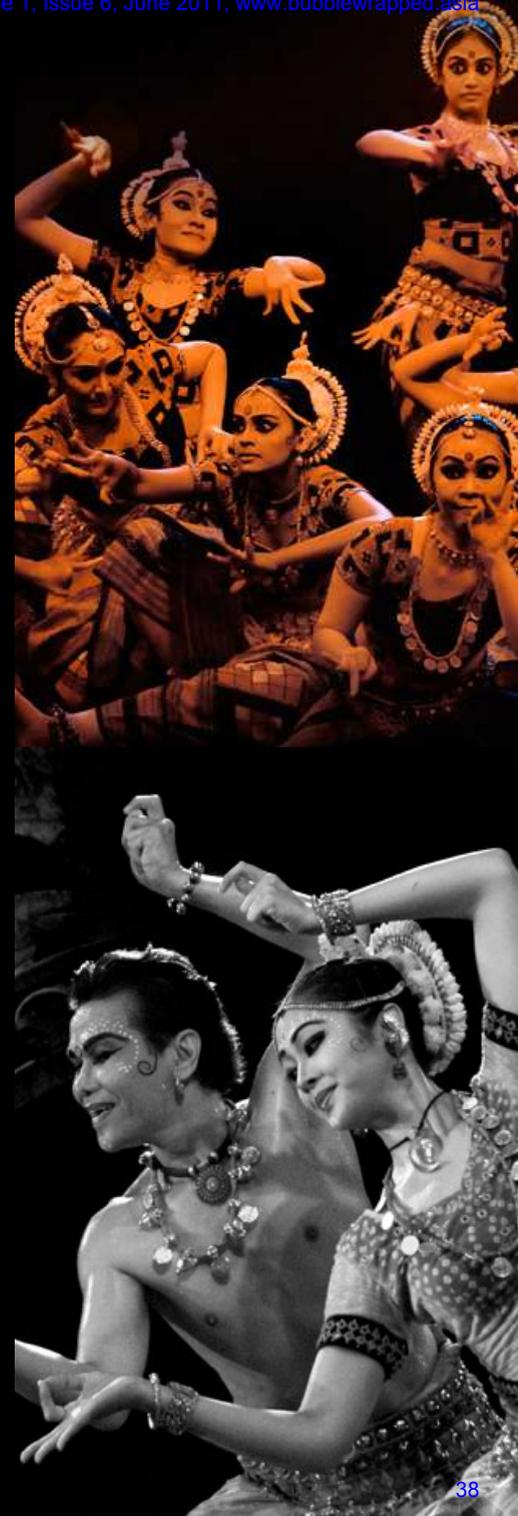


attend several of the language and vocational guidance programs run by the team. VIDYA also works to empower the less privileged with tools like income generation programmes, remedial education, secondary education for youth who have dropped out and micro-credit options that just might give them a brighter future. The approach, as has always been, is holistic. This has served both the organisation and the beneficiaries well.

The website www.vidya-india.org is a well-oiled machine with updated information and product lines. The latest in a series of well-received fund raising activities is the VIDYA Mumbai Fundraiser. With her own background in Odissi as inspiration, founder and chairperson Rashmi Mishra has made the most fluid transition. The institution has come together with the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai to host Ramli Ibrahim a pioneer in art of Bharatanatyam, Odissi and Contemporary dance forms. Accomplished in ballet, modern, and Indian classical dance, Ramli Ibrahim is a cultural icon, who has performed internationally for more than three decades. As artistic director of the Sutra Dance Theatre, in Kuala Lumpur, Ramli has worked towards establishing Odissi as a widely appreciated dance form in Malaysia.

This fund raising event scheduled for 30th June, 2011 at the Tata Theatre, NCPA in Mumbai is intended further the cause and help VIDYA's mission of complete literacy and independence for every individual of this democratic nation. Ramli will perform a piece of work aptly titled 'Vision-of-Forever'. Through the programme he seeks to depict the fragile, yet powerful beauty associated with the repertoire of his dance guru, the late Odissi pioneer Guru Deba Prasad Das. As an incentive for people to experience firsthand the work that volunteers do, the team is willing to arrange a visit to any of their centres on request.

