

# **Entrepreneurship Cases in Government**

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The task of reinventing the government is slow-paced and demands the concerted efforts of every individual in the government system, whichever position one may be in. Strategies are mandatory to reinvent the government. Equally important is for each person in the system to reinvent himself/herself. To reinvent oneself, a fundamental transformation in behaviour and attitude must take place. Duties must be carried out with fearlessness and in a transparent and entrepreneurial mode, which will lead to promising results. All this perhaps sounds impractical given the corruption, pressures and bureaucracy prevalent in the present-day government system. But, there have been civil services officers who have had the courage to dream, who did not succumb to the pressures of the system, who have with grit and guts taken on the system, and have executed their duties by persisting in an entrepreneurial manner to achieve out-of-the-ordinary results. Their captivating feats have been captured in Chapter 1 to serve as instances to inspire aspiring officials in government departments and organizations to take on entrepreneurial roles. By no means do they purport to be exhaustive. Chapter 2 attempts to allay fears that civil services officers may have in taking on entrepreneurial roles, by providing answers to some of their frequently asked questions.

Civil services officers and other government officials can draw inspiration and greatly learn from the works carried out by a few personalities of non-government organizations as well, detailed in Chapter 3. These heroes have brought to life their dreams, working against heavy odds, impacting the life of many in rural India through their determination, humanity and entrepreneurial mindset. Their benevolent actions and perseverance lead each one of us, be it a commoner, a businessman, a politician or a bureaucrat, to introspect and rethink our excuses for inaction.

The stories narrated in the first two chapters in this section attempt to communicate how an individual can make a meaningful contribution to his organization and society at large, when he pursues his role in an entrepreneurial fashion, Chapter 4 highlights programs and projects implemented by a few state governments in an entrepreneurial manner. These projects attempt to empower communities, decentralize power, build a sense of ownership through community participation and have been successful in delivering customer/stakeholder satisfaction, thus exemplifying what reinvention in government means.

Reinvention of governments in few Western countries started as early as 1979. They have made incredible progress in public sector reform. Chapter 5 describes the journey of reinvention of the British, Canadian and New Zealand governments. The Indian government can significantly learn from these experiences.

## 1. Concept of Entrepreneurship in the Government

There is a sense of despondency in most public employees and civil servants in our country today. A feeling that 'no change is possible in the government' has crept in their hearts and minds. They feel rosy concepts like reinventing the government only form interesting topics for classroom discussions, and can never be implemented in reality. They have become skeptical about the ability of their organizations to change. They fear that their career-path would be dampened and personal life would be threatened, if they alone take bold steps to reform their organizations. They feel that the work that they perform in the organization makes it impossible for them to change the status quo.

The secret of success for government employees in general and civil services officers in particular lies in transcending from this pessimism of 'nothing is possible' to the attitude of 'I will make it happen' and 'I will make a contribution.' It is naive to assume that somebody in a position of power will bring about change in the organization, and wait endlessly for this to happen. Instead, one should attempt to be that somebody who takes the initiative. This would set a precedent and inspire others to follow. The truth is that the collective effort of a whole lot of such 'somebodies' is what drives change. Hence, one has to play his or her part in bringing about a change in the organization culture, systems and procedures by focusing on the customers, instead of becoming cynical and giving up. There is a whole lot one can give to the organization by serving its interests, which will give a new dimension to one's life. There will be times when one would have to satisfy the greed of some. The only touchstone in such situations is to have the courage to hear one's inner voice and follow the dictates of one's conscience. The focus on building entrepreneurial attitudes will help to navigate through most troubled waters.

It would be incorrect to suggest that all public officers are engaged in despicable and unethical activities. Following are but a few role models who have mustered the courage to shake out the lethargy of the system, dared to dream, and despite the immense roadblocks, have persevered in an entrepreneurial mode to achieve phenomenal results.

### **Reinventing District Administration – The case of District Collector, Umashankar, Tiruvarur**

Umashankar joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1990. As the District Collector (DC), one of the solutions to wiping out corruption, as he saw it, was to aggressively implement e-governance in all government organizations. This would make work processes more transparent and leave little scope for bribing and corruption. Further, he also envisaged that e-governance could provide accurate and speedy services to the common man. Thus, driving e-governance throughout the district of Tiruvarur and bringing a smile to the common man's face was a dream Umashankar had nurtured ever since he took over as its DC.

After taking over as DC of Tiruvarur, Umashankar transformed the once slow-paced town into India's first 'computer district' in just 18 months. He shot to fame and hit media headlines for making Tiruvarur the first ever e-district in the country. Public administration at the village, taluk and block levels were computerized and made available online. The result

was prompt, transparent and virtually corruption-free administration. Bulky manual records were done away with, and officials' accessed information from their database containing 15 million documents. The entire district was connected through 311 computers, which not only speeded up work, but also earned the praise of the public. During the implementation of this project, which Umashankar conceived of, lights would burn all night at the Collectorate, in the pursuit of serving the public.

### ***District Administration***

The district administration of Tiruvarur has primarily three functional levels. The first level, which is the field level, comprises of the Villages, Taluks and Blocks. The District Headquarters makes up the second level, and consists of the Collectorate, District Registrar's Office, RTO, District Police Office, Commercial Tax offices and District Headquarters Hospital. The HoDs (Heads of Departments) and the Secretariat at Chennai constitute the third level.

At the first level, a number of transactions take place in large volumes every day. The function of the Taluk office is to maintain and update records pertaining to land, cultivation and harvest, old age pension (OAP) details, and Jamabanthi accounts (annual audit of village accounts). The offices also undertake land revenue collections, issue applications and certificates such as OAP certificates; birth and death certificates; income, solvency and community certificates; etc. They also issue documents of house-site Patta and maintain Patta Pass books, which relate to ownership details of immovable properties. The Block Offices maintain information regarding the various schemes sponsored by the central and state governments. They monitor the progress of each scheme. Details of utilization of the General Fund, maintenance of asset register, status of the Noon Meal Scheme and Marriage Assistance Scheme are also recorded and maintained.

The District Headquarters primarily monitors functioning of the taluks and among other responsibilities, takes care of land administration. It issues administrative sanctions to the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) that is chaired by the DC. The headquarters also monitors implementation of schemes at the Panchayat and Block levels.

The Secretariat is a policy formulating body and the HoDs oversee the implementation of these policies at the field level.

### ***Approaches adopted by Umashankar towards reinvention of Tiruvarur district***

Umashankar's brief stint as Joint Chief Electoral Officer (Computerization) at Chennai in 1995 gave him exposure to very elementary computer software like Microsoft Word and Excel. Further, he was assigned the responsibility of setting up a computer center to streamline the administration of electoral rolls for all the districts in the state, during the time of state elections. This project required networking of Collectorates in all districts through installation of servers. In the process, he gained good knowledge about bilingual data interfaces. On completion of this project, the state government assigned him the responsibility of conducting research in two areas: fair-price shop automation using optical mark read

(OMR) technology, and celestial mapping technology (in which a specialized software package was to be configured to convert celestial paper maps into electronic form). During the course of the above research, he had good exposure to relational database software packages.

As the sub-collector in two revenue divisions of Mayiladithurai and Cheyyar, Umashankar gained considerable knowledge of Tiruvarur district. Working subsequently as the additional collector (Revenue) at Tiruchi, gave him further knowledge about the nuts and bolts of district administration. In 1995, he had the opportunity of implementing e-governance in the district of Madurai using the basic FoxPro database. In the process, he became intimately familiar with the functioning of development blocks in a district and the District Rural Development Administration.

Although Umashankar had minimal knowledge and exposure to e-governance, his confidence and conviction prompted his dream of ushering e-governance in Tiruvarur, soon after the state administration announced his posting as the district collector of Tiruvarur. He discussed his plans at length with the Secretary of Information Technology, who being a skeptic advised him not to take the plunge, for he believed that bringing about changes in the government sector was close to impossible. Umashankar's Chief Electoral Officer counseled him that in his new role as district collector, he would be too busy performing routine duties of a DC, and driving e-governance in the district of Tiruvarur would be nothing but a dream. Umashankar set out to prove both these men wrong.

#### □ *Steering the district administration through e-governance*

With a clear brief of doing something extraordinary to change the way things were done by the district administration, Umashankar triggered off the e-governance initiative on his very first day in office. Progressively, three full-fledged software development centers were established in the Collectorate. A wireless LAN (Local Area Network) tower (with a height of 150 ft.) was constructed within the Collectorate complex. Two of the taluk offices were also equipped with a 100 ft. wireless LAN tower each. These were to be pilots, so that eventually all the taluk offices could be connected to the district administration. The investment on each tower was about Rs.20 lacs. The entire district was connected using 311 computers. At final reckoning, the entire project was estimated at about Rs.2.5 crores. Nearly 34 software programmers were engaged on a contract basis to do the software programming. Driving the project, Umashankar was seen at the Collectorate at 6:30 am every morning. He assisted the software team in writing programs. Much of his deep knowledge of computers was picked up on the job. At times, he and his team would work all night and sleep in the server room. Here was a 'Collectorate that never slept.' He developed the entire database design and front-end design of the software packages. He masterminded all aspects of the software such as how the package should look, what techniques need to be employed, how to make the package more user friendly, etc. Everyone was amazed by his substantial technical knowledge, which he had acquired only on the job and not by undergoing any specialized training.

The software packages developed were bilingual, in both Tamil and English. The software when used updated the data on-line and not on a batch mode. ABC analysis was used to determine the applications that needed to be computerized first. Typically these involved

maximum interface of the administration with the public. Accordingly, the first department to be computerized was the Revenue Department, in which the Taluk Automation Software (TAS) was installed. TAS handles all land-based transactions on-line. It processes cultivation, harvest, Jamabanthi accounts; issuing of community certificate, birth & death certificates (Thulir Varavu software), nativity certificates, solvency certificates; handling of schemes like OAP (Anbupani software), Distress Relief and Accident Relief (DRS & ARS Automation Software) and Agricultural Labourer Insurance schemes. Also incorporated in the TAS is the grievance day petition software (Manuneethi), scholarship administration software for Adi Dravida department and backward class welfare department.

Umashankar had gathered inputs on OMR technology during his brief stint as Chief Electoral Office in Chennai. This was put to use in the computerization of the civil supplies department outlets in Tiruvarur. The technology enables collection of bill-level data from the various shops in the district, and gives close to 10,000 sheets of information pertaining to sale and stock figures of each of the shops, in one hour.

In order to automate the Rural Development department, the Block Automation Software and the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) automation software were developed. The DRDA software handles all schemes sponsored by the central and state governments like the Jawahar Gram Swarozgar Yojana (JGSY) scheme, Swarnajayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) scheme, etc. It also takes care of the Panchayat Raj administration, makes technical estimate preparations, handles administration and monitors the rural development schemes. The DRDA is the only nodal agency that provides administrative sanctions for the schemes and spends close to Rs.50 crores every year on developmental schemes. The Block offices implement the schemes sanctioned by the DRDA and execute work of the district panchayat as well. As a result, the Block offices require maintaining a number of registers like Chitta register, bill passed register, register for cheques received, petty cash book, cashbook for every scheme and acquittance registers. Block officials also prepare a reconciliation statement at the end of the month. Umashankar and his team developed the Block Automation Software, which drastically reduced maintenance of the manual registers and the software also automated the various schemes at the block levels. Both the Block office and DRDA offices are linked through a network, which enables verification of status of each of the schemes.

The Town Panchayat Automation Software called 'Minnau Peruratchi' has reduced workload of the panchayat officials. The town panchayat has only 2 officials who are required to maintain about 40 registers pertaining to various property taxes such as professional tax, animal tax, water tax, etc. They need to maintain cash books, Chitta registers, do bank reconciliation, generate receipts for collections made, maintain registers for payments made such as for funeral expenses and payments for works, etc. Computerization has helped to automate all the services the town panchayat office provides.

The Primary Agriculture Cooperative Banks (PACB) of Tiruvarur approached Umashankar to develop a software to carry out all their activities online. The banks provide financial assistance to farmers at low interest rates and encourage them to save money. They issue various loans and have a variety of deposit schemes. Thus, the PACB automation software was developed (Beta Version) and implemented in about 18 months.

The RTO department and the Police Department were also brought under the umbrella of Umashankar's online governance.

□ *Mobilizing financial resources for the ambitious e-governance projects*

Despite Tiruvarur being a backward district, there is no dearth for money. For every good cause, affluent people are willing to pay large sums of money. As district collector of Tiruvarur, Umashankar sharpened his skills to mobilize money for a good cause. Although having been seen as closely associated with Chief Minister Karunanidhi, he received no aid or official funding for the entire e-governance project from the state's formal fund allocation process. He managed to raise the funds on his own through the generous contributions of affluent citizens of Tiruvarur, as well as from MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) and MPs (Member of Parliament), from their respective Local Area Development Funds. The largest contribution of Rs.70 lacs came from the Nagapattanam MP, of which Rs.40 lacs was utilized towards wireless networking, and the balance for other purposes. The total donation made by block offices was Rs.50 lacs, each block contributing Rs.5 lacs. Mr. Moopanar, a veteran politician from the area contributed Rs.10 lacs, and Rs. 7 lacs came from one of the noted Rajya Sabha MPs. Each of the seven MLAs of the district donated on an average Rs.12 to Rs.13 lacs. Umashankar allotted Rs.5 lacs towards networking costs from the funds available under his purview. The monetary support extended by MLAs and MPs helped them gain popularity, and all the MLAs who supported Umashankar on this project got re-elected.

□ *Streamlining work process*

Computerization of all the public offices in the district put an end to the languid processes that have been their traditional mainstay. Public officials were free from the burdensome task of maintaining and updating registers, which had earlier made their jobs cumbersome, time consuming and prone to errors. Besides, the manual mode also made the process corruption-prone. Everyone from the Teshildar right down to the last man was provided computer training.

In the past, lower level officials like the Village Administrative Officers (VAO) in the Revenue Department used to spend 30 to 60 days in a year writing Jamabanthi accounts and updating the records. There was no guarantee that the work thus carried out produced accounts that were hundred percent accurate. Also, it was not humanly possible for a Tehsildar to audit all of these accounts. To avoid the headache of writing accounts, officials often resorted to using short cut methods, like bribing the Jamabanthi Officer or engaging a proxy account writer. With the installation of TAS, workload of the VAOs has reduced drastically and the software generates accounts with over ninety five percent accuracy.

The OAP pension distribution was another very time-consuming task. There were about 17,500 pensioners in the district who were entitled to get pensions every month. On an average, each taluk office had to dispatch 2,500 money orders every month. Officials would waste 10 days in a month filling up the money order forms. With the OAP software in place, pensions now reach the beneficiaries within a day or two after each month. The system also updates the records automatically. The public officials find this system a lot more rewarding, as it has reduced the burden and monotonous nature of their work.

In the past, when the owner of a piece of land (pattegar) would come to the taluk office to obtain a patta transfer application to have the 'patta' or ownership of the land in his favour, he would inevitably have to bribe the official to get the application. On filling the details, the application would have to be submitted to the VAO, who would manually verify the application against the Chitta records. The VAO would approve the application and send it to the taluk office, for the counter signature of the Tehsildar. It would take one month for the final copy of the certificate to reach the pattegar. At times, even if the Tehsildar would sign the application immediately, it would be retained deliberately by his subordinates for days, in order to harass the pattegar for a bribe before releasing the document. In the present system subsequent to the e-governance initiative, the Patta transfer procedure has been simplified through the TAS software. The software automatically sends the registration details to the taluk office, which is approved by the Teshildar and is dispatched to the pattegar's address within a few days.

In the past, if a farmer wanted a Chitta or Adangal extract (which proves ownership of the land and provides all necessary details of the land such as type of land, extent, etc.) in order to raise a loan from a bank, he had to approach the VAO. The VAO would then obtain a manual extract of the Chitta or Adangal from the taluk office and get the signature of the Teshildar before releasing the extract. This procedure was very time-consuming and would often take several months. For instance, issuing of birth, death and community certificates used to take about six months to a year. Now, computerization enables issuing of these extracts and certificates in just 10 minutes.

The taluk and village officials are delighted with the computerized system as it periodically updates information, provides easy access to vital information across taluks and villages, has simplified work processes, gives no room for backlog and does not require them to manually maintain routine accounts. Teshildars are happy for they need not waste time auditing accounts, as the system audits the accounts automatically. Although e-governance has robbed some of the officials such as the VAOs of their power, Teshildars of taluks continue to enjoy their power, as the computerized certificates generated still require their signature. Earlier, if a subordinate of the Teshildar did not turn up at office, work would get held up. But now, the Teshildar can process the work himself by logging on to the system and keying in his password. This ensures continuity in service delivery despite any absenteeism.

#### □ *Delivering Customer Value*

E-governance was central to Umashankar's scheme of things, for he was convinced that it had the potential to curtail corruption and deliver customer value. The e-governance project in Tiruvarur has clearly demonstrated that if properly implemented, it has the potential for tremendous impact on the district's operations. Officials can be transformed into being more customer-driven and customer-focused. Villagers of Tiruvarur are overwhelmed by the speed of service being delivered, without the need for paying bribes or waiting for unduly long periods to get simple work done with the government offices. In this manner, Umashankar has made the offices at the village, taluk and block levels to reinvent themselves for public good.

Earlier, if anyone required information pertaining to land records, taluk officials would make them run around the government offices for weeks. They would take days to retrieve the record. On bribing the official, the information would be provided immediately. Similarly, issuing of Encumbrance Certificates (EC) would happen only if bribes were given. Obtaining Chitta extracts and Adangal extracts (cultivation extract) used to take nothing less than six months to a year. With the new system, Adangal and Chitta extracts are easily available at the Taluk offices on payment of Rs.20 and Rs.10 respectively. Information of EC dating back to 15 years can be made available the very same evening.