With a tagline that reads 'Educate. Empower. Transform', the organisation is also running an online campaign at www.wishberry.in/VIDYA-Mumbai-Fundraiser-11743. With a target of INR 5 lakh and the ability to reach people beyond the borders of this country, VIDYA hopes the website will be able to generate enough to build the corpus for future endeavours. Arm yourself with a mouse and an internet connection to follow the lives and accomplishments of the individuals at VIDYA by 'liking' their Facebook page - www.facebook.com/pages/Vidya-Integrated-Development-For-Youth-And-Adults/204837842859710?ref=mf, commenting on their blog - vidyamumbai.blogspot.com or simply sign up as a volunteer. 





THE CORPORATE P



PITCH

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The Smart Manager celebrated its 10th anniversary on 3rd June with the 'Ethics and CSR: The Strategy Debate' in Mumbai. The event saw topics like the distinction between philanthropy and socially responsible business practices, the proposed 'mandatory 2%' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) law and the triple bottom line theory being discussed by the who's who of corporate India. Moderated by Bloomberg UTV's Associate Editor Ms. Abha Bakaya, the panel included eminent personalities such as Mr. Harsh Mariwala - CMD Marico Industries, Mr. Amit Chandra - MD, Bain Capital India, Ms. Anu Aga - Director, Thermax, Mr. Vinay Somani - Trustee, Karmayog, and Ms. Rita Soni - CEO, NASSCOM Foundation.

Dr. Gita Piramal, founder of The Smart Magazine, eminent business historian and Director-BP Ergo, commented on the differences between the West and the East's constructs of CSR. In the West, the companies are seeking strategies to maximise returns on social investments in turn enhancing the bottom line. In India, CSR is still



viewed through the cold filter of 'strategy'. She even suggested that philanthropy should be a matter of personal choice distinguishing it from the inherent social responsibility of corporates. Her point was further reiterated when Mr. Vinay Somani said, "We have been rating corporate social responsibility for four years. When we started, more than half of the top 500 companies of India had absolutely no CSR operations, whereas today it's almost everyone."

Mr. Mariwala went on to state, "Responsible business and even direct CSR activities have an indirect, positive effect on the company and the brand benefits." Speaking from the audience, Sam Balsara - CMD, Madison World, raised the question of corporations using innovative means to "align business interests with social interests." Citing Tata Tea's 'Jaago Re' campaign that encouraged people to vote or P&G's Shiksha that promotes the cause of child education in India, Mr. Balsara said, "To my mind, this sort of innovative thinking is the need of the hour."

The new legislation planning to make it mandatory for companies to invest 2% in CSR was a matter of debate with some pushing for it while others citing the risks of fraud and increased

mismanagement of funds. But all in all the panelists and the audience agreed that inclusive growth was the need of the hour. 🌐





THE GLOBAL PERSP



PERSPECTIVE

DROPS OF LIFE

Author: Aditi Mukherjee

Deeply troubling global water crisis is being tended more by NGOs, NPOs and other external bodies, than by the governments even though the alarm went off years ago. Water constitutes 70% of our body. We feel parched when we lose 1% of it and risk death when the loss exceeds 10%. Thus, it's safe to say, we live because of water. On 22nd March, 2011 the world celebrated Water Day. However, the day dedicated to the element that humans literally thrive on, did not see any parade or merriment and went pretty much unnoticed.

Two-third of the earth is submerged in water. Merely 3% of it is fresh, most of it sealed in the form of glaciers and the rest is getting contaminated at a rapid pace. In a clear case of taken for granted, amongst world population of 7 billion, 1.2 billion suffer everyday due to acute water shortage. In the Northern Hemisphere, the region that was first to hit the billion population mark and contains highest number of countries with water shortage crisis; Pakistan, India and the Central Asian



countries are in a disturbing state. Majority of the population in these developing countries live in rural areas with hardly any sanitation facility and water supply. Women walk several hours in a day to fetch few gallons. Also, diseases are rampant and many children die before living through their fifth birthday. Wastewater treatment receives no emphasis due to huge costs involved. Without recovery millions of gallons of organic wastewater pollute rivers every day, which otherwise could be life supporting resource systems for agricultural and other purposes.

In the Western Hemisphere, just 700 miles away from the biggest economy in the world, America; Haiti is one of the most densely populated and poorest countries. After four earthquakes in 2008, its economy extirpated. Abundant water resources and rainfall haven't met proper management to develop and maintain water supply. Ministry of Public Works in Haiti does not have a water and sanitation directorate yet, although it is in the making.