A purchaser of land now can get the Patta transfer certificate (change of land registry) as a matter of right, quite unlike the situation that prevailed several years ago. All that the purchaser now needs to do is register his land in the sub-registrar's office, and the TAS software takes care of the rest. It automatically sends the details of the registration to the taluk office, and the change in registry is effected immediately. The patta transfer certificate also gets dispatched to the buyer's address through the system. Similarly, the Thulir Varavu software enables a villager to get a birth or death certificate within 10 minutes as the entire data is maintained online. For the first time in the history of the district, during the zenith of Umashankar's tenure as the district collector, petitions were received online with the help of 'Manuneethi' software. It was mandated by the district collector that the disposal of petitions must happen within 7 days. The Anbupani (OAP) software, which has enabled the automation of the process of sending pensions for the aged, widowed and the physically handicapped persons, has proved to be the most beneficial package to the common man. The beneficiary receives his / her pension by the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of every month.

The e-governance initiative has resulted in total customer satisfaction. During his tenure as the collector, people would warmly receive Umashankar whenever he came to their village for an inspection. They would greet him in large numbers and through various ways demonstrate how much they appreciated what he had done for them. The entire district saw e-governance as a boon, and was all praise for its champion.

□ *Motivating Employees and encouraging intrapreneurship*

Usually, there is a lot of resistance towards any efforts towards modernization and deployment of IT in government departments, especially at the district, taluk and block levels. How this resistance was overcome in Tiruvarur provides interesting learning. Umashankar's drive and contagious enthusiasm was a key in changing the employee mindset. Even the most disinterested person was seen performing under his leadership. Officials were impressed by his humility and ability to connect with each individual and address concerns that they may have. Even pockets of resistance that were present initially gave way over a period of time. He employed a collaborative approach to getting work done from employees rather than exercising power to win over people.

The magic of Umashankar was that he walked the talk. He would roll up his sleeves, involve himself completely while at work, and most importantly treat people with a great deal of human touch. At every stage of implementation of e-governance, everyone from the deputy collector right down to the entry-level employee was encouraged to give his or her suggestions, most of which were incorporated. In most public organizations, top managers ask

employees to come up with their suggestions, but rarely consider them. Over a period of time, this leads to cynicism. When this happens, the process loses credibility with employees and they cease to apply their mind.

Umashankar retained the team members, when he took over as DC. No one was replaced or transferred. The District Revenue Officer (DRO) was a very senior person, on the verge of retirement. Although Umashankar had the option to ask the government to replace the DRO with someone much younger, he did not do so. Instead, he coached the DRO into accepting responsibility. The DRO retired a happy man. He had the greatest satisfaction of having led a team to transform the district administration, and was indebted to Umashankar for this. Umashankar strongly believed that transferring under-performing or corrupt officials out of the team would not send the right signals and more importantly, and change that he ushered would not last beyond him in such a situation. Instead, he worked with the existing people, engaging them intensely, so that over a period of time they were transformed individuals, manifesting his idealism. According to Umashankar, this approach would lead to longevity of the changes that he sought to bring in. It was his conviction that if the man at the top is just and honest, his subordinates too will live up to being the same. He believed in the old adage: “Yatha raja, tatha prajah” (as is the king, so are his subjects). Motivated by the honest and just ways of Umashankar, corrupt employees gradually transformed to being honest and performance-oriented. Umashankar’s approach was to change the system by transforming people and not using punishment (through transfer or suspension) as the solution.

□ *Converting a skeptic: An example*

Mr. Raghuraman was the District Secretary of the Non-Gazetted Government Officers’ Union. When Umashankar proposed e-governance for the district, Raghuraman vehemently raised objections. He had felt it would result in people losing their jobs. Over a few weeks, as Umashankar explained to him the advantages of computerization, he stopped opposing the change. Likewise, an accountant in one of the taluk offices fought computerization. He showed no interest in it and refused to adapt to the new system. But Umashankar won him over and others like him, by highlighting the good that e-governance would do to them and to the public. All these efforts resulted in widespread acceptance of e-governance by employees in different offices of the district administration such as at the block offices, taluk offices and village offices. This was the key to making it a phenomenal success.

According to several employees who attempted to articulate the reason for their implicit alignment to the vision proposed by Umashankar, the usual tendency of collectors is to communicate with only the immediate two levels below them in the hierarchy. The rest of the employees are treated as invisible. This barrier ceased to exist when Umashankar took over as the district collector. He addressed everyone by his or her name, mingled with subordinates easily, spent time talking to them and found many ways to put them at ease. What appealed to the employees was the genuineness of the approach that Umashankar adopted in building relationships with everyone. Besides, the fact that he had a powerful vision and got others to also take the ownership of this vision, they also found that there was no personal agenda that drove his actions. When a person did a good job, Umashankar would be generous in his praise, and his praise would be heartfelt. Further, star performers received financial rewards. On one occasion, Umashankar had promised his employees that if their performance was

consistent over a period of one year, they would be provided the luxury of working in air-conditioned cubicles. As they had lived up to this promise, Umashankar got six air-conditioned cubicles built. He diverted some funds that were in his discretionary power for building these cubicles.

When the Collectorate was computerized, he literally hand-held officials and taught them the ABC's of using computers. He would ask subordinates to sit when they came to his chamber, unlike many of his predecessors, who made them wait outside or would refuse to meet them on the pretext of being busy. He treated everyone as equal. Saroja who was physically handicapped also had her place in the district administration. She was asked to oversee and handle all software-related issues. The respect and recognition that each employee received from Umashankar is what motivated them.

For e-governance to survive even beyond his time, Umashankar motivated employees to take psychological ownership of the new work system. He felt that doing so would dampen all attempts of his successors to discontinue the system. And this strategy has paid off. Although all his four successors have shown little interest towards e-governance in the district, the employees in the taluk and blocks have not let the system die. If necessary, Taluk officers are ready to spend their own personal money to buy paper for printing or to buy cartridges for the printers. They take care of expenses for minor repairs of computers, as the Collectorate does not sanction funds towards maintenance of computers.

Their total ownership of the system has been the primary driver of keeping the system alive despite the elapse of over 3 ½ years since Umashankar moved out of the district and several indifferent collectors followed. Since these employees are now accustomed to the new system of working and find it easier to work with it, they have repeatedly demonstrated that they are ready to spend their personal money to make the system work. In several of the Taluks visited, of some ten computers installed initially, only a few are now functional and the wireless towers have fallen into disuse due to non-payment of the charges to maintain these systems.

Umashankar empathized with his employees and instilled in them a sense of loyalty and pride towards their work and towards the customers they served. Although the new e-governance systems ensured a lot more transparency than was the case in the past, there was still considerable scope for officials to accept bribes. However, most officers refrained from doing so, as they were inspired by Umashankar's honesty and integrity, and wanted to follow in his footsteps.

### ***Challenges faced while implementing e-governance***

Although transforming Tiruvarur into an e-district meant his dream come true, there were many hurdles Umashankar had to overcome in order to make his dream a reality. He faced a series of over thirty audit objections. There is a specific list of development work that the Government of India (GOI) allows a DC to undertake under the MP LADP (Member of Parliament Land Area Development Program) and MLA LADP (Member of Legislative Assembly Land Area Development Program) schemes. Any development work carried out outside the purview of this list is considered a violation. Umashankar had utilized the MP

LADP funds for computerization of the block and taluk offices, although computerization of government offices was not an eligible item that could be executed under the MP LADP scheme. Thus, the Audit Committee raised objections. However, Umashankar replied to the committee justifying utilization of the MP LADP funds as not towards a simple purpose of computerization of government offices, but for providing computers to enable government offices provide better services to the common man. In his answers to the audit objections, he thus justified that expenditure incurred due to computerization of the Collectorate is as per norms laid down in the MP LADP guidelines. Similarly Umashankar dealt with all the other objections raised by the Audit Committee and saw his project through.

Server administration at remote locations in the district posed to be another problem in Tiruvarur. Networking of all the offices in the district was a huge challenge. Tiruvarur had an existing network connecting the various field offices in the district, but it was not reliable. The Department of Telecom (DOT) had laid fiber optic cables only up to the block headquarters level. The absence of a leased line/V-SAT connection at the district headquarters level prompted Umashankar to explore the option of wireless networking. Tenders were floated. A deal was finalized for 11 mbps (mega bytes per second) network catering to 14 locations including Tiruvarur town. Orders were placed for procurement of wireless LAN (Local Area Network) and the construction of LAN towers was initiated. In this manner, networking of the entire district was executed in stages.

With the establishment of e-governance in the district, the next challenge was to ensure that the software be used proficiently by the government officials. All the users (560 VAOs, 150 revenue officials, 60 survey officials and 150 officials of the rural development department) were trained in the operating system and application software modules. Umashankar took personal interest in helping officials overcome their phobia with computers.

### **Standing up against an improper situation – The case of Bimal Chatterjee, Assistant Financial Adviser and Accounts Officer, Guwahati**

Mr. Bimal Chatterjee was posted as Assistant Financial Adviser and Accounts Officer, Guwahati, after clearing the prestigious All-India Civil Services Examinations. One of his many responsibilities was to pass the contractual bills for all transshipments<sup>1</sup> done on the entire North East Frontier Railway (NEF Railway). His office passed the bills of all transshipments of the NEF Railway including the Bongaigaon station. Bongaigaon was the largest transshipment point of the Indian Railways, where different commodities like coal, food grains, fertilizers, etc. were transshipped from 54-Ton broad gauge wagons to 18 ton meter gauge wagons, as well as reverse transfers from meter gauge to broad gauge wagons. A politically well-connected labour contractor was doing the transshipment. This contract alone involved a monthly labour payment of about Rs. 35 lakhs. The transshipment being carried out at Bongaigaon was improper contributing to significant loss of potential earnings for the railways.

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<sup>1</sup> Physical transfer of goods from a broad-gauge wagon to a meter-gauge wagon and vice versa is called transshipment. North East Frontier Railways awards labor contracts to big private contractors to do this work.

***The mystery confounds Bimal***

The carrying capacity of a broad-gauge wagon and a meter-gauge are 54 and 18 tonnes respectively. To avoid wasteful utilization of meter-gauge wagons, one of the contract conditions provided that the contents of a broad-gauge wagon are to be transshipped into 3 meter-gauge wagons. It was further specified in the contract that in case the contractor uses excess number of wagons, 10% of his claim would be deducted as a penalty.

Bimal discovered that the contents of every broad gauge wagon were being transshipped into 4 instead of 3 meter gauge wagons. Thus for every broad gauge wagon transshipped, one extra meter gauge wagon was being used. To make matters worse, no penalty was being imposed on the contractor for the simple reason that Assistant Operating Manager (AOM), Bongaigaon was regularly certifying on each bill that the extra wagons were being used as per the directions of administration. As a result, 844 excess wagons were being used each month without fetching a single rupee for the Railways. The potential revenue loss due to non-availability of these wagons, based on their usage for coal transportation, would be Rs. 44 lakhs every month.

Bimal's predecessor told him that this was being done to save contractor's labor cost. Transshipping 54 tonnes of coal in 3 meter gauge wagons required more effort and time than transshipping them in 4 meter gauge wagons. Further, the contract conditions stipulated that if the transshipment was not completed within the allowed time<sup>2</sup>, the contractor was liable to pay demurrage charges.

***Early attempts at confronting the waste***

Ignoring the remarks of AOM, Bongaigaon, who had certified the bills for payment, Bimal ordered deduction of 10% of one of the monthly bills of the contractor. The value of the bill was about Rs. 10 lacs. Simultaneously, Bimal wrote a letter to the AOM informing him about the imposition of penalty, and asked him to furnish a clear and valid explanation, justifying the reasons for using excess wagons. Predictably, the AOM did not reply to his letter. Earlier, Bimal had briefed his superior, Mr. Jagdish Hazarika, the Deputy Financial Adviser and Chief Accounts Officer (Dy. FA & CAO) about the irregularity and his decision to impose the penalty. Jagdish did not show any interest in the case.

Next, Bimal went to Alipur Dwar, the divisional headquarters, as Bongaigaon came under jurisdiction of this office. Bimal explained the irregularity to the Sr. Divisional Finance Manager, Mr. Thomas Jacob, who was seen as an upright officer. He gave Bimal a patient hearing and promised to do something about the case. From Alipur Dwar, Bimal went back to Maligaon, where the headquarters of the North East Frontier Railway was located. There, he briefed some of the good officers in the Finance department about the irregularity that he detected. Since the issue did not concern them directly, they all just listened to what Bimal had to say but did not offer any concrete solution. While raising this issue at various quarters, Bimal realized that the indifference of many of the officers, with whom he raised the issue,

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<sup>2</sup> Once the wagons were placed for transshipment, the contractor had to complete the exercise within a fixed period of time. This in railways parlance is the allowed time.

was because of the fact that in bureaucracy, everybody has his/her share of problems and meddling into jurisdictions of other officers is normally not done.

### ***Stirring the hornet's nest***

By this time, the next set of bills came for payment, totaling to Rs. 35 lacs. Bimal promptly ordered withholding of the entire set of bills relating to the contract in question. The contractor dispatched one of his representatives to meet Bimal with the request to pass his bills. Bimal felt that if he passed these bills, nobody would ever bother about the issue and the Railways would continue to lose money. He suspected that there could be some vested interest at play and unless the issue was confronted head-on, these vested interests would continue to have their hold on the system. Bimal was also clear that from his perspective, there was no motive for personal gain and that he was trying to get to the bottom of the issue, with only the interest of the organization in mind.

Next day, Mr. Jagdish summoned Bimal to his office. Mr. Jagdish informed Bimal that the contractor had approached the General Manager of North East Frontier Railway, who had given immediate orders to pass the bills. Further, Mr. Jagdish told Bimal that the FA & CAO, Mr. Jayaram was also upset and the only option available with them was to immediately make the payment.

Mr. Jagdish recorded on the file that the matter should be taken up with the Alipur Dwar division. He also instructed immediate release of all withheld payments. Bimal was very frustrated, as he felt that all his efforts were in vain. Another month passed and nobody seemed to be bothered about the significant and needless waste. His frustration increased with each passing month. Other bills that came from the contractor over the next few months had also to be routinely passed, based on the implicit orders of Bimal's superiors.

### ***Vindication at last!***

After about four months, one day Bimal received a letter in response to his earlier letter, from the office of Chief Operations Manager (COM), Maligaon. The COM had ordered through the letter that henceforth only 3 and not 4 meter gauge wagons would be used at Bongaigaon for transshipping the contents of one broad gauge wagon into meter gauge wagons.

This letter from COM, Maligaon did not happen by chance. Subsequent to Mr. Jagdish reversing the orders of Bimal to stop payment, Bimal, on the advice of some of his well-meaning colleagues, had written letters to many officers of the North East Frontier Railway (in operations, commercial and finance departments), who could in any way help in correcting the irregularity taking place at Bongaigaon. He was extremely happy to see that one of these letters had finally produced results in the form of written orders from COM, Maligaon.

Whatever was the reason for the wasteful deployment of wagons, Bimal was happy that due to his efforts, the process was corrected. He had in a significant way contributed to stopping this waste. Most officers in bureaucracy argue that unless the whole system changes from the top, it is pointless for any individual officer to make any significant difference. Having decided to take the issue head on, Bimal had handled the situation in the best possible manner.

Bimal felt that he had done his duty to the organization. He emerged stronger from this defining moment that he faced, and in a large sense, this incident defined for himself and for his other colleagues, what stand he would take in similar situations in the future.

### **Adopting new measures to improve suburban train operations of the Central Railway system – The case of Shrinivas Mudgerikar, Divisional Traffic Manager, Central Railway in Mumbai**

Shrinivas Mudgerikar (Shrinivas) was the Divisional Traffic Manager (DTM) of suburban train operations of Central Railway (CR) in Mumbai. When he took charge as the DTM in January 1995, the CR suburban system was on the verge of collapse.

- The trains were running out of schedule (more than 15 minutes late), the punctuality figures were mostly fudged, although the records showed that 80% of the trains were running on time. In reality, no train was running on the right time. Too many speed restrictions were imposed on the train running due to the poor track conditions. The reasons included encroachments near the track, the railway line being used for attending to the calls of nature by the slum dwellers and lack of time for maintenance of compartments due to continuous running of trains. The system was clearly over- stretched.
- Many trains were getting cancelled due to the late running of trains as the same rakes are used for subsequent runs of the suburban trains. The late running was also leading to a huge overtime that had to be given to the driving staff, running into several crores of Rupees per year.
- The system was beset with frequent derailments mostly of the goods trains on the common corridor, causing delays to suburban trains.
- Too many level crossing gates (31 on the CR alone) causing delay to the suburban traffic.
- The large number of train starting stations: Out of 67 stations on CR suburban system, 21 were train starting stations (about 1/3<sup>rd</sup>). This caused delays while the train entered into the main traffic flow after starting from a terminus by negotiating a cross-over at a restricted speed. This had the effect of delaying the other trains.
- The semi-fast trains were run on the fast corridor between CST-Thane and then diverted on to the slow corridor cutting across all the lines. This caused considerable delay to the trains running on the other lines. The semi-fast trains were basically catering to the passengers from Kalva and Mumbra, which had stations only on the slow corridor (the fast corridor goes through a tunnel and has no stations for Kalva and Mumbra). These stations were catered to by the slow trains. The time difference between the slow train and a semi-fast train was only 10 minutes.

The encroachment was a larger issue involving the state government, the municipal corporation and the police. Shrinivas decided to leave this issue to the higher management to sort out. He decided to concentrate on the things which were possible to be done at his level. Accordingly, he came out with a multi-pronged strategy as follows:

- Start showing the correct punctuality figures. He felt that there was no point in presenting wrong operational performance figures.

- Reduce the number of trains particularly in the late night, so as to get enough time for maintenance of assets.
- Close level crossing gates at least during peak hours (2.5 hrs in the morning between 8.30 hrs to 11.00 hrs, and 3 hours in the evening between 17.00 hrs to 20.00 hrs).
- Reduce the number of semi-fast trains gradually, with the ultimate aim of removing them altogether.
- Reduce the number of train starting stations.

Once he decided upon the path of action, he convinced his seniors and colleagues in the organization about his point of view. Although some of them were skeptical about the whole idea, they did not oppose him in the open. But the most difficult part was that to convince the passengers about the proposed reduction in the number of services, and also reduction in the number of the train starting stations as well as of the number of semi-fast trains. He called for a meeting with the representatives of all the passenger associations and put before them his plan of action. He presented them all the facts about the way the existing system is functioning, and the need to improve the same if the system was to be saved from total collapse. They liked his forthrightness, but were worried about the reactions from the affected parties. He was successful in convincing them about the need for the short-term sacrifice to achieve long-term gains. But as expected, there was no unanimity among the passenger associations about the action plan. They also refused to put any of their agreements in writing. The association members tended to backtrack and reverse their stands from time to time based on the pressures brought on them by the commuters.

Shriniwas decided to go ahead and gave orders to close the level crossing gates between CST-Thane during the morning and evening peak hours with immediate effect. Working closely with his timetable controllers he made a new timetable, reducing the total number of services by about 80 train runs, and canceling some of the late night trains so as to give enough maintenance time. These 80 train runs represented about 8% reduction in the number of trains. Given that the reduction in the number of trains was never done for the last fifteen years, this was a major step. He was however criticized a lot by the passenger associations. His DRM and GM supported him strongly, and thus Shriniwas could push through these unpopular measures.

Looking back in retrospect, this was good for the system. Looking at the performance over a two-year period after implementing these changes, it was clear that the on-time running of trains had reached 90%. He reduced the train starting stations from 21 to 20 and the semi-fast trains from 60 to 25. The new timetable was widely publicized in the various media and came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1995. Shriniwas could have chosen to continue running the trains as usual, and bided his time for his next transfer. Instead, he chose to address the fundamental systemic deficiencies, and work towards correcting them with an entrepreneurial mindset. Although this required a lot more investment of his energies, looking back at this experience, Shriniwas feels happy that he could undertake this difficult task and rationalize the train system.

## **Handling challenges by empowering the work force – The case of Mr. Ranjit Bawa, Officer of the Xanadu Police Service**

In April 2000, Mr. Ranjit Bawa, an officer of the Xanadu Police Service (XPS), was posted as Police Superintendent (PS) for the Kanishka District, which is an important district in the frontier state in the country of Xanadu. The district headquarters of Kanishka was located at Pohari, a town with a population of about 200,000 people, made up of about 60% Hindus and the remaining 40% Muslims. From time to time, various anti-social elements instigated differences between these two communities, making maintenance of law and order quite challenging for the police force.

The Hindus claimed that a monument called “Chaubara” under the jurisdiction of Archaeological Survey of Xanadu (ASX) was a temple, which the Mughal Rulers took over and converted into a Mosque. Due to the historical disputes over the monument, successive Governments at the State and Central level evolved a formula whereby the monument would be kept open for two hours on every Friday between 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. to enable the Muslim community to offer their Friday afternoon prayers. Additionally, once in a year i.e., on Vijayadashami day (which typically falls in October of each year), the monument would be kept open for the Hindus to offer their prayers. For the rest of the time, the Monument would be kept locked by the ASX.

The district had encountered various incidents of communal violence in the past. Each year on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Hindu community in Pohari would take out a procession from the largest temple in the town to the riverbank adjoining the town. Managing this event was a big challenge for the police every year. During 1993, some miscreants and anti-social elements took advantage of the procession to vent their frustrations, which resulted in widespread loss of life and property.

Another incidence of violence occurred after the festival of Vijayadashami in 1999. Some hotheads in the Hindu community felt that if the Chaubara was being opened every Friday for two hours to enable the Muslims to offer prayers, there was no reason why their community should not have an access to the Chaubara on a weekly basis. Therefore, two weeks after Vijayadashami they unilaterally decided to make a large procession and descended to Chaubara to offer their prayer. The state police and the General of Police (GP) camped at Pohari to handle any eventuality during the planned forced entry into Chaubara. As the crowd tried to enter the Chaubara, the police prevented them. The crowd went on rampage burning a dozen police vehicles in different parts of the town. The atmosphere of trust in Pohari between the two communities became so vitiated that it took almost two months for the situation to return to normalcy.

### ***The Challenge before Ranjit Bawa***

Ranjit Bawa realized that he had three major handicaps to reckon with. Firstly, the Magistrate of District (MD) Mr. Babbar Singh was likely to indulge in one up-manship game whenever possible. Secondly, the district had an extortionist, Adil Khan, who terrorized the district through sheer muscle-power, using his various henchmen. Thirdly, the police force was totally demoralized owing to poor leadership in the past. Additionally, the hot-heads of both

the religious groups felt that they could call the shots, since the administration was relatively weak over the last two years.

As the police force became demoralized, the politicians sensed a rift between the civil administration and the police force in the district. The politicians started interfering with the normal functioning of the government officials and tried to have their way in many little ways. In this manner over a period of time, mutual nexus between the government officials and the politicians increased, further resulting in reduced effectiveness of the police force.

### ***Empowering the demoralized police force***

From the time he took charge, Ranjit Bawa worked with his police force, shoulder to shoulder, and helped them in tracking various crimes in different areas of Kanishka district. Earlier, the revenue officials would treat the police counterparts with an air of superiority. However, by empowering the police, bringing confidence in them and educating them about their roles and responsibilities, he was able to get the police to interact with the revenue officials on an equal footing and with dignity.

He authorized the police to use whatever means was available with them to protect life and property of the public and in this manner he greatly empowered them. This resulted in the police nabbing criminals on several occasions. After each incident, Ranjit Bawa ensured that the concerned policemen were appropriately rewarded and some of them even received fast-track promotions. He also went through various rulings and court orders relating to the relationship between the revenue officers and the police, with regard to preventive action and found that infact, the police had lot more latitude than was being practiced. Through this clarity, which he transmitted to his police force, he could get them to feel a greater sense of empowerment. In short, Ranjit Bawa was able to bring pride and commitment in the police force and this resulted in their improved morale. Petty politicians in the neighboring districts, sensing that Ranjit Bawa was a strong officer, stayed away from creating any trouble in Kanishka district during his tenure.

### ***Overcoming the next challenge by putting an end to extortion***

The Highway adjacent to Pohari had a reputation for frequent robberies by dacoits during night times. As this was widely known, the past practice for any vehicle that wanted to use that stretch of the highway, was to wait and be part of a convoy of about 100 vehicles. This group of vehicles would form a group and traverse a length of about 10 km, which was the most vulnerable stretch of the highway. Ranjit Bawa introduced a new system of regular and surprise police patrolling on the highway. The police force would frequently board transport vehicles, buses, private vehicles, etc., and in this manner patrol the highway, keeping it free of dacoits.

Ranjit Bawa learned about Adil Khan and his extortionist activities. Khan and his cronies terrorized many small and medium industrialists in the area. A politician friend of Adil Khan met with Ranjit Bawa and tried to encourage Ranjit Bawa to agree to meet Adil Khan. Ranjit Bawa flatly refused this meeting and took severe steps by stepping up police surveillance to

ensure that Adil Khan had no option but to leave the district. Handling this extortionist from the minority Muslim community in a tough manner sent signals of strictness and fairness of all and built Ranjit Bawa's image as an impartial officer.

### *New resolve and efficient handling of the Vijayadashami day event*

Two weeks before the actual Vijayadashami event, Ranjit Bawa convened a Peace Committee Meeting that involved the leaders of both the religious communities and other important people in the town. He laid out clear ground rules for the conduct of the pooja, which emphasized the need for strict discipline and adherence to a clearly agreed-upon timetable for the various events. As the event coincided with a Friday, the Hindus would have to vacate the Monument at 12.00 noon. The Muslims were to offer their prayers at 1.00 p.m. Thereafter, the Hindus could come back to the shrine after 3.00 p.m. for their further prayers. The leaders of both the communities agreed to these suggestions made by Ranjit Bawa.

Ranjit Bawa received intelligence reports that a lot of religious leaders and petty politicians from the neighboring districts were planning to foment large-scale trouble during the Vijayadashami day celebrations. Unfortunately due to by-election in some of the districts in the state, no additional police force could be made available to manage the Vijayadashami day event at Pohari. Ranjit Bawa briefed his 200 strong police team on how to control any unexpected events that might crop up. The police were issued rifles and ammunitions, and two video cameramen were stationed at strategic locations to record the entire day's events. He also told the magistrate of the district not to issue any directives to the police through wireless and that all instructions had to be routed only through the PS.

On the Vijayadashami day, tight police bandobast was made. Leaders were making provocative speeches and organizers did not allow any of the devotees to enter the monument till 11:00 am. At about 11.30 a.m., all of a sudden, a huge crowd broke through the first barricade and tried to surge ahead. Ranjit Bawa confronted the organizers and asked them to follow the procedure as earlier agreed upon, and enter the premises peacefully. The organizers ignored this. The mob tried to push ahead and forcibly entered the monument complex. Ranjit Bawa immediately ordered for lathi-charge. Most of the people fled from the scene. The key leader was helplessly lying on the ground. All of this was video recorded, so that it can provide correct evidence relating to the events, should there be an inquiry at the state headquarters about the events.

Over the next one or two nights there were attempts to create tension by some of the mischief-makers. However, due to the vigilance of the police, these persons were apprehended and severely dealt with. This sent out very strong signals to both the communities. After a few days, the situation fast returned to the normalcy.

Ranjit Bawa was greatly commended by the Political Leadership in the State for his effective handling of the situation. Ranjit Bawa was convinced that his improving the morale of the police during six months prior to the Vijayadashami Day had contributed greatly to the smooth passage of the event. But for his proactive manner of planning and handling the issues, there were enough petty politicians and trouble makers in the district, and if they were

allowed to have their way, several people would have died and properties destroyed. That all this was averted through his actions was the satisfaction that Ranjit cherished the most.

### **Taking on an intrapreneurial role in the government - The case of Mr. Sairam, Deputy Director, Directorate General of Revenue Intelligence**

In 1995, the Jain group founded the Universal Copper Limited (UCL) in West Bengal. Mr. Sumit was the Executive Director, who was in-charge of plant operations. The company was putting up a large plant for manufacture of copper (with an investment of Rs.5,000 crore) in collaboration with a company in New Zealand, in a 6000-acre plot. The project phase, extending over 30 months, involved sourcing equipment from different parts of the world, based on the specifications furnished by the collaborator.

The company had started drawing term loans from financial institutions. In addition, considerable equity from various investors had also flowed into the company. Different equipment was to be imported from different sources across the world. All this put considerable pressure to complete the project implementation and start production at the earliest. The project required several clearances from various statutory agencies, one of them being the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), for importing the plant and equipment. In view of the very large foreign exchange outflow involved in this project, the due diligence process by different governmental agencies for issuing various clearances, was becoming time consuming.

As the company was not getting the required licenses for clearing the goods from the customs, they resorted to bonded warehousing of the goods within the factory premises. To ensure that the project was not delayed, the company used to remove the goods from the bonded warehouse in a clandestine manner, and install the equipment, knowing fully well that this was in violation of the law. This act of the management was tantamount to violation of Customs and Central Excise Laws, which makes them liable for criminal prosecution.

On receipt of intelligence reports, officers of the Directorate General of Revenue Intelligence, headed by Mr. Sairam, Deputy Director, immediately proceeded to the plant and commenced investigations. It was found that a lot of equipment that was shown as being in the bonded warehouse was already removed and installed in the factory, without filing the required ex-bond bill of entry and the empty cartons were filled with junk material to camouflage their act. Had the company obtained the requisite licenses, they could have removed the material from the bonded warehouse without payment of any customs duty. In the absence of such licenses, the company had to: either wait for the licenses or remove the material from the bonded warehouse only upon payment of full duty, which would have resulted in significant cash outflows.

As the impropriety was evident, Mr. Sairam advised Mr. Sumit to come out clean, pay the evaded duty and give a confessional statement. Mr. Sairam assured Mr. Sumit that if this was done, he would be in a position to help the company and its officials from facing any further tough departmental action. Realizing that there was no other option, the company officials complied with these requirements and extended all cooperation to Mr. Sairam in completing their investigations.

Mr. Sairam was elated at having detected a good case, which resulted in the realization of over Rs. 10 crores for the government. This included both duty payable and penalty at 100% of duty. But the Additional Director General Mr. Naik insisted that tough action be taken against the company officials, who were directly involved in the offense. In view of the magnitude of the offense, the size of the company as well as the wide publicity it has received, Mr. Naik was of the opinion that any lenient action on the part of the department could come up for adverse notice if the issue was raised in the parliament. Sairam was also convinced of the same. Accordingly, two of the company officials were arrested. However, Sairam convinced his superiors that given the history of events, it would not be fair on the part of the officials to oppose the bail application that the company management was sure to file. Accordingly, when the bail application was lodged, Sairam did not object to it.

Sairam was of the belief that as a responsible officer from the Department of Revenue Intelligence, his job responsibility was essentially investigative. However, he felt that his role went beyond that, since he was a member of the prestigious Indian Revenue Service and therefore he felt that his work must result in tangible gains in terms of maximization of revenue to the government, rather than merely getting caught up in paperwork. In normal course, as an investigating officer, his task would have ended with the investigative report, and let others act on the case in the interest of the government, by following the due process of law. But, he went a step ahead and collected the customs duty from the company for the obvious violation that they had made. He tried to further extend his role to that of a judge as well. He was also thinking that the department as an organization should give more weight to the spirit or letter of the law and should extend special treatment to offenders who want to come clean.

Sairam completed the investigation in about two months and submitted a draft show-cause notice to the Commissioner of Customs and Central Excise for whetting, before he could issue it to the company. However, the Commiserate Office, while whetting the show-cause notice, modified the show-cause notice. In the modified version of the show-cause notice, the duty demand was made under provisions of Section 72 of Customs Act. This section is for demand of duty when goods are lost, stolen or pilfered from a warehouse. This is a much more lenient and simple provision for demand of duty. In this more lenient view of the offense, penalty could be imposed only under general penal provisions of Section 112 of the Customs Act. Moreover, it provides for significant discretion on the part of the officials in the imposition of penalty. The officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence felt this was not proper that the Commissioner of Customer and Central Excise should dilute the investigation to such an extent, especially when the circumstances leading to the offence and the offence itself were crystal clear. Sairam and his team felt let down. What the company officials did was a clear case of collusion and fraud and *mens rea* (deliberate intention to commit an offense). The office of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence protested with the Commiserate office for changing the provisions of the show-cause notice.

Based on these protests, the case was adjudicated by the Commissioner. He imposed more penalty than under the mandatory provision, while continuing to stipulate Section 112 as the basis for the penalty. However, the officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence felt that penalty imposition under Section 112 can act as an escape route to the company, since there

was every chance that at the subsequent appellate levels, the penalty would be considerably reduced. Normally, parties plead financial hardship and seek reduction in penalty at the appellate levels.

It was coincidental that the Government of India announced the 'Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme,' which was primarily meant to settle long-pending legal disputes in Customs, Excise and Income Tax Departments and thereby open the tap for revenue flow into the government's kitty. However, under this scheme the settlement was possible only for outstanding dues not paid to the government.

Officers of the Directorate were already feeling indignant at the turn of events. They wanted to pre-empt the possibility of the company taking any escape route by going for appeal. The top management of the company was called to Sairam's office and advised to avail of the Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme and close the matter. Though initially the company officials were not willing to do this, they finally agreed when they were told that if they did this, they could escape from being prosecuted. The company thus reluctantly went for Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme. The duty demand came to about Rs. 4.5 crores. Under Mandatory Penalty Provisions, the company would have paid 100% of this amount as penalty, i.e., the penalty the company would have to pay would be an additional Rs. 4.5 crores. However, as the Commissioner had already imposed Rs. 6 crores as penalty, and as Rs. 10 crores was already paid, the outstanding amount for settlement under the Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme was only Rs. 50 lacs. As per the provisions of the scheme, 50% of this outstanding amount, i.e., Rs. 25 lacs was paid by the company and the matter was closed. Thus, the company ended up paying more penalty than they would have under the Mandatory Penalty Provisions.

### **Daring to do what is right – The case of John Simon, Jr. Commissioner, Xanadu Civil Services**

Mr. John Simon, a member of the Xanadu Civil Services (XCS) was posted in May 1999 as a Jr. Commissioner in charge of all VAT related revenue in the province of Venice in Xanadu. Xanadu was famous for the manufacture of exotic alcoholic beverages. The raw material for these beverages was alcohol. Consequently Xanadu had several tens of distilleries that used to manufacture alcohol from molasses through batch distillation process. This was the only major industry in Xanadu and the country's industrial revenue depended heavily on the Value-added Tax (VAT) collected from this industry.

There was stiff competition among the major alcohol manufacturers in Xanadu, most of who were established during the early 1980's. The severe competition provided a strong incentive to the distillers to market their product at the lowest possible rates, by resorting to various unscrupulous means. The distillation process involved large amount of usage of electricity, and power was very expensive in Xanadu. In order to have lower power bills, the distillers tampered with electrical energy meters. This necessitated that the distillers show much lower production of alcohol than what was actually manufactured. By conservative estimates, not more than 20% of the alcohol actually manufactured was reported to the country's VAT authorities. The remaining 80% was taken out illegally from the factories, thereby resulting in staggering revenue losses for the country.

### ***The Finance Ministry attempts to plug VAT Evasion***

Taking cognizance of this huge loss of revenue through VAT evasion, which was estimated at about US \$ 1 billion per year, the Finance Minister of Xanadu decided to plug any loopholes in the system that allowed such evasion. In November 1999, during the budget speech, he announced a proposal whereby distillery units would have to pay a fixed amount of VAT per month. This amount would vary depending on the size of the distillery, which in turn was based on the physical dimensions of the main equipment in the distillery. Thus, the larger distilleries would pay more VAT as compared to the smaller ones. However, the amount of VAT to be paid remained fixed from one month to the next, for a given unit, irrespective of the quantity of alcohol produced by the unit in any particular month. The VAT authorities were directed to determine the size of the units, so that their VAT liabilities could be determined.

Based on this broad policy, smaller units typically would have to pay US \$50,000 per month and the larger units would pay about US \$ 100,000 per month as fixed VAT. For fixing the size (capacities) of the distilleries, the local VAT Authorities were to rely on the invoices relating to the purchase of distillery equipments. In case, such invoice could not be furnished by the distillery, the Sr. Commissioner had the discretion to fix capacities based on a suitable rational approach, to arrive at the monthly VAT payable.