In Pakistan, water availability has plunged down to 1,420 m³ per capita and is said to decrease to 1,000 m³ per capita by 2020. Even though Pakistan has the technological and financial resources needed to provide

clean water, it lacks in strong political lobby to advocate for water and for proper study of allocation and distribution.

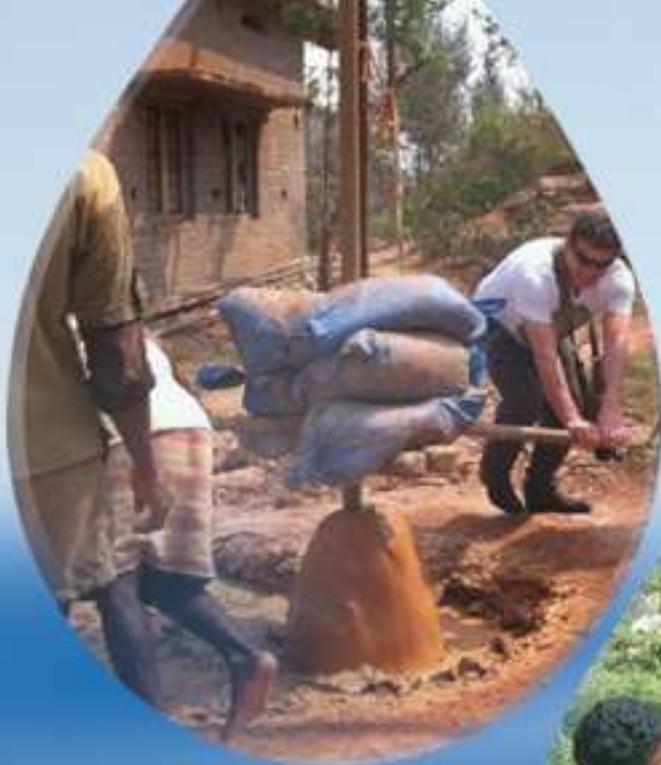
India is what one can say 'on a roll'. Its economy has risen considerably and with new Foreign Direct Investments its GDP is only expected to rise. But all that glitters is certainly not gold. For example, Orissa State Government has allowed the newly green lighted POSCO Plant to draw 16.5 million gallons of water per day from river Mahanadi. Question is will it leave enough water for irrigation? Also, has POSCO taken responsibility to recycle the wastewater?

In nations like Haiti, Nicaragua, Uganda, Tanzania, Cambodia and India, external bodies and non-profit organisations persevere to eradicate severe water insufficiency. A UK based NPO called Drop4Drop (<http://www.drop4drop.org.uk/>) makes positive and lifelong differences by giving individuals and businesses the opportunity to offset their water consumption, delivering efficient and accountable clean water projects across the developing world. Drop4Drop is currently running projects that ensure lifelong clean and safe drinking water for just £1.

In Haiti, together Drop4Drop and Concern Worldwide provided emergency safe water after the earthquake. They were involved in search and rescue efforts and, provided food and clean water to the survivors. They also funded water purification kits that helped around 2,400 individuals. The two are now in talks to visit Pakistan, where they plan to repair and construct water supply schemes and hand pumps to ensure immediate access to safe and clean drinking water.

Treating wastewater, sanitation, growing population, industrialisation and urbanisation have become the biggest challenges for many countries today. However, correlating these factors and making them interdependent will result in self-sufficient societies with less diseases and untimely deaths. It's high time governments sit up, acknowledge and take action towards making the most fundamental resource, available to its people. But until then, water remains a luxury. 