### ***John Simon fixes capacities of the distilleries in Venice***

In May 1999 John Simon was instructed by his superior, Sayed Ahmed to visit all the 20 distilleries in Venice to fix their capacities and therefore the VAT payable. By a rather strange coincidence, not even one of the distilleries had the invoice relating to the purchase of the distillery equipment. The distillery owners reasoned that the equipment was more than a decade old and most of the invoices were therefore not available. John Simon consulted technical experts in his department to arrive at a rational basis of fixing capacities. The logic used was that the raw material, namely molasses, was stored in a large cylindrical tank and hence the capacity of the distillation unit was directly related to the volume of the cylindrical tank. The volume of the tank could be readily computed from the measurements of the tank (diameter and height of the tank). Accordingly, by end of May 1999, John Simon fixed the capacities of all the distillery units in Venice. A report of the same was furnished to Sayed Ahmed.

Based on the good work done by John Simon in the Venice Province, a working committee headed by him was formed to fix the capacities of all the distilleries in the country. John Simon completed this task by October 1999. During this time, he revisited and re-verified the capacities of the 20 units in the Venice Province and confirmed that the earlier capacities reported by him were indeed accurate. By November 1999, the final notification of the capacities and monthly VAT liabilities of all the distilleries in Xanadu was made.

### ***John Simon is shocked***

On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1999, John Simon received a communication from the Sayed Ahmed enclosing a representation from Md. Ibrahim Distillers, stating that the capacity fixed was too

high. The representation also included the copy of an invoice dated during 7<sup>th</sup> April 1985, relating to the purchase of the distillery equipment by Md. Ibrahim Distillers. John Simon was surprised that the attached invoice of distillery equipment from Md. Ibrahim Distillers had a much lower capacity of the unit, compared to the capacity arrived at by John Simon and his team by measurement and calculation. In fact, the capacity on the invoice was 10% of the capacity that John Simon had fixed. One look at the invoice and John Simon figured out that it was fabricated. Further, during his two visits to Md. Ibrahim Distillers, the owner clearly informed him that he had no invoice relating to the purchase of distillery equipment. This meant that instead of paying VAT of about US \$ 100,000 per month, Md. Ibrahim Distillers would end up paying about US \$ 10,000 per month. John Simon also learned that Sayed Ahmed was under pressure from Paul Victor, the Commissioner General of VAT for the country, to re-open the capacity fixation for Md. Ibrahim Distillers and lower it considerably based on the equipment invoice furnished.

To John Simon, the implications of lowering the capacity for Md. Ibrahim Distillers due to pressure from the top were clear. Very soon thereafter, all the remaining distillery units in the country were bound to come up with similar requests to reopen the capacity fixation issue. John Simon did not want to accede to this pressure. It would also mean that all his months of efforts to curb the evasion of VAT in the country from the distillers would come to naught.

John Simon again visited Md. Ibrahim Distillers on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1999. However, the verification of capacity that he carried out clearly indicated that the capacity fixed earlier was correct and did not need to be changed. He further observed that the invoice did not correctly reflect the actual capacity. John Simon accordingly reported his findings to Sayed Ahmed immediately. To his utter disbelief however, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1999 he received a cryptic fax directly from Sayed Ahmed indicating that the capacity of Md. Ibrahim Distillers had again been revised (superceding his own November 1999 order), taking cognizance of the very same invoice, which John Simon knew could not be correct. He was in a fix. He had before him the revised notification from the Sr. Commissioner regarding capacity of Md. Ibrahim Distillers. From the organizational perspective, within the VAT Department, Sayed Ahmed was four levels higher than John Simon. From this perspective, John Simon had no locus-standi to question Sayed Ahmed's decision. Yet, John Simon was greatly concerned over the revenue loss on account of this notification. A much more serious issue was his apprehension that other distillers would follow suit and come up with fabricated invoices and requests in down-scaling their 'capacities' for the purpose of VAT calculation.

On the one hand, Sayed Ahmed was his superior, and John Simon was duty-bound to follow his instructions. On the other hand, he was responsible for the collection of VAT revenues in the Venice Province. The action of Sayed Ahmed in relation to Md. Ibrahim Distillers would immediately have a cascading effect and other distilleries in the country will surely emulate this example and come up with fictitious invoices within the next few weeks. This would result in a severe revenue loss for the Government. However, when his senior officer Sayed Ahmed, in his wisdom had taken a decision with full cognizance of all facts pertaining to the situation, to reduce the capacity of Md. Ibrahim Distillers, knowing fully well the repercussions that this decision would have on the other distillers in the country, who was he to worry about these larger issues? He wondered whether he should quit the service and look for an alternative job.

As he thought more deeply on the issue at hand, he realized that his upbringing and moral fiber did not permit his conscience to allow such losses to the Government's revenue. It was clearly a defining moment for him. He was an employee of the Government, and had to do whatever he could, to safeguard its interests. The only possibility as he could see was to do what he thought was right under the circumstances, from the perspective of a strong ethical foundation that was ingrained in him from his childhood. He realized that this approach would necessitate him to take on the powerful officers in the VAT Department, perhaps even jeopardizing his career.

John Simon put his thoughts together in a document that essentially challenged the basis of the latest orders of Sayed Ahmed. This was faxed to Sayed Ahmed on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000. Infuriated on receiving the fax from his junior officer, Sayed Ahmed literally blasted John Simon for taking needless initiative to reopen an issue for which he had already passed the necessary orders. As John Simon was clear in his mind, about the course of action that he had embarked upon, there was no question of withdrawing the letter.

The very next day, Sayed Ahmed set out for a one month annual vacation, handing over the charge to his colleague, Mr. Chris Alexander, who was the head of a neighboring District Commissionerate. Knowing well that Sayed Ahmed was now out of action for about a month, John Simon decided that this was the best time for him to try and get Sayed Ahmed's orders rescinded. John Simon sent a detailed confidential note relating to the capacity fixation of Md. Ibrahim Distillers to Chris Alexander. Based on this note, Chris Alexander sent back the file with a clear note from him concluding that the lowering of capacity of Md. Ibrahim Distillers was not warranted and that there was a clear need for a thorough study of the case

Sayed Ahmed resumed work in February 2000. He learnt of the initiatives taken up by John Simon with regard to Md. Ibrahim Distillers case during his absence. Rightfully he was furious at the way John Simon was seeking to undermine his authority. Sayed Ahmed challenged John Simon to come up with clear proof supporting his entire line of reasoning and warned him of dire consequences if he failed to do so.

John Simon was convinced that there was something terribly wrong with the invoice furnished by Md. Ibrahim Distillers. John Simon laid out his plan, which envisaged raiding the factory of the equipment manufacturer in Jersey Town, who supplied the distillery equipment to Md. Ibrahim Distillers. With five officers of the VAT Administration in Jersey Town in tow, John Simon extracted the confession from the manufacturer of the distillery equipment, that indeed the invoice relating to the supply of equipment to Md. Ibrahim Distillers dated mid-1980's was actually made in his office only about four months ago at the behest of the owner of Md. Ibrahim Distillers.

John Simon next requested and got the consent from Sayed Ahmed to raid Md. Ibrahim Distillers to interrogate the owner. The owner readily confessed to the fact that he had fabricated the invoice and presented the same at the District Commissionerate, only a few months ago. John Simon felt a sweet sense of accomplishment, when the owner of Md. Ibrahim Distillers told John Simon that he was really appreciative of his efforts. He never

imagined that a Government officer could so doggedly pursue a case in spite of so many obstacles. Md. Ibrahim Distillers paid up the differential VAT for the interim period.

John Simon recorded a confession statement from the owner of Md. Ibrahim Distillers. With all this evidence before him, Sayed Ahmed had no option but to issue one more revision to his earlier notifications, this time revising the capacity of Md. Ibrahim Distillers to the earlier level recommended by John Simon. By now, the fame and credibility of John Simon spread far and wide. For the subsequent one-year, all the manufacturing units in Venice Province as well as the VAT authorities in Xanadu, did not attempt to make any shortcuts with regard to VAT matters.

### **Intrapreneurship in the government – The case of Meena, Sub-Collector of Bhoomipalli in Frontier State**

Mr. Meena, IAS, was the sub-collector of Bhoomipalli in Frontier State. This sub-division has many revenue lands that were assigned to landless people. These assigned lands have many reserved trees such as rosewood, teak, sandalwood and black-wood. The ownership of these lies with the State, despite the allotment of the land to the beneficiaries. This fact is reported in the pattayam (document), which accompanies the land assignment. Accordingly, the permission of the sub-collector is necessary to cut, remove and sell these trees. The proceeds of the sale of such trees went to the government. However, the tahsildar can inspect any of these trees, and if convinced about the need to cut and remove the tree, can auction the tree and place the matter before the sub-collector for confirmation, before actually cutting the tree.

The young sub-collector came under pressure from the section clerk to clear a particular file dealing with the confirmation of an already conducted auction by the tahsildar. The contents of the file were that three rosewood trees, which were depicted as decomposed and likely to fall off any day, thereby having the potential to cause harm to the life and property of the tenant, were auctioned for a total sum of Rs. 3550/-. This was to be ratified by the sub-collector. Meena, being a relatively new officer of the IAS, had no prior exposure to rosewood trees. However, he heard that it was valuable wood. Hence he was surprised at the ridiculously low auction value and decided to inspect the trees before confirming the auction.

The sub-collector traveled by his car, along with his trusted staff, to the nearest highway access point, and from there he walked 13 km in the rocky terrain, to reach the site. He was shocked to find that one of the trees was a massive one while the other two were relatively small trees. With the help of forest officials, an on-the-spot valuation of the trees was done and the siegenerage value was assessed at Rs. 6.5 lacs for the large tree (which was estimated to be more than 150 years old), and Rs. 1.lac for each of the two smaller trees.

Meena initiated disciplinary action against the tahsildar, by discussing the matter with the collector, who was also an upright officer. The tehsildar was to retire in about 2 weeks. He, however, had the protection of the local MLA, who happened to be the Revenue Minister for the State. The tehsildar had served the minister loyally for many years during his career, assisting the minister to pursue his personal agenda in revenue matters and election issues. This was gratefully reciprocated by the minister, by his patronage and protection of the errant tahsildar. In spite of this, Meena and the collector persevered with the revenue board member,

a senior IAS officer, to get the tahsildar suspended and dismissed, but in the end, the minister prevailed over the officers, and the result was that the tahsildar retired without being suspended, and the only penalty imposed in him was that his pension was reduced by about 30%.

Subsequently, sensing that there could be many more such cases, Meena verified the tree registers containing the details of reserved trees standing in the assigned lands and began innumerable site inspections during his leisure time and holidays to verify whether the trees were still available or not, and if available, got the registers updated with the latest girth of the trees. While undertaking such exercise in the remote areas of the sub-division, one of the locals, who for the first time saw a sub-collector touring the areas, had informed Meena that seven massive rosewood trees were cut and removed illegally from one of the assigned lands, some five years ago. Meena immediately picked up the signals and verified the pattayam of the particular land, to find out whether these seven trees were recorded in the document at the time of land assignment. Verification of the document did not support the statement, as no trees were shown in the pattayam. However, Meena studied a little more about the growth patterns of rosewood trees. He especially tried to understand what happened after they were cut. He also met the local conservator of forests (CF), a senior IFS officer. On Meena's request, the CF spared the services of a forest ranger and guard to enable Meena to inspect the site. Additionally, Meena engaged two labourers and proceeded to the site with his confidential staff and necessary tools.

Rosewood trees when cut create suckers (saplings of rosewood trees) in a circular pattern, and these suckers survive long after the original trees are cut. Meena ordered the digging of the central portions of the circles formed by the suckers. Everyone present was surprised to find massive stumps of rosewood trees in all the seven areas. The experienced forest ranger and guard measured the girth of the stumps and also collected pieces of the stumps as samples, which were carried to the headquarters to assess the age of the trees and value of the wood.

Subsequent interrogation of the land assignee revealed that he colluded with the revenue officials two decades ago, at the time of land assignment, ensured that the trees were not recorded in the pattayam, and got the trees illegally cut and removed some three years ago, in collusion with revenue and forest officials as well as with timber contractors. Conservatively, each tree would have had a value of Rs. 7 lacs, totaling over Rs. 40 lacs, in siegenerage value, which itself would be much less than the market value of these trees.

Meena was going out of the way to do what he was doing. His loyalty to his job was driving him to do this. Surely, the system had a lot more difficult and bigger challenges and he would be facing them in his long career ahead. He wanted to ensure that the idealism with which he entered the service does not fade over time and that he does not become cynical with the passage of time. At one level, he was an individual conscientious officer in a large system. Yet, he believed that it would make a difference to the system, if he continued to work with absolute integrity. Infact, during the rosewood incident, some of his well-wishers in the service told him that he should take life easy and 'flow' with the system. But, Meena's vision was to transform the system by transmitting his idealism to his colleagues. He was confident that over a period of time he could change the system for the better. This optimism kept him energized despite the various obstacles he faced in the discharge of his duties.

## **Elephant poaching and illegal trade of ivory – The case of Jaidev Singh, District Forest Officer, Indian Forest Services, Daulatabad District**

It was a bright Sunday morning in February 1998. The harsh ring of the telephone disturbed the tranquility of the house of Jaidev Singh (Jaidev for short), an IFS officer in Pallava State. The news was very disturbing. The caller, a field staff of the forest department informed Jaidev, that two mighty tuskers were gunned down early that morning, in one of the eight forest ranges overseen by Jaidev as District Forest Officer (DFO), Daulatabad district.

Jaidev originally joined the Indian Police Service. But soon he gave up his job and joined the Indian Forest Service in 1986, primarily to pursue his calling and passion, viz., his dedication to the cause of protection of flora and fauna of the country. Jaidev had an excellent career track-record. Just before his present posting as District Forest Officer, Daulatabad, in March 1995, he worked as a planning officer in the state forest department head office. In this capacity, he was one of the key persons involved in conceptualizing and obtaining sanction from the Japanese government for an ecology and environment conservation project, estimated to cost Rs.500 crores over a period of five years. He completed more than 3 years in head office. This field posting for him was a challenge. Daulatabad was one of the oldest forest divisions in the country. Prior to independence of the country, during the colonial time, British stalwarts managed it. The division had dense evergreen forests and was a biodiversity hotspot of the world.

### ***Wildlife conservation in India***

India is an importer, exporter and a conduit for wildlife that contributes to the \$ 25 billion annual global trade. In an attempt to curb trade in wildlife, the Government of India has set out a clear policy and made unambiguous laws to support the cause of conservation of flora and fauna. This is reflected in the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, in which lists of scheduled fauna and flora in the country are clearly given for their protection. Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is one of the **Scheduled- I animals** as per this Act. Further, India was one of the earliest members of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild fauna and flora, thereby pledging international support to the ideal of protecting wildlife.

India has retained strong conservation ethics, both in its domestic and international policy on wildlife, recognizing that this is part of the country's history and tradition. Despite all of these laws and policies, the illegal trade in wildlife continues to flourish both in India and in the international arena, largely due to lacuna in implementation. Just as mere laws do not bring down the incidence of heinous crimes in society, the curbing of poaching of animals and their subsequent trade needs vigilance round the clock and special care in the field.

### ***Ivory and its economics in illegal trade***

Ivory is obtained primarily from the tusks of Asian & African elephant species. It is illegal to cut the tusk from a living elephant. The average weight of an Asian elephant tusk is around 10 kg, although this is decreasing as poachers have killed many of the larger and older tuskers.

Indian (or Asian) ivory is easier to carve on when compared to African ivory, and therefore fetches traders a higher price.

A poacher can sell 1 kg of freshly collected elephant tusk at the rate of Rs.1,500 to Rs.2,000 per Kg. to a middleman or to an ivory trader, who immediately passes it on to the carving master. The carving master defaces the tusk at the earliest through some fundamental treatment, to prevent it from being detected as fresh ivory by wildlife authorities, in case of any investigation.

The trader, after getting the carved ivory, prefers to sell it through illegal channels in the International markets, as it is more lucrative. The major illegal trade routes are:

1. from Thiruvananthapuram, Calicut, or Mangalore to Dubai
2. from Thiruvananthapuram via Bangalore or Mumbai to Dubai
3. From Dispur to Mumbai and onwards to Dubai
4. From Kathmandu or Jaipur to Pakistan

Much of the finished products (carved ivory items) find their way to affluent countries such as Japan.

### ***Administrative jurisdiction***

Poaching of elephants in Daulatabad Forest Division, though rare, was not uncommon. During the later part of 1980s, 1994, and 1996 there were incidents of elephant poaching in this division. However, over the last 3 years with Jaidev as DFO, the district was kept under total control and free from poaching and felling of trees in the reserve forest. Because of his continuous effort through preventive measures, inculcating a team spirit among his about 150 staff, constant vigilance and frequent inspection, the division under his control had an unblemished record, despite the department being chronically under-staffed due to governmental budgetary constraints.

Of the 8 ranges for which he was responsible, four were disconnected pockets of reserve forest and the other four were contiguous forest ranges located in the eastern flanks of the Western Ghats, covering an area of 50,000 hectares. The contiguous ranges were full of valuable forest wealth like teak and sandalwood as well as wild fauna such as elephant, tiger, etc. These four ranges together constituted one of the main corridors for moving herds of wild elephants. It was Jaidev's responsibility to protect the flora, fauna and the forestlands under his charge.

As DFO, Jaidev remained the executive head of the district for protecting and managing all the natural resources of forest areas of the district. In addition to the control and protection of the resources, he also implemented the various governmental policies related to forestry and other general plan schemes in the district. He reported to Mr. Krishnaswami, the Conservator of Forests, his immediate boss, for guidance and advice as and when required. Jaidev kept a good rapport with the District collector, District Superintendent of Police and other district officials, and helped them in the smooth and effective administration of the district. When it involves certain urgent issues, the District Forest Officer sends flash reports to the Principal

Chief Conservator of Forest, who is the head of the forest department of the state, as well as to other senior officers in the government.

### ***Jaidev takes stock of the situation***

Through the telephone call, Jaidev learnt of the poaching of two male elephants at the same spot and at the same time. Being a veteran in the forest service, Jaidev was convinced that this was part of a much deeper organized crime. The poachers, who receive a paltry compensation for the ivory that they pass on to the channels, are only the last link in a well-honed machinery for smuggling wild life and related items. Moreover, this had to be a planned activity, as the poachers would have made many reconnaissance trips to the reserve forest, stalking their prey, for several days before actually committing the crime. Despite all the protection efforts taken by him and his field staff, Jaidev was saddened at the incident.

### ***Jaidev's response***

Though it was shocking news for Jaidev, he took the situation head-on and showed strong leadership qualities. The issue at hand was one that had potential large ramifications at a national level. His staff of 150 people looked to him for guidance. He jotted down a few points about what he needed to do immediately. He made a list of men and material he would need at site to begin his investigative task. Clearly, speed was the essence, since each passing hour would result in more chance for obliteration of evidence. Jaidev informed his immediate superior, Mr. Krishnaswami, over the phone about the report he received from the subordinate and also informed him about his proposed course of action.

### ***Strategy adopted to apprehend the poachers***

Gadadhar, Jaidev's driver, drove him to Prashanti, the place where the poaching had taken place. Focusing intensely on the immediate task at hand, Jaidev meticulously planned for his modus operandi for next 24 hours and for the next few days, with the single-minded focus of apprehending the culprits.

### ***Crime Scene Investigation & Evidence Collection***

On reaching the Prashanti range office, Jaidev summoned the concerned range officer and his field staff, to get a quick briefing about the entire happenings. The team had collected some information about offenders who they suspected could have perpetrated the crime. Soon after the briefing, Jaidev conducted a meeting with four of his range officers and 10 foresters to express his desire for urgent, precise and well-planned action to track down the criminals. After the clear communication of intent, Jaidev organized for a crime scene search with the help of a few intelligent subordinates who had earlier experience in such search operations. Important observations were made, photographs and videos of the crime scene were taken, a sketch of the possible way the poachers could have shot the elephants was made, footprints of humans were taken and bullet marks on the animals were examined. Collection of evidence from the crime scene was done scientifically and in a precise manner in order for the evidence to stand the scrutiny subsequently in the Court of Law, and for this evidence to assist him in the final investigation.

- *Post-mortem investigation*

A post mortem investigation of both the carcasses at the site, which is most important and invaluable for solving wildlife crimes, was conducted by the assistant veterinary surgeon of Prashanti village. During post mortem, the veterinary surgeon was requested to focus on certain issues such as time of death, age of the animals, etc., in addition to other normal procedures. Removal of bullets from heads of both elephants made it clear that the poachers had used country-made guns and shot both the animals from a nearby treetop. They had then cut the trunks of both the elephants and removed the tusks.

- *Flash reporting & informing the media*

From his past experience, Jaidev knew the importance of keeping the senior state forest machinery informed of the incident and steps being taken by him. Accordingly, he informed his immediate boss about the progress in the case. A flash report was submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Chief Wild Life Warden, Conservator of Forests and also to the Honorable Minister of Forests and Environment, about the facts and actions being taken for detecting the culprits. The local police, the S.P. and the District Collector (as he was the chairperson of the district level wild life committee) were also kept informed about the proceedings. Media persons who were eager to know about the case were given basic information about the issue.

- *Creating an intelligence network and the modus operandi*

Based on the crime search, collection of evidence from the crime scene, meticulous planning, criminal investigation, and post-mortem analysis collected by Jaidev until then, 3 preliminary hypotheses were derived:

**Hypothesis I:** *A well-prepared group had done this poaching. It was meticulously planned. This group had a clear idea of the locality. It was clearly done with the help of at least one local man, who may be a habitual offender. Perhaps, such a person figures in the list of habitual offenders of forest and police departments.*

**Hypotheses II:** *A criminal party from the neighboring state of Vidhisha, who did illicit ganja cultivation along the interstate border of Pallava and Vidhisha, might have been involved in this poaching activity.*

**Hypothesis III:** *The chance of this crime being done by an outside party with the connivance of local subordinates could not be ruled out.*

Two different range officers Prasad and Bhujanga Rao were selected for investigation of Hypothesis-I and Hypothesis-II respectively. Jaidev decided to handle the investigation of Hypothesis-3 by himself. He established a makeshift camp at the boundary of reserve forest (near the site of crime), with all communication facilities like wireless and phone.

Prasad was asked to proceed immediately to Vijaypur (a district within Pallava state) and Bhujanga Rao to Mayapur in Vidisha, along with 4 to 5 subordinates of their own choice. While an informer from Prashanti accompanied the first group, the second group was instructed to meet the Wild Life Warden (Chief Conservator of Forests) at Mayapur. Both the groups were to keep frequent contact with Jaidev at his makeshift camp.

### ***Mounting pressure***

- Pressure mounted up from all sources to know about the reason for failure of the forest department to protect the two elephants, and also to find out the position about the actions being taken to apprehend the culprits.
- Elephants are listed in Schedule-I of The Wildlife (Conservation) Act, 1972. Hence poaching of two elephants simultaneously at the same spot and at the same time, was a matter of great concern.
- The forest minister made a direct phone call to Jaidev in the field to know further details and also to learn about the progress being made. Clearly he was under immense pressure from various quarters. Moreover, he was put in a spot earlier in the day, when the chief minister of the state knew a lot more details than the forest minister. Jaidev provided a comprehensive assessment of the situation to the minister and assured him that all steps were being taken to nab the criminals at the earliest. The minister wanted that Jaidev and his party should go ahead with their plans and find out the culprits within 24 hours. The minister also expressed his confidence that Jaidev and his team would be able to quickly get to the bottom of the episode and apprehend the culprits.

### ***Breakthrough in detecting the elephant poachers***

The team entrusted for testing the Hypothesis-I made a breakthrough in detecting the two hardcore elephant poachers. They found a crumpled paper in the pocket of a shirt found in a coconut grove where presumably the culprits took shelter on the night before the crime. This paper had a telephone number scribbled on it.

Jaidev made a visit to the three STD booths located in the Swetanagar, and very discretely examined the registers they maintain on out-going calls. The number on the scrap of paper tallied with the number found in the register of one of the STD operators. From this, Jaidev discovered that the call was made to a place in Madhupur, about 100 km away. Since this was a relatively distant place, the culprits could not have done this heinous deed without local help. Jaidev then discretely found out who among the locals visited Madhupur frequently in the recent past. Pasha was found to be that person. Prasad then called the number in Madhupur impersonating as Pasha on the phone, and spoke in a way to confirm that the called number was indeed connected to the poachers.

Jaidev then tactically let out misleading information to a few people in the village, that the culprits had been caught. Based on this, Pasha passed on a discreet message to his contacts in Madhupur, that the forest officers had caught the criminals, and therefore they could now relax. Jaidev and Prasad then set about the task of tracking down the culprits in Madhupur. The team headed by Prasad went to Madhupur in disguise (i.e., not in forest department uniform), in two non-governmental vehicles (one Jeep and one Maruti van). When Prasad

finally knocked at the door of Seenu and Venu at 4.00 am the following day, the two culprits were shell-shocked and least expected to be caught, that too, so soon. They were in possession of one pair of tusks. Jaidev also arrested Pasha in Swetapur.

Seenu and Venu showed Prasad and his team where they had killed the elephants, and where they had buried the country-made weapons after killing the elephants. Upon interrogation, they furnished the names of all other criminals associated with this crime. In addition, they also gave the details of the network that was involved in ivory trade in Vidisha as well as other parts of India. Seenu and Venu confessed upon interrogation that they were in this business for over fifteen years. Out of the 14 accused, 10 of them (including the 3 who were directly involved in the killing of the animals) were apprehended and produced before the Judicial Magistrate of Swetanagar Court by Prasad, the investigating officer, on the following day. The Judicial Magistrate admitted the case and booked the accused under judicial custody for the next 2 months. He also directed the investigating officer to apprehend the remaining accused and to file the charge sheet at the earliest.

News was given to the media persons about the culprits being nabbed. The forest department received an inspiring letter from the PCCF for the good work done, which helped to bring up the morale and confidence of the officers in the department.

Although Jaidev and team tracked down the abettors of the crime from Vidisha state, based on the information furnished by Seenu and Venu, they were not successful in nabbing them. While Jaidev sealed further chances of poaching in Daulatabad division by learning of the lapses from this case, and while he was amidst the process of unearthing all the illegal trade networks of kingpins in the country and outside, he got deputed to a posting in the Government of India at Delhi in July 1998 (for which he had applied during 1997). Jaidev resolved to pursue the case from the place of his new assignment. However, he learnt that the remaining four accused absconded from their native places and could not be traced. The case is still continuing in the Swetanagar Court albeit with less vigor, perhaps because all the concerned officials have since moved out and the new officers in their place are not so passionate about pursuing an old case to its logical conclusion. This may lead to the eventual death of the entire case, as in most of forest cases. However, this has not dissuaded Jaidev to taking up similar actions in his new assignment. He continues to strive towards reducing poaching of wildlife in India.

### **Manifesting integrity in the discharge of his duties – The case of Bir Singh, Deputy Financial Adviser and Chief Accounts Officer, Western Railways, Jaipur**

Mr. Bir Singh was the Deputy Financial Adviser and Chief Accounts Officer (Dy FA & CAO) of the Western Railways in Jaipur. He had to oversee the construction activities relating to all new projects such as laying of new railway lines, gauge conversion (from meter gauge to broad gauge), construction of railway stations, construction of passenger amenities at existing stations, etc. All of these works were undertaken by private contractors, based on a very elaborately orchestrated process starting from specification of the work, tendering, comparing offers from various contractors who bid for the tenders, deliberations by the tender committee, acceptance of the tender offer by the Railways, and entering into agreement with the successful bidder. As part of his duties, at any point of time, Singh was a member of over

six arbitration committees that had to decide on disposal of cases that involved long-pending disputes between the contractors and the Railways.

However, one such arbitration case pertaining to the civil engineering department of the operating division set him thinking deeply about the deep-rooted malice in the system that resulted in significant losses to the Railways. The railways had called for tenders for track renewal work between km 20 to 35 on the Ajmer-Delhi section. What this entailed was close scrutiny of the track, looking for tracks that are worn out, and replacing them. Balwant Rai Constructions was one of the contractors assigned the track renewal job. They were awarded a contract worth Rs.25 lacs. There were 25 mandatory items of work that were required to be done in connection with this track renewal job. For five other items of work the tenderer had to quote the rate, and the officer concerned, Mr. Shakil Ahmed, would decide in due course whether or not to take up these five items, depending on the site conditions. One of these involved shifting of the replaced rails from the site and moving them to the storage yard. The unit of measurement was in meters of rail and rate fixed was about Rs. 250/- per meter, for shifting the rail on a trolley that is pushed on the track and taken to the yard.

Accordingly, the fixed component of the job, involving the 25 items of work was satisfactorily completed. Additionally about 25,000 meters of rail were moved to the yard. This would involve a payment of about Rs. 60 lacs for this item alone. Being an optional item, not much attention was paid to it at the time of awarding the contract. Two bills were admitted, for an amount of about Rs. 3 lacs each, paying the contractor at the quoted rate of Rs. 250/- per meter. However there was a written rule in the Railways code that in the award of any contract, the total payment made to the contractor should be within plus or minus 25% of the contract value.

Once the payments to Balwant Rai constructions started exceeding the Rs. 25 lacs plus 25%, i.e., about Rs. 31 lacs, the accounts department woke up and asked the concerned railway engineers for an explanation. With a view to cover up the slip on their part, the engineering department came out with an explanation that the unit of measurement should have been in Metric ton basis for transportation of rail, and not on the basis of length in meters. To further cover up, they promptly passed the blame for the slip on a 'typographical error.' By then the contractor had already completed the movement of about 25,000 meters of rail. Understanding the repercussions of the slip, the engineering department promptly ordered stoppage of further payments to the contractor. While perusing the file, Singh was surprised at the solidarity with which the entire engineering department stood behind the concerned Executive Engineer, Mr. Prahlad, in an attempt to cover up the issue.

Balwant Rai was politically well connected, being a third generation contractor for the railways. He knew the senior officers of the railways well, and tried his best to get the blocked amount released, since on paper, his case was very strong. However no officer at the higher levels wanted to stick his neck out by authorizing the clearance of a bill that would undoubtedly come up for audit questioning in the future. Balwant Rai knew that with no action to resolve the imbroglio for over 18 months, his only recourse was to seek arbitration, as permitted by the terms of the contract. For this purpose, he sent a written request to the General Manager of the zonal railway in Mumbai, giving clearly the reasons for the request, as well as detailing all his pending claims.

The claims of the contractor were sent to the concerned unit, comprising both accounts and engineering functions, for their comments. It finally came up for arbitration to the arbitration committee on which Singh was a member. Once the matter was referred to the arbitrators, Singh knew that only the arbitrators could dispose off the matter. Singh was aware of the heavy responsibilities on his shoulders in assessing the situation and coming up with a fair award. Due to the significant lapse of time from the event, Singh and his co-arbitrators had to rely heavily only on the written documents available to them. Singh also knew that if he came up with an award that was not fair to the contractor, the contractor would take the matter back to the General Manager, with a request to change the arbitration committee, or alternately the contractor could seek legal recourse.

Passing the blame onto others and pointing to a 'typographical error' did not ring well for Singh, who was known for his uprightness. He was not the kind of government official who would try to wield his power, sitting in a governmental seat, make the situation difficult for the contractor, and in the process make a deal for private gain with the contractor, to finally pass a judgment favouring the contractor. Instead he felt that he had to be fair to all the parties.

As there was no ambiguity either in the schedule or in the agreement with regard to the unit of measurement of rail transported from the track site to the yard, Singh knew that the case was very weak as far as the railways was concerned. In order to avoid further damage, he felt that it was prudent to speedily close the matter by directing the railways to make payment to the contractor as per the terms and conditions of the contract, i.e., at Rs. 250/- per meter of rail transported. In this way he could at least curb further mounting of the interest, as already there was a potential accumulated interest payment of about Rs. 15 lacs on the claims for the 18 months time @ 24 % pa, as claimed by the contractor. The contractor was obviously pleased with the judgment. When the contractor subsequently tried to send some expensive gifts to Singh, he gracefully refused them. This fact became well known in the government and contractor circles. In this way, Singh's reputation as a fair and upright officer spread.

### **Using participatory management as a method to handle a difficult situation – The case of Ganesh Solanki**

Forests of Bharuch district in south Gujarat are divided into two territorial Forest Divisions: the major portion falls under the jurisdiction of Rajpipla (East) Division and a small portion is under the jurisdiction of Rajpipla (West) Division. Rajpipla (East) Division manages a semi-moist deciduous patch of about 1145 sq. km of good forest. Tribal population inhabits the entire forest tract. Illegal tree felling, smuggling of timber and encroachment of forestland are a major forest menace.

In 1990, a dead body was found in the Rajpipla (East) forests. Promptly, it was made out among the local inhabitants that forest officials were involved in the killing. The forest officials had to face governmental enquiry on the one hand and also had to handle investigations and protests by the NGOs on the other. About 8000 trees were felled as a mark of protest. The backlash was so strong and violent that many forest check posts, forest offices

and government property were damaged. Stones were pelted on the vehicles of the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police. Things were in a very heated condition.

The government realized that the situation was getting out of control, and hence transferred Mr. Ganesh Solanki to Rajpipla (East) Forests Division in early March 1991 (although he joined after 5<sup>th</sup> April), to take control of the situation. In the mean time, the dead body of another tribal was found in the forest on 25 March 1991. This led to a 'mild agitation' against forest officials. This time, about 1800 trees were felled in the protest. However, the transferring out of the previous officer and inducting Ganesh in his place was expected to send a strong signal to the local tribal people that the government was serious about addressing the problem. It was also expected that this move would help to cool frayed tempers of the locals and rapidly restore the situation to normalcy.

Another incident of conscious firing by a forest official took place in the same area in early-October 1991. The forester was on his regular patrol during the daytime. He saw Kanti Bhai Vasava cutting a tree along with two more persons, whom he could not recognize. He tried to go to the site and catch them, but they fled. In the evening, Kanti Bhai came to the forester's residence in a drunken state and tried to break the door using an axe. The forester was away (he was camping in Gavan village) and hence the door was closed. When a local villager informed the forester about the previous night's incident, the forester decided to return to his headquarters. As he approached his quarters, he found Kanti Bhai running towards him and apprehended that Kanti Bhai was coming to attack him. The forester had a 12-bore service gun with him and fired at Kanti Bhai. Kanti Bhai was injured. The police was informed and a First Information Report (FIR) was lodged.

When Ganesh took charge, he decided to protect the forests of his jurisdiction in a more planned fashion. Accordingly, the RFO was sent to contact key persons in the key villages under the jurisdiction of Ganesh, to discuss with them clearly about the situation and solicit their cooperation. Village Forest Committees were requested to patrol forest areas in their vicinity and calm down the sentiments of the people. The local leaders of the range headquarters were asked to attend a meeting to explain the situation. Ganesh also met district officials and explained the events that led to the situation of firing by the forester, and solicited the cooperation of the officials.

Ganesh monitored the situation every six hours, during the first three days. Not even a single tree was felled. Key local leaders felt happy at the manner of handling the situation by the forest department officials. People's participation got invigorated due to intensive contacts and meetings that were arranged. Ganesh reviewed the situation after a week and put the management of the area on track. The staff developed faith in Ganesh's transparent and well-intentioned leadership. He issued a letter of appreciation to the local Police Sub-Inspector (SI) with a copy to the SP for his smooth handling of situation and for cooperating in the protection of the forest. The police SI was thrilled and after this, he always paid a visit to Ganesh whenever the latter camped at the headquarters.

Surely, Ganesh had a few uncomfortable moments with his boss, Mr. Pathan, during his phone briefings of the situation from time to time. Ganesh explained the intricacies of the issue. He assured his boss that in the future, he would ensure that such incidents do not re-

occur. Pathan felt unhappy that such incidents would tarnish the entire image of administration that he was trying to build. Pathan was known to be a pioneer Forest Officer, known for his participatory management style. In due course, Pathan felt comfortable at the manner in which Ganesh handled the situation. He asked Ganesh if he could render any help. Ganesh was happy that Pathan reposed confidence in him. The greatest benefit that Ganesh achieved was the consolidation of his conviction in people's power. His staff understood that forest protection can be improved with popular support and even the most serious situation was not beyond control.