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DEATH SENTENCE FOR THE BILL

Author: Radhika Rajee

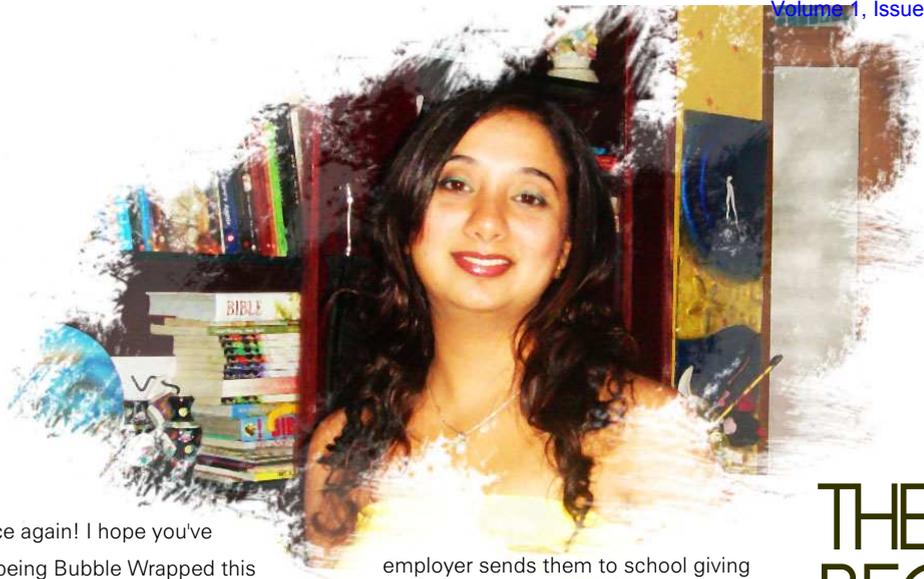
Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill which was introduced on 14th October 2009 shocked the Human Rights' panels all over the world. The chief objective of the Bill is, "to establish a comprehensive consolidated legislation to protect the traditional family by prohibiting (i) any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex, and (ii) the promotion or recognition of such sexual relations in public institutions and other places through or with the support of any Government entity in Uganda or any non-governmental organisation inside or outside the country." The infamous bill faced a huge uproar by the people and activists as it spoke of death penalty for homosexual individuals.

Homosexuality has been a sensitive topic for long in most of the African countries and Uganda is no different. It is one of the most conservative societies and regards homosexuality as un-African as well as un-Catholic. David Bahati, a Member of Parliament

from Ndoorwa County, who proposed the bill, saw an increasing amount of international opposition to the bill. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill spoke of execution of the LGBT community (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender) who were HIV positive. This specific objective of the bill terrified not only the local activists but also grabbed the attention of the LGBT communities and their supporters all over the world. The government's severe stand against gays was evident after a Ugandan tabloid published pictures of homosexual professionals under the headline, 'Hang Them'. Another incident that shocked the nation was when David Kato, an advocacy officer for a gay rights group was bludgeoned to death with police reports showing the motive for the murder as robbery. Homophobia is a matter of concern in such countries, wherein people take extreme actions against same gender sex. The passing of this bill will not only enrage countries like US and UK, but countries like Sweden have even threatened to withdraw any help to Uganda if the bill is passed. International communities have gone ahead to name the harsh bill as Gay Genocide. Though, the author of the bill, David Bahati, pacified the furious public by announcing that the Bill would undergo certain changes and negotiations, and the death penalty

will be put aside, the issue remains that how justified is it to criminalise and punish the freedom of expression and choice.

Nevertheless, the recent Parliament adjourned without putting forward any kind of debate about the Bill. This has led to celebrations for Western leaders and Human Rights' groups. The bill could be discussed again when the Parliament resumes later this year, but the international recognition to the issue has assured that homosexuality won't be degraded in anyway and Uganda cannot act in isolation and oppose global pressure. The Bill might not have completely gone off the hook, but introducing the Bill again would mean following a totally new Parliamentary process. The global outcry has made it absolutely clear that the world demands respect to Human Rights and nothing that harms the human belief will be allowed. The international pressure not only helped support the human right to expression but also saved thousands of lives which could have faced execution only because they are gays. 🌐



THE BEGINNING

Hello once again! I hope you've enjoyed being Bubble Wrapped this month. A fund-raising event, a tree plantation drive and a rally to protect my rights as a woman, this month's issue is an action-packed one and I hope you will step out to play your part.

I'm also very excited about our new section, The Global Perspective, which aims to highlight best practices from the international arena. I hope Bubble Wrapped serves as a platform for information exchange and we all learn something from each other's efforts. After all, we can each be an example for someone else thus, keep the chain reaction of change going strong. Last month we posted a poll on www.bubblewrapped.asia and asked our readers if it was alright to employ a child as domestic help. 41% of voters were absolutely against the idea while 26% thought it's ok as long as the

employer sends them to school giving them a chance for a better future. A new poll is already up and this month we are asking, "Can RAPE be justified?" So don't forget to have your say. Also, if you are in Delhi in the last week of June, make sure you attend SlutWalk Delhi to take a stand against suppression of women and their rights.

I hope you've enjoyed reading Bubble Wrapped so far. Do subscribe to the magazine on our website for monthly updates from the world of CHANGE. I also invite you to join us on Facebook and Twitter. Until next time...
happy reading! 🌍

Cheers!

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