**An effort to introduce a rational system to help the poorest of the poor SC/ST people – The case of Rakesh Sharma, Managing Director of Pataliputra State Development Corporation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Limited**

Rakesh Sharma, an officer in the prestigious IAS for about 5 years, was posted as the Managing Director of Pataliputra State Development Corporation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Limited (PSDCSCSTL) in 1996. This organization was established in 1971 at Janakpuri, the capital of the state. It had the explicit objective of uplifting the socio-economic status of the people belonging to SC/ST communities of Pataliputra state, by providing them necessary financial help in the form of low- interest bearing loans and subsidies so as to engage them gainfully in tailor-made technically and financially viable self-employment schemes / projects. Further, the corporation used to provide subsidized loans to landless and houseless SC/ST people for the purpose of buying agricultural land / construction of houses.

Additionally, considering the potential in the transport sector in Pataliputra State, the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Financial and Development Corporation (NSFDC) had started financing the State Corporations in various states on a massive scale to purchase and give vehicles like autos, jeeps, mini lorries and taxies to the SC/ST beneficiaries.

The broad policy of the Corporation was to disburse loans to the SC/ST people having an annual family income of less than Rs.22,000/- per year. This ceiling was set to be twice the annual income that defined the poverty line. The funds to the beneficiaries were disbursed at an interest rate of 6% per annum (Year-1996) at a time when the commercial banks were charging an interest rate of 12 to 14% per annum. Further, the guarantee conditions insisted by the Corporation for loans were very reasonable and not beyond the capacity of the beneficiaries to easily furnish. The project cell of the Corporation introduced various schemes with loan amounts ranging from Rs.10,000/- to Rs.5,50,000/- Typically the loans were recovered in 60 monthly installments. However, neither the Government of India nor the State Government issued any guidelines as to how to select the beneficiaries of the various schemes from among the thousands of applicants that the Corporation received on an on-going basis.

***Antecedents of the policy***

When Rakesh took charge of the Corporation as Managing Director, a politician headed the Board of the Corporation, as the Chairperson. A lot of funds were lying unutilized with the Corporation, while at the same time many applications for loans under various schemes were pending disposal. Rakesh called for a Board meeting in order to form a committee to select

beneficiaries among the vast number of applicants and disburse loans to them. It was revealed during the meeting that the Corporation had no policy guidelines to select beneficiaries for its various schemes.

Earlier a committee consisting of three Board Directors headed by the part-time Chairperson used to select the beneficiaries based on personal interviews. Rakesh also got to know that no skill test was being conducted while selecting the beneficiaries. Moreover, influential people who were close to the part-time Chairperson were actually putting some of the vehicles purchased from funds disbursed by the corporation to SC/ST beneficiaries to commercial use for private benefit. It was clear to Rakesh that the Committee headed by the part-time Chairperson was deciding matters without any rational norms, and was disbursing large sums of public money without any transparent and objective system for identification of the beneficiaries.

Rakesh discovered that in the past some of the administrators had obliged the illegal requests made by the elected representatives, keeping in view the desirability of having smooth relations with them, since in a democracy the elected representatives are the ultimate masters. In the whole process, the elected representatives (politicians) used to recommend applicants who were their near and dear ones. Alternately they would take bribes from the applicants thus vitiating the fairness of the selection process. The result was that many people who were otherwise eligible and deserved the state generosity, but could not influence either the administrator or the politician in power, were being deprived of the benefit.

Rakesh felt the social objective of the state to help deserving people in the society by using the taxpayers' money was being defeated. Having realized the gravity of the situation at a macro level and being averse to allowing degeneration to set into the administration, Rakesh set about trying to find ways of reducing the discretion of the administrators in power and increasing objectivity in the process of selection. This was possible only by evolving rational guidelines based on transparent and objective criteria for the selection of beneficiaries.

### ***The process of policy formulation***

Rakesh arranged a brain storming session involving some of the sincere officers and staff of the Corporation. Together they evolved a set of rational and objective criteria, for selection of applicants for each of the various schemes. The criteria included: skills, educational and technical qualifications, family responsibilities, type of housing, personality characteristics, etc. of the applicants for the various schemes being offered by the corporation. Suitable weightages were assigned to each of these factors. The list of certificates of the applicants that needed to be verified was finalized. Modalities for conducting the skill tests for each of the schemes of the Corporation was worked out.

The guidelines were placed before the Board. The Board was divided as to whether to approve the new policy guidelines introduced by the Managing Director or to stick to the earlier policy. However, the part-time Chairperson overruled all the logical arguments and decided to go ahead with the selection of the beneficiaries by a Committee of the Board of Directors, headed by himself, as was the case in the past. Accordingly, he directed Rakesh to

fix suitable dates for conducting the interviews at various districts in the state and to dispatch call letters to the applicants.

***Interaction with policy elite of the state and the results***

Rakesh approached the Principal Secretary SC/ST and explained to him that social justice would not be done to the poorest of the poor among SC/ST people, unless rational norms based on objective selection criteria were followed in selecting the beneficiaries. However, the Principal Secretary, who was to retire in a couple of months, expressed his helplessness in the matter. Subsequently, with the permission of the Principal Secretary, Rakesh called on the Minister of the Department, apprised him about the matter in detail and sought his intervention. However, the Minister humiliated Rakesh in front of his other hangers-on and retorted, 'Stop being smart. We do not need your clever ideas on how we should run the corporation. Follow the directives of the Chairperson of the Corporation, keeping in view the need to spend all the funds meant for development programs at an early date, especially since the State Assembly elections are fast approaching.'

Rakesh had no option but to schedule the interviews for the selection of beneficiaries. In the hope of release of Election Notification by the Chief Election Commissioner of India (CEC) for conducting the Pataliputra State Assembly Elections, which were to take place very soon, Rakesh tried to deliberately delay the process of scheduling the interviews. He took one-week's casual leave hoping that these delaying tactics would help him postpone the selection of beneficiaries for the time being. As luck would have it, a few days after starting the interviews, the CEC issued the Election Notification and also ordered that the Model Code of Conduct would come into implementation with immediate effect.

Rakesh swiftly sought the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer of the State (CEO) regarding the correctness of selection of beneficiaries, to confer financial benefits, by a committee headed by a politician of the then ruling party. The CEO opined that such selection process would definitely violate the Model Code of Conduct and advised him to postpone the process till after the Election process was completed. Accordingly, the matter was informed to the Principal Secretary SC/ST and all interviews were postponed indefinitely. The same was informed to the applicants through press releases in all the districts of the state.

***Change of guard at all levels -renewed efforts for policy formulation and results***

In the State Assembly Elections, the ruling party was defeated and consequently a new Minister and a new Chairperson took over their respective positions. Since lots of funds were lying unutilized, they were deposited in National Banks in interest bearing Fixed Deposits for quite some time. Rakesh approached the new Chairperson, explained to him all the developments and placed the guidelines once again before the next Board meeting. The Board, though convinced about the logic of the guidelines, forwarded it to the State Government for a decision on the matter.

Rakesh approached the new Secretary of SC/ST Department and subsequently the Minister and convinced both of the need to implement the guidelines recommended by him, in the interest of social justice and also because a duty was cast upon the state government-run

corporation to be accountable to the general public. As a consequence of these exercises, the State Government of Pataliputra issued a G.O. approving the guidelines for selection of beneficiaries for the various schemes of the Corporation, as forwarded by the Managing Director.

### *Method of implementation*

Based on the new guidelines approved by the state government, Rakesh speeded up the selection process of beneficiaries, thus trying to ensure that the public funds could speedily reach the beneficiaries in a transparent manner, without any leakage. Rakesh and his team introduced relevant skill tests for various schemes (like driving test for transport scheme) during the process of selection. This ensured that the financial benefit reached the beneficiary who had the appropriate skills that were required for the respective scheme. Details of the selection of beneficiaries were first telegraphically informed to the beneficiaries directly soon after the interviews to eliminate chances of insiders in the corporate office taking advantage of knowing the information and seeking payment from successful candidates for the same.

### *Consequences*

With the State Government's approval on the guidelines, the committee constituted by the Board conducted interviews with the Managing Director as one of the members. The poorest among the poor SC/ST applicants, who satisfied the various criteria laid out were selected for the loans irrespective of their political affiliations. After the completion of the selection process, the grievances of the rejected applicants were handled in a very transparent manner by placing before them the norms that were followed in the selection process and also by displaying the marks that were allotted to all the beneficiaries that were placed above them in the merit list. Everybody appreciated such a transparent policy. This resulted in creation of trust between the beneficiaries and the Management of the Corporation.

However the new system of selection of beneficiaries was difficult for politicians to digest. This was only natural, since the selection process as it was implemented, reduced the potential of the ruling party politicians in conferring benefits on their party workers. Various interest groups started working overtime to scuttle the system instituted so painstakingly by Rakesh. They pressurized the Chairperson and the Minister to change the system of selection of beneficiaries, and once again the guidelines were brought up for discussion in the subsequent Board meeting.

A concerted attempt was made by the Board to water down the guidelines and a proposal was mooted to revamp the guidelines totally and increase the marks allotted to the personality test in a disproportionate manner, thus providing the necessary handle to the politicians for discretion. The proposal generated heated discussions and resulted in a stalemate between the Managing Director and the other Directors. Rakesh was transferred from the Corporation. Rakesh however resolved that he would not allow the idealism with which he joined the IAS to die, because of this setback.

### **An attempt to usher transparency into the system – The case of Salman Ahmed, Collector, Nalanda district**

Mr. Salman Ahmed had a good track record as an IAS officer in the Magadh Cadre. He joined the cadre in 1994 after his master's degree in industrial management from IIT, Kanpur. He was posted as Collector of Nalanda district in January 1999. This was perhaps the most sensitive posting in the state at the level of collectors, as it is politically very strategic. To give an idea of the clout the district carries, it was the erstwhile capital of the state till about 40 years ago, and even now four ministers of the state cabinet come from this district. To this day the police headquarters and high court of the state of Magadh are in Pataliputra, the headquarters of Nalanda district.

The elected body of Pataliputra Municipal Corporation was dissolved in November 2001 due to corruption charges against the elected councilors. Thus in addition to his normal role as collector of Pataliputra from May 2001, he was made the administrator of the Pataliputra Municipal Corporation. This position could have been filled by an elected MLA or alternately by another IAS officer. The CM had faith in the abilities of Mr. Salman.

As the administrator of the Pataliputra Municipal Corporation, Salman found that public works for several tens of lacs of rupees were being awarded in a haphazard manner, without any due processes. Much of this was through oral instructions from the city MLA, who also happened to be the Minister for Urban Development. This was usually justified by showing the work as an emergency work. Salman was surprised to note that significant amounts were being paid to the same parties for undertaking the same work year after year, and there was no improvement in the condition of the roads and drains. It was clear that the contracts were being awarded based on patronage and with little regard to capability of the contractors. The local mafia lord Ranjit Singh was closely involved in various construction projects and his hand was everywhere. The value of contracts awarded each year for roads and drains was about Rs. 5 crores, and Salman being a conscientious officer, wanted to see that these works are at least awarded based on merit. Moreover, soon after the floods of July 2001, the road conditions were so bad that Salman did not feel it appropriate to fritter away scarce financial resources.

#### ***Attempting to institute the tendering system for contracts***

Salman set about the task of instituting the tendering system for all government contracts in the municipal corporation. This was clearly not palatable to the Minister for Urban Development, who wanted to keep the contractor lobby under his control, and award the contracts to his loyalists. Salman's efforts to convince the minister on the merits of the tendering system were of no avail, as he clearly did not want the system to be introduced. The minister tried to influence the executive engineer of the municipal corporation to scuttle the process at any cost. Fortunately the executive engineer was also a person of integrity and did not give in to the minister's request.

Salman realized the futility of direct confrontation with the politicians. He had seen enough bureaucrats who lost out in such battles with the politicians. He decided that patience was the

only way to handle it. After three long meetings with the minister, and showing his firmness in a polite manner, perhaps the Minister realized that it was better to go by Salman's proposal.

***The tendering system is introduced but there is no significant change in the contracting process***

By January 2002, Salman and his team introduced the tendering system. It was conceived of as a good system. People who learnt of it appreciated Salman and his colleagues. However, there was no significant change in the contracting process. Right from collection of tender application forms to their submission, the process was tightly controlled by the mafia don Ranjit Singh. No one who had not made a deal with him could have access to the tender forms, and any aspiring contractor had to make a significant payment to him. He would physically assault or even kill anyone who dared to collect the tender application forms or submit completed tender forms without his explicit approval. Works started in March/April 2002, and Salman realized that the new system was not bringing in any qualitative improvement in the execution of the projects.

Salman did all that he could to usher in a new era of transparency into the contracting process of the municipal corporation. He had taken on a powerful minister and in his own style convinced the minister of the merits of the proposed system. Although the system was being sabotaged by the mafia, he was more determined than ever to look newer ways to achieve the goals that he and his team set for themselves. His primary objective was to usher in an era of transparency and ensure that public money is not squandered away. He found the solution through technology. Any contractor who wanted to bid for a contract could download the application form electronically. The submission of the completed form could also be done electronically. The results of a tender process were likewise displayed transparently, and could be accessed through the internet. When the system was fully in place, the mafia found that they had lost their hold and had no way to scuttle the system any more. Salman felt a deep sense of satisfaction that his untiring efforts finally paid off. Even if he moved out of that position, it would be difficult for his successor to reintroduce the old system, since now genuine contractors were awarded contracts and work was actually getting done at the field level.

**Dilemmas of Personal Relationships – the case of Aparna Shah, Director, Social Development Department, Government of Rajasthan**

Aparna Shah, an officer from the IAS with about ten years of service, was currently posted as the Director of the Department of Social Development (Directorate). A person known for her integrity, straightforwardness and no-nonsense attitude, she looked forward to doing some good work along with her peers in the organization to help the poor in the state. But little did she know about the animosities prevailing within the Department of Social Development (DSD), especially between the Director of the Directorate and the Managing Director of the Corporation, a RAS (state administrative service) officer. Much of this animosity was the result of a long and historical legacy.

Things were never smooth between the Directorate and the Social Development Corporation (SDC) for a long time now. The Director was always an officer from the IAS, while the

Managing Director (MD) of the Corporation, was typically from the state service, the Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS). Hierarchically, both reported to the Secretary to the Government, Department of Social Development, who typically was an IAS officer with over 25 years experience. In addition the Director for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the Secretary for State SC/ST Commission, both of who are from RAS, also report to the Secretary to the Government. In terms of resources, the total budget of the department is about Rs.4,000 million per year, of which over 80 percent is controlled by the Directorate. This fact as well as the fact that the Director is from the IAS while the other three department heads are from RAS, was a source of serious friction in the working of the department during the best of times.

The Directorate was the largest both in terms of size as well as budgets and program outreach. It dealt with all regulatory, statutory and developmental functions of the department while the Corporation broadly dealt with the income generation activities for women. The release of nearly all funds to the SDC was through the Directorate (the Director had to countersign all release bills). This was an irritant for the Managing Director.

For various reasons alluded to the above, some of which were real grievances on the part of the SDC and others were perceived, there was always a feud running between the Corporation and the Directorate. The most common complaint being that the Directorate was bullying the SDC. The Directorate in turn felt that the SDC was not sensitive to the issues raised by the field staff (who were all employees of the Directorate), especially in the implementation of various programs. In the past, there were occasional showdowns. However, in all these cases, the Director by virtue of being senior IAS officer (while the MD was from RAS), got his/her way through. The Secretary to the Government, almost always a senior woman IAS officer, who was overall responsible for the Department of Social Development, played a neutral role in most of the cases, though one would suspect that their sympathies lay more with the Directorate (as almost each one of them worked as Directors some years back!).

When Aparna took over as Director, she soon realized the ground realities of her situation. She detested the existence of friction between colleagues, for in her view it was not productive. And as luck would have it, soon after she took over as Director, the incumbent MD of SDC, a person with dubious track record, was transferred, and in his place, Brajesh, an RAS officer whom Aparna knew for over a decade, was posted. Aparna and Brajesh belonged to the same batch (although one of them was from IAS and the other from RAS) and were together for some time in a training institute together during their early days with the government.

### *Off to a fine start*

Aparna and Brajesh took stock of the situation in the SDC and decided that they will start a new era in the department. During the first week itself, the duo planned out a comprehensive strategy for the department, planned joint tours and inspections, and decided to present a united front to the employees.

The first taste of sourness came about four months later. It was a trivial incident. All the staffs of the Directorate and SDC were to attend the wedding reception of one of their colleagues.

The usual ritual was that staffs of all four departments leave an hour early in the evening to attend a reception. On this particular occasion, the SDC staff was not granted permission to leave office one hour early to attend the reception. When Aparna learnt about this, she called up Brajesh and casually mentioned that since a common bus was arranged, his staff could join the others. Brajesh's silence over the phone was a clear indication to Aparna that he resented her calling him on the subject.

Soon after this incident, Brajesh informed Aparna that he would not be available for the joint tour to Jaisalmer, which was planned a few weeks earlier. Aparna was curious to know the reason for such an about-turn in Brajesh's attitude. She discreetly enquired from a mutual friend, who explained the consuming need for Brajesh to be seen as the 'best,' and be held in awe by everyone around.

### *The escalation of animosity*

Shortly thereafter, Brajesh fired the next salvo. Three departments in the Rajasthan government, viz., Women & Child Development, Social Welfare and Education were the only ones exempted from the cabinet level approval for creation or abolition of posts in their respective departments. Instead the concerned directors had to present their cases before the empowered committee consisting of very senior bureaucrats. In a sense, it short-circuits a long-winded process, and goes through a 'single window' approval process (referred to as the empowered committee). By convention, the Director presents the cases. Before going to such a meeting, the concerned four department heads compare notes for any common issues. Aparna was puzzled to find Brajesh trying to steam-roll his way through at the meeting of the empowered committee. He mooted a fresh proposal for induction of thirty Assistant Directors, at the field level, without any prior discussion with her. The logic given was that the MD wanted to have control over his own staff. Aparna argued in the presence of many senior bureaucrats, against such a proposal. She presented her reasons why this would not be appropriate. Brajesh was visibly upset at the stand taken by Aparna in such a public forum, comprising of secretaries from various government departments.

The next confrontation related to shifting of a scheme from the Directorate to the SDC at the behest and full backing of the Secretary to Government (DSD). The decision involved shifting the scheme in 'as is' condition, along with the funds. The issue got complicated when it came to details. Aparna instructed the concerned officer from the Directorate to go personally to the Corporation and hand over all the records to them.

Almost two months later, Aparna was shocked when she came to know that the officer whom she had deputed to SDC for handing over of the scheme had not yet completed the handing over and had not yet resumed his duties at the Directorate. She immediately phoned Brajesh. The reply from Brajesh on the phone was curt: "Your man has brought in records which are utterly disorganized. The SDC cannot be penalized for the Directorate's inaction over the years. Let your man be with us for the next two months till things get settled."

The tone and tenor of Brajesh perplexed Aparna. Brajesh had never raised this issue when he met her in person several times during the intervening two months. Aparna rationalized to herself that it was true that things were in pretty bad shape with regard to the scheme. She

immediately called her Joint Director (JD) and asked her to issue a note deputing this person for two more months to the SDC. This note was promptly issued.

However, at the end of four months, the officer had to be withdrawn for legislature work, as the officer sent for handing over was crucial for the legislature work. In one of the routine review meetings with the Secretary to Government, the MD protested regarding the withdrawal of the officer. Aparna made it clear that the Directorate itself had staff shortage problems, and her view prevailed. Aparna could sense the sarcasm of Brajesh all through the discussion. But again she decided to act magnanimously, as she did not want to stoop to the level of the MD.

### *The last straw*

Things came to a head-on collision when Brajesh suspended an Assistant Director in SDC, Mr. Pandurang. Pandurang was on deputation to the SDC. Pandurang was known to be an efficient but a cantankerous officer. Successive Directors ignored the negative aspects and made use of his subject knowledge to a great extent.

The suspension caused a lot of resentment in the department as Brajesh had not given Pandurang an opportunity to explain his stand. Aparna was out of station and in her absence the issue of Pandurang's suspension was discussed hotly in the officers' union meeting. The union demanded that Pandurang be reinstated immediately, else they threatened to boycott the work of SDC. They also wanted an apology from the MD for acting arbitrarily. When Aparna appeared in office on Monday to chair the monthly review meeting, the representatives of the union demanded an immediate resolution to the issue. After patiently hearing their views, Aparna felt that Brajesh had acted high-handedly. It was clear that Pandurang reported technically to the Director, and the MD had no authority to suspend him. However, even if the MD had decided to do so, the suspension order had to be ratified by the Director after due process. When the entire staff announced that they would not cooperate in the review of WDC work unless the issue relating to Pandurang's suspension was resolved, Brajesh did not comment. Nor did he appear to make any effort at reconciliation or explain his position.

Determined to find possible ways of getting out of this impasse, Aparna requested Brajesh to join her for a cup of coffee in her office. Brajesh refused her request categorically: "I do not want to be influenced by anyone on this," he said, adding that he was well within his powers to do what he did. All this was enacted in front of the entire staff of about 30 officers.

Aparna tried to reason. She said: "It is not the question of your powers, Brajesh. This kind of hardening of sides is of no use to anyone. Can we not find a way out?" Brajesh greeted this comment with silence.

The staff that witnessed the inflexible attitude of the MD right in front of them bellowed, "Nothing short of immediate revocation of suspension order will satisfy us".

For Aparna, it was a very awkward moment. She had known Brajesh to be an honest, upright officer. And Pandurang was a known troublemaker, although very efficient at work. But how

could one justify an arbitrary action? She did not want to give in to the pressure of the union. But then, technically they were right. Pandurang had to be given a chance.

### *The grand finale*

Aparna sank into her chair, wondering how to deal with this situation. As an IAS officer she had been through many difficult moments. However each new challenge had its own unique flavor. The present fiasco made her feel that Brajesh was taking advantage of her goodness, and that he did not respect the fact that she was his senior in authority and service. Aparna sensed that the MD was given too long a rope, and it was time for her to assert herself. She dictated a note to her PA, superseding the MD's order.

While the immediate problem was addressed in this confrontationist manner, taking final recourse to a heavy-handed approach, Aparna was no wiser at the end of it all. When two department heads who were supposed to work together for the betterment of the underprivileged are on such a collision course, what role models were they setting for their staff? Looking at the enactment of the unfolding drama between her and the MD, surely each one of the department staff would be emboldened to try to carve out their own little kingdoms to preside over. It would be impossible to discipline the staff. Bad elements in the system could use this situation to their advantage, and to further their own agenda.

In the system of the government such turf wars, fiefdoms, blinkered ways of functioning within silos, outwitting each other in meetings, scheming against each other, etc. has regrettably become a colossal waste of human energies expended at the expense of badly needed progress for the state and its populace on various development issues that are crying to be addressed. In all this bickering and clashes of bloated egos, the fundamental purpose for which these departments have been set up are often lost sight of. Aparna looked back a decade ago, when she joined the IAS, starry eyed, full of idealism, to give life to her dreams of serving the nation. 'Where did this dream figure in these petty squabbles?' she wondered.

### **Bringing in credibility and foolproof method into the system – The case of Mr. J.S. Bhindra, Special Officer for CET**

The admission process for professional colleges (engineering, medicine, dental, agriculture, veterinary science, pharmacy and home sciences) in various states in India is extremely competitive. With a view of providing equity, the various state governments have evolved very clear norms for the admission process. Given the few college seats available for these streams vis-à-vis the number of aspirants, competition is intense. To give an indication of the competition, a state like Kanishka has a population of about 50 million people. About 50,000 aspirants, who are on the verge of completing their 12<sup>th</sup> grade, appear for these competitive exams. Of these, only 600 candidates succeed in obtaining the admission to medical colleges. A similar number of applicants for engineering college admissions vie for about 2000 seats. The ratio of successful candidates to those who do not make it is thus 1 to about 100 for medical colleges and about 50 for engineering colleges. The difference in the career track between those who get admission in professional colleges and those who do not is vast. Twenty years hence, on the average, those who get admission into professional colleges may earn 10 to 30 times more than those who do not get these admissions. In this context, it is in

reality a make-or-break situation for the aspirants, as the results in these exams largely defines their future lives.

While there are various quotas for admission to various streams, the primary criterion is the marks secured in the Common Entrance Test (CET) that is conducted by the respective states, under the aegis of the Special Officer for CET. Given the contentious nature of the position, which is prone for various controversies, pressures, potential litigation, etc., this is not a sought-after post. Typically an officer from the prestigious Indian Administrative Service (IAS) with 10 to 15 years experience is posted to handle this sensitive position.

### ***Mr. Bhindra takes charge***

Mr. J.S. Bhindra joined the IAS with a strong sense of ideology, and wanted to contribute to the creation of a better India through public service. This flame of ideology lasted through the about ten years that he had been in service. His family saw very little of him, as he was consumed with a passion to serve the larger society. He was one who by nature 'called a spade a spade', and would mince no words in giving his perspectives to his superior officers in the cadre as well as to the political bosses.

Bhindra took charge as the Special officer of the CET for the state of Kanishka on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1995. The CET was scheduled to start on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1995. He had no prior experience in the Education Department. His first task was to visit his office and open the secure locker where the question papers, etc. are stored. He found one set of question papers for each of the four subjects, viz., Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology, for the ensuing CET exam. Bhindra had a briefing with his Confidential Assistant (CA) who apprised him of the various intricacies relating to the procedures for conducting of the exam. With the exams only 40 days away, Bhindra developed an idea of how to go ahead with conducting the exam. On glancing through a set of available question papers, and going through the entire correspondence available in the confidential files relating to the CET-1995, Bhindra was perplexed to find the following:

1. There were many corrections made by hand in the manuscripts, but there was no information in the files as to who had made these corrections. Typically, corrections if any, to the question papers set by the paper setter, have to be made by a duly appointed moderator. Convention requires that the paper setter and the moderator are both eminent professors from out of the state, to minimize chances of leakage of the question papers, to provide an impartial perspective, and to protect the public interest.
2. A perusal of the correspondence with the printer revealed that the question papers were forwarded to the printing press for CET-1995 in August 1994 itself, i.e., about nine months before the actual date of the exam of CET-1995. Convention mandates that these question papers are sent by the Special Officer (CET) about than 30 days before the exam to the printing press, to minimize the chances of leakage of the question papers. This norm is adhered to, although the credentials of the printer may be impeccable.
3. The needless hurry in which the question papers for the CET-1995 were made ready a full nine months before the exams by Maruti Dev, the then Special Officer for CET, was

intriguing. The CET-1994 was completed in June 1994. The evaluation and declaration of results is a one-month process thereafter. The next and crucial step is counseling and allotment of seats in the various colleges to the successful candidates, which takes another two months. Based on this schedule of activities, all the events relating to CET-1994 got completed by September 1994.

4. Two other aspects were glaring. Firstly, there were many other entrance exams to be conducted in the intervening period, before the next CET, i.e., CET-1995. These include exams for Post-graduate medical admissions. For these other entrance exams, Bhindra found out that only rudimentary preparation was made. The concentration on CET-1995, when there were more important deadlines to be met in the current academic year was puzzling. The fact that Maruti Dev retired on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1994, made this even more puzzling.
5. No correspondence with the professors was available as far as moderation of the question papers was concerned. The typical process for finalizing the question papers before printing involves a two-step process. The first is to send the syllabus for the 12<sup>th</sup> standard curriculum to a professor from among the confidential panel of professors for each subject. The professor usually takes about two to three months to set about 100 objective type questions, and also provides the answer key. In order to ensure that the questions are given from the prescribed syllabus only, to ensure that the standard of questions adhere to the standard of the 12<sup>th</sup> class syllabus, to ensure correctness of questions and answer keys, and finally to ensure that the given questions are neither of too high a standard nor of too low a standard, the question paper and the answer key are sent to an independent moderator (again chosen from the panel), who takes about a month to verify the questions and answers. This moderation process ensures that there are no errors, inconsistencies, vagueness or other unpleasant surprises in the question papers as well as the answer keys. Convention requires that the question paper setter and the moderator are different individuals, and chosen from the panel of eminent professors from out of the state.

Bhindra realized that the situation at hand was serious. He tracked down Maruti Dev to seek clarifications regarding the moderators and premature setting of the question papers of CET-1995. Maruti Dev informed him that he got the question papers moderated by some local professors in the state. Further, based on his prior knowledge in Biology, Maruti Dev himself corrected some of the questions in the subject. He did not have any convincing reason for the premature setting and forwarding of question papers to the printer.

### ***Bhindra's conclusions***

Bhindra concluded that going ahead with the CET-1995 with the existing set of question papers that were left as a legacy by Maruti Dev, especially after having sensed that these question paper copies could possibly be available with persons other than Special Officer (CET), would not be correct. He put together a detailed note addressed to the Principal Secretary (PS), narrating all relevant facts. The final conclusion in his note was unambiguous: 'The examination cannot be conducted with the existing set of question papers.' Bhindra in his note recommended to the Principal Secretary that the CET-1995 be postponed by at least

two months to give time to restart the entire process relating to setting and moderating the question papers.

As the examinations were already delayed, the PS felt it inappropriate to change the examination date. Despite being shocked to note the developments with regard to the premature setting of question papers and the moderation of the question papers through local professors, the PS felt it would be impossible to get a fresh set of question papers prepared, moderated and printed in the available time of 40 days. He felt that printing the existing set of question papers would provide a standby. Bhindra however politely disagreed with this view. According to him, printing this set would be a colossal waste of public money, as it would cost the government more than Rs. 1.5 million, which would be a wasteful expenditure.

The meeting ended with the PS asking Bhindra to go ahead with the efforts to get a new set of question papers readied, and at the same time arrange to print the existing set of question papers. Bhindra decided to take up the challenge of setting a new set of question papers and give his best to ensure the smooth conduct of the CET-1995, which was now only thirty-eight days away.

### ***Operation CET-1995***

Bhindra had to ensure that both the professors and the printer complete their respective tasks in a total time of 38 days. Accordingly Bhindra contacted the empanelled professors over the telephone, explained the constraints and the urgency of the situation, and requested them to set the question papers and also get them moderated/checked at their level itself, through competent professors on whom they have full confidence. He gave them sixteen days to do this. Initially, all the professors categorically refused to take up the job citing the limited time frame. However, Bhindra's serious and sincere efforts to convince them of the need to rise to the occasion paid off. The professors finally agreed to take up the responsibility.

Meanwhile, Bhindra proceeded to the printer to print the available set of question papers that were set during the tenure of Maruti Dev. Being aware of the fact that printing mistakes in the question papers could cause legal problems, Bhindra personally did the proofreading after the professional proofreaders of the printing press had done their job. The printing had to be necessarily done in an out-of-state printing establishment that was known for its credibility.

As promised, all the professors framed, got moderated/checked and forwarded to Bhindra a new set of question papers and answer keys within the stipulated time frame. These were also similarly printed and airlifted to the Special Officer (CET) four days before the date of the CET. This enabled Bhindra to conduct the CET-1995 successfully on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1995, using the freshly set question papers. With this mammoth task accomplished, Bhindra heaved a sigh of relief and felt satisfied that he had risen successfully to the challenge that he encountered when he took over as the Special Officer (CET).

### ***Bhindra searches for solutions to address allegations in the previous years, relating to office of CET***

Simultaneous with other on-going preparations for CET-95, after having set in motion all processes for preparing a new set of question papers, Bhindra focused his attention on the ongoing allegations being reported in the local media, both in print and on TV, about possible widespread malpractices in the previous years. All questions in the entrance examinations were objective type. The answer sheet was called 'OMR Answer Sheet,' which was a single sheet of pre-printed stationary, wherein the candidate had to write his name and roll number, and had to darken the appropriate slot for the chosen answer to each question, using a pencil. The alleged malpractice involved tampering with this answer sheet by erasing any wrong answers and correcting them, once they reached the office of Special Officer (CET). It was being alleged that the staff of the office of CET were collecting huge amounts of money from willing candidates for such tampering, so as to assure them high scores to enable them to obtain seats in the chosen professional colleges. Some candidates who could afford to pay were willing to do this, since the alternative would be to pay large sums of money as capitation fee for seats in professional colleges in other states.

In response to these allegations, Bhindra searched for solutions and found an excellent and foolproof system that was being practiced in other high security examinations, such as recruitment examinations for banks and admission tests for prestigious management institutions. This system involved bar coding of the answer sheets. Each answer sheet had a detachable stub that had the same bar code. Upon receipt of the completed answer sheet from the candidate after the examination was over, the officer in-charge of the examination center would detach the stub (bearing the name of the candidate, roll number, subject and the bar code) from the rest of the OMR answer sheet. After detaching the stub, the OMR answer sheet just had the bar code and the answers.

These two components, i.e., the detachable stub and the answer sheet were then packed and sealed in separate covers, and for each examination center, and would then be sent to the office of the Special Officer (CET). The OMR portion would be evaluated through computer scanning for tabulation of the scores without the identity of the candidate being known to anybody, the only linkage being the bar code. The process would be repeated for each of the subjects and the final scores would be compiled, leading to finalization of the merit list based on bar code. Only then would the stubs be subjected to computer scanning to access the information contained in the stubs, such as the name and roll number of the candidate.

Finally, the databases that have been created separately by scanning both the stubs and the OMR answer portions would be matched by the computer through the bar-code, to evolve the final merit list with the names of the candidates, roll numbers and the marks for individual subjects as well as the total score. The merit list thus obtained cannot be edited as the source code of the software dealing with this bar code system would not be available even with the chief officer presiding over the examinations. Instead they would be stored in the locker of another independent authority. This system was proven and was totally tamper-proof. It had the potential of regaining back to the office of the CET and the government, the credibility that was hitherto lost in the eyes of the student community, the parents and the general public. Bhindra found a company in Mumbai that was pioneering this concept in the country. He even contacted a renowned professor in one of the prestigious technology institutions in the country, who was considered an authority on this technology.

Bhindra had to overcome resistance among the staff of the computer evaluation cell when he proposed the above system, since they interpreted such a proposal as acceptance of the allegations. They felt slighted that Bhindra suspected their integrity. Bhindra convinced them that it was not enough that integrity is maintained internally. It should additionally be made explicit and perceptible to the outside world.

In the heat of the run-up to CET-1995, and having worked out the details of the above-described foolproof evaluation, Bhindra approached the PS with a proposal to implement this technology for CET-95 and sought approval to implement the same. The PS was skeptical and expressed his reluctance to introduce such innovations. He feared that the whole system might collapse and therefore showed no interest in experimenting with it. Bhindra had no option but to shelve the proposal, as there was no way he could implement the same without the full support of the PS. Implementation needed financial and administrative sanction of the PS. Furthermore, in the unlikely event of any problem, the PS would have to stand solidly by Bhindra. Since the support of the PS was totally lacking, Bhindra had to obediently abandon a creative solution to the difficult problem of warding off the tampering allegations.

However Bhindra did not want to give up on his efforts to address the problem of tampering allegations. He proposed to the PS that a committee consisting of eminent persons in the society like retired judges of the Hon'ble High Court, representatives of students and parents selected at random, representatives of the media, and a group of senior IAS officers of outstanding integrity and reputation, be formed to oversee the evaluation process in the office of the CET. The PS conceded to this suggestion in a modified form, agreeing that the committee could consist of six senior IAS officers. Accordingly the committee was formed. Bhindra apprised the committee from time to time on the developments relating to the conduct of CET-95.

### *Five months of harrowing events*

Soon after the exam some candidates wrote to Bhindra stating that there were six errors in the question papers. He forwarded these six problematic questions and answer keys to the concerned professors for their views. On obtaining confirmation from the concerned professors that all six of the questions had errors, he took necessary measures to delete them from the evaluation and adjusted the marks through a process of normalization. The same was notified to the candidates through the press, during the declaration of results. Soon thereafter Bhindra started the counseling process for the successful candidates, based on the declared results. While this was in progress, some candidates approached the Honorable High Court praying for a stay on the counseling process, citing that there were more mistakes in the question papers than those notified by the Special Officer (CET). This led to a series of contentious litigations in the High Court and Supreme Court and as a consequence the on-going counseling had to be abandoned.

For instance, due to the deletion of the six problematic questions and due to the procedure of normalization of scores, decimal points appeared in the score sheets. These score sheets were made available on the CET web site, showing the decimal points. Not all candidates may have seen the press notification. However, when these candidates saw their individual marks subject-wise on the web, and found decimals in these marks, they were perhaps puzzled. This

prompted some of them to challenge the authenticity of the scores before the Hon'ble High Court of Kanishka, praying for verification of the question papers and answer keys by an independent panel of experts to detect other possible errors, and re-evaluation of the papers. The High Court conceded to the request of the petitioners and subjected the whole set of question papers and answer keys to scrutiny by an independent panel of professors.

This process revealed that there were a total of 61 errors in all the question papers together. Thus, a re-evaluation of all the answer sheets, incorporating the changes as revealed in the scrutiny, had to be conducted, necessitating the release of a second merit list. Due to this change in evaluation, the names of some students whose names appeared in the earlier list did not find their names in the second list. This resulted in more litigation. Students, especially those who had got medical seats in the first list but whose names did not figure in the second list were especially vociferous. They approached the Honourable High Court for creation of additional seats to accommodate them.

The litigations in High Court as well as one case filed in the Supreme Court, were successfully sorted out by the commissioner. All this took about four months of time. The Special Officer (CET) restarted the counseling process based on the second merit list, and succeeded in getting all the professional courses started without any significant delay, i.e., by October 1995.

The fact that a panel of six senior IAS officers who were seen as upright oversaw the CET process lent the process very high credibility. There were no allegations raised from any quarters about corruption in the admission process despite all the above problems. As mentioned earlier, corruption in admissions was a serious allegation in earlier years.

Bhindra pursued the bar code idea, and thoroughly tested the same with the help of the professor who had developed the process, as well as a high-security printing press. The system worked perfectly. Bhindra created a file of the same and kept it ready for his successor to implement for future examinations.

The High Court of Kanishka appreciated the efforts of the Special Officer (CET) under the given circumstances. However, the honourable court passed general strictures about the overall process of conducting entrance examinations, and counseled the state to institute tighter and more fool-proof processes in the future. Accordingly, the government appointed a committee of experts to study, analyse in depth the system, and to furnish a comprehensive report. The committee had detailed discussions with Bhindra, among many other stakeholders. The findings of the report were submitted in due course to the government.

As Bhindra prepared for his next posting, he left with a sense of deep satisfaction that he did his best under the most trying of circumstances, and did not shirk responsibility at a very crucial juncture.

### **e-Seva - An initiative taken up by Sanjay Jaju, Collector & District Magistrate, West Godavari District**

In a country like India where bureaucracies are notorious for delivering minimal acceptable levels and quality of service, and often the system needs to be greased to make anything move, where government offices appear as mere repositories of important paper stacked in every nook and corner, where computers have failed to do anything more than generating letters of higher officials, where lack of usage of information technology and the general lethargy of government officials among other factors has hampered the effective delivery of public services, the district of West Godavari (in Andhra Pradesh) has been fortunate to have surpassed all these impediments and experience the fruits of Information Technology at the grassroots level. This has been possible due to the concerted efforts of one man, Mr. Sanjay Jaju, Collector and District Magistrate of the district.

Before Sanjay Jaju took over as the District Collector, the district administration was anything but efficient. Villagers had been silent sufferers of neglect and callous behavior of district and village officials. They had to run around for days to village and taluk offices with their applications to get pension, land records, loans, etc. When they finally got them, they did not come for free. They had to pay hefty bribes to sundry officials who would only then consent to process their requests. At a macro level, very few initiatives were taken by the state government to improve rural economic growth in the district. With more than two-thirds of the district's population of 3.8 million residing in rural areas, the rural populace had no access to vital information regarding markets, products, agriculture, health, weather, education, etc. Women who constitute more than half the rural population were subjected to decades of exploitation, discrimination and inferior treatment vis-à-vis their male counterparts. In short, the district administration badly needed a knowledge worker at the top who could bridge the gap between the rural people and their access to information, deliver government services effectively to marginalized communities. Sanjay Jaju was successful in doing this through his project e-Seva. Through this vehicle, he could fix the responsibilities of the various state government departments and could ensure that they follow the citizens' charter while delivering services.

#### ***Project e-Seva***

Project e-Seva was launched in the early months of the year 2002 and spearheaded by Jaju. It recognizes that the application of information technology as a tool of governance is an effective and transparent approach for the dissemination of information and execution of administrative activities.

e-Seva had two explicit objectives:

- i. providing information vital to the rural communities
- ii. streamlining and simplifying work in government offices to facilitate effective and speedy delivery of services

The project sought to achieve these objectives by leveraging the power of Information Technology. Under this project, web enabled rural information kiosks called e-Seva Kendrams have been setup at the mandal (a sub-district unit of administration) level. Women

self-help groups (SHGs) have been identified and assigned to operate and manage the kiosks, thereby empowering rural women and bridging the gender divide. The e-Seva Kendrams operate on the district administration portal <http://www.westgodavari.org> that provides access to a variety of citizen-to-citizen (C2C) and citizen-to-government (C2G) services.

The portal and the various software packages were developed in-house by members of the district computer center and district self-employment agencies. The SHGs were made to undergo a two-phase training program conducted by the District Computer Training Center as well as APTECH and Training and Technology Development Center, all located in and around the district headquarters, Eluru. The training program familiarized the SHGs to internet concepts, disk operating systems, concepts of Windows & MS Office and provided them training on use of the district portal. The 7-month project saw the establishment of more than 80 rural information kiosks (costing Rs.1 lakh each unit) in different villages of the district. Computers installed in each of these kiosks provide information via a district wide dial-up network, which interacts with the district server that hosted the portal. A unique synchronization technology has been developed to make kiosks work offline, thereby significantly reducing networking and internet costs.

### *Services offered through the e Seva Kendrams*

- *Online filing of complaints and grievances:* Citizens of the district need not wait in queues anymore to meet concerned district officials to lodge complaints regarding basic services such as non-availability of drinking water, non-functioning of fair price shops, or of a government functionary not doing his/her duty. The e-Seva portal takes care of all grievances with utmost speed and promptness. Grievances can be registered by citizens online through the local kiosks, which then get recorded in the central database. The complaint is promptly acknowledged by the government official to whom it has been posted, transferred online and attended to by officials of the respective departments. Not only does the software provide summary statistics and performance summary statements of the individual departments, it also enables the verification and tracking of the status of redressal of grievances online.
- *Online Application Registration:* The earlier system of availing services for the various government programs required rural citizens to be in constant touch with government officials. Getting loans under self-employment schemes, applying for old age pensions, asking for subsidized agricultural inputs, all required interactions with district officials who were more often discourteous, and made the process time consuming and difficult for villagers. Now citizens have a hassle free procedure of obtaining applications and submitting them on-line. The e-Seva kiosks provide the necessary application forms and perform registrations on-line. On submitting the application on-line, the applicant gets an acknowledgement number for his request. This then gets forwarded to the appropriate official who will handle the application. The handling and closure of the application can also be done and monitored on-line.
- *Issuance of Certificates:* An integrated application form for caste, nativity and income certificates, birth and death certificates, as well as other certificates required by citizens from the government can be obtained and submitted online through the e-Seva portal.

Certificates are prepared and made available to applicants at the kiosk itself, avoiding the hassles associated with following-up with different offices.

- *Essential Information Relating to Land and Issuance of Land Record Certificates:* The portal provides crucial information pertaining to land that is useful to farmers. This includes geological information such as the shape and size of plots of land, land forms, soil-related information, economic information related to land use, details on irrigation and crops, information regarding legal rights, registration and taxation, etc. This section of the e-Seva portal also makes land records readily available to farmers online. The computerization of these land records, which was previously monopolized by village accountants, has put an end to the farmer's frustration in obtaining the land record certificates. It has facilitated speedy, transparent and effective delivery of land records to farmers.
- *Online Auction and Bidding:* The e-Seva kiosks offer the facility of online bidding by citizens. They can advertise their products on the portal. These can be anything that rural households would be interested in buying/selling, such as agricultural commodities, farm implements, land, buildings, etc. The self-help groups help in auctioning these products using the medium of the web. This service enables the rural population to make more informed choices relating to the products and services that they wish to buy/sell.
- *Online Market Rates:* Rates of various agricultural commodities are uploaded by each of the e-Seva Kendrams in the district. This helps people in markets elsewhere in the state to know the prevailing market rates and make informed decisions.
- *Matrimonial Services:* One of the important and popular citizen-to-citizen services being provided by the portal is the matrimonial service. This service enables an inexpensive and speedy search of suitable spouses for people wanting to get married. An online marriage bureau has been established wherein prospective brides and grooms place their resumes seeking suitable life partners.
- *Online Civil Supplies Allotment:* This service allows fair price shop dealers to do stock entry online, allows collection of allotment orders online and also provides an organized list of ration card holders. This makes it possible to eliminate names of ineligible citizens from the list, and thereby reduce the hold of unscrupulous persons who want to manipulate the system.
- *Tele-Medicine & Tele-Agriculture:* Tele-Medicine enables patients to post queries pertaining to their ailments online. Wherever appropriate, competent doctors provide online prescriptions for these ailments. Tele-Agriculture addresses many queries related to farm practices and provides appropriate solutions. The farmer can come to the e-Seva Kendram and place his question, which will be appropriately answered by an expert. The weather forecasts made available on this website help farmers in planning their agricultural practices.
- *Forms download:* Through this facility, a citizen can download any form that he may require relating to any government department, at any time.

- *e-Education:* The district administration has a tie-up with the Azim Premji Foundation which supplies educational CDs to the e Seva Kendrams and trains the Kendrams on the use of the CDs. The multimedia, animated, story-based educational content of the CD created in Telugu has been successful in delivering joyful learning to children in primary schools in the district. Schools located in the vicinity of the Seva Kendrams send close to 200 children in batches of 20, to educate children through the CD-based content that has been closely mapped to the school curriculum. The government pays the kendram a fee of Rs. 2 per child per month towards this e-learning service.
- *A source for local communication:* The district administration uses these kiosks as a medium to disseminate important social communication messages to the communities. The portal also allows private companies to advertise their products.
- The e-Seva Kendrams are managed and run solely through the revenues they generate from providing the above commercial services (Table-1). There is no government subsidy to either set up or run these Kendrams. In fact, Sanjay Jaju gives great priority to ensure the financial viability of each of these Kendrams, as he believes this is the key to their long-term sustainability.

### ***Results***

- The project has been conferred several prestigious awards. In 2002, it got the Gender and ICT Award, an award that honors and brings international recognition to innovative and effective projects that enable women to use ICTs (information and communication technologies) for the promotion of gender equality and/or women's empowerment. For two consecutive years (2002 and 2003) e-Seva was presented the CSI National IT Award by the Computer Society of India.
- Allowing women SHGs to run the Kendrams has enabled women to become information mediators and consequently leaders in their communities. In this way, it has helped to bridge the gender divide.
- Each of the Kendrams is generating significant revenues. The average turnover of each Kendram is Rs.8,860 per month. In order to improve their earnings, some centers have adopted innovative methods of revenue generation such as bulk data processing, providing examination result printouts to school children, etc.
- Over 1.5 million online transactions pertaining to various C2C and G2C services were carried out between January 2003 and October 2004. A whopping Rs.350 million was collected against electricity bills during this period. For each bill collected by the SHG workers of the Kendram, the Kendram receives a modest fixed payment of Rs. 1.50.
- Government departments received over 5,000 grievances through the Kendrams within a span of one year of the project inception. Of these, 4,000 were redressed. About 1,10,000 certificates were downloaded through the kiosks, potentially saving Rs.30 million to the

citizens, which they would have otherwise ended up paying to village and district-level officials as bribes for issuance of these certificates.

- December 2004 marked the beginning of the tele-medicine (video conference) activity through the combined efforts of the Kendrams and Primary Health Centres. Over 50 patients are receiving benefits through this initiative everyday.
- By July 2004, the number of students availing the e-learning services being offered by the Kendrams went up to 70,000 from 28,000 in November 2003.

**Table-1: Details of Monthly Revenue Generation of a Typical e-Seva Kendram**

<b>MONTHLY PROJECT ECONOMICS OF A TYPICAL E-SEVA KENDRAM</b>			
<b>Name of the Service</b>	<b>Charge Rs.</b>	<b>Minimum number of services per month</b>	<b>Total Income Rs.</b>
Issuance of Land Record Certificates	15	30	450
Online Auction	5	20	100
Online Bidding	2	20	40
Issuance of certificates	15	50	750
Online application registration	5	20	100
Online filing of complaints and grievances	5	50	250
Online Market rates	1	20	20
Printing copy	5	10	50
Payment of dues (Electricity bills, etc.)	1	2000	2000
Online Civil Supplies allotment	15	20	300
Matrimonial services	5	15	75
Tele-medicine	2	15	30
Tele-agriculture	2	10	20
Forms download	2 per page	100	200
Maintenance of accounts of SHGs	10	200	2000
Consumables download	10	10	100
NOAP acquaintance printing			300
Photos	20 (4 color passport)	30	600
Lamination	10	30	300
Internet browsing	25 per hour	25 hours	525
DTP & Job work	25	50	750
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>8860</b>

### **The Lace Park – An initiative pioneered by Sanjay Jaju, Collector and District Magistrate, West Godavari**

The art of making lace came into the small village Narasapur in Andhra Pradesh during the time of the British Raj. It was apparently taught to the local populace by Irish nuns. What was then looked upon as a hobby by local women has manifested into a small business. This is the only means of livelihood to many families in the villages of Andhra Pradesh. The cotton yarn (raw material) that gets knitted into intricate designs to form products - ranging from purses to bedspreads to clothing - has high artistic value. Unfortunately, artisans are under financial

duress to sell their produce at throw away prices to small traders (middlemen) who in turn make a fortune by selling them in the national and international markets. Artisans, oblivious of the real value of the ornamental fabric their nimble fingers so meticulously weave, accept prices that are as low as Rs. 100 a week or even less for their labour, the raw material being provided by the middlemen. The product sells for much higher value in the international markets.

Recognizing the difficulties of the artisans, Sanjay Jaju resolved to put an end to the exploitation of artisans in the hands of small traders. He recognized that:

- The lace industry must be made a recognized industry.
- Women artisans must be trained to produce products suited to the tastes of end-customers.
- A variety of yarn such as silk, superior grade cotton, etc., must be used to add value to the products.
- Information regarding fashion trends of the garments and furnishings in vogue must be gathered to help make products that match with current trends.
- To ensure that the products command a good price in export markets, the services of an adept fashion designer and execution of work under strict quality standards were considered as essential.

### ***Creation of the Lace Park***

The Government of India (GOI) initiated 'Integrated Rural Development' program aims to integrate rural development in the country through implementation of poverty elimination programs including self-employment schemes, minimum wage employment schemes, encouragement to handicrafts & handlooms and area development programs. Every district in a state has the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), a government body that implements the various schemes and programs entrusted to it by the GOI and the state government. The DRDA is headed by the District Collector in the capacity of the Chairman. Sanjay Jaju drew up an action plan, under the Rural Development program initiative, to give the lace industry its much-deserved facelift. He took inspiration from the hugely successful Amul movement in Gujarat that brought prosperity to farmers in the state. The district administration headed by Sanjay Jaju decided to take active part in the 'lace movement' in and around Narasapur by being an active and value-adding mediator between the local artisans and small traders, through providing the necessary training to women artisans to develop new techniques of lace making to better the quality of the product. It also decided to sell select produce to the intermediaries at a price the government deems fair, so that the artisans could get their fair share. These objectives resulted in the Lace Park evolving into a cooperative corporate organization with public-private participation. Based on the initiatives taken by Sanjay Jaju, the Ministry of Textiles, GOI, sanctioned Rs.5.85 crores towards this 3-year project.

The Lace Park complex has been set-up in a quiet and scenic part of Narasapur town. On entering the premises, one goes through rows of flowerbeds, lawns and some innovative landscaping. The doors of the main building open out to a number of individual units like the Technical Training Wing, Design Development Wing, Work Room, Computer Room, Administrative Section, Display Room, Visitors Room, Kitchen & Canteen and Lodging.

- *The Technical Training Wing:* Here women are provided a free 15-day course on lace making. The contents of the course include learning of new techniques in knitting and crochet, training artisans on how to maintain quality, and educating them on fair pricing. This comprehensive training equips artisans to produce fabric of quality, and helps them determine the right price for their product based on the work and craftsmanship. In the past, these prices were determined solely on the basis of weight of the cotton used, irrespective of the labour and skill involved.
- *The Design & Development Wing:* This is a place where new and unique designs are worked out by a team headed by the Chief Designer. The department is fully equipped with necessary materials like drawing boards, measuring instruments, chart boards and stationery. The Chief Designer also works new designs using the computer in the Computer Wing.
- *Kitchen and Lodging:* A well-equipped kitchen takes care of the food and nourishment requirements of trainees. The kitchen can serve food to about 1,000 trainees at any given time. The Park also provides well-spaced and neatly laid-out bunker beds with comfortable mattresses to the trainees undergoing the training program at the Park.

### ***The functions of the Lace Park***

There are three primary functions performed by the Lace Park:

- 1) to provide training to artisans, who then return to their homes and continue knitting
- 2) to provide the raw material necessary to make lace and
- 3) to buy the finished product and sell it to middlemen at a suitable price, which will help the artisan earn a fair amount

### ***Results achieved within the first 6 months of its inception***

- The Lace Park has been successful in training more than 10,000 local women artisans.
- The quality of the products generated by the lace workers in villages up to a radius of 50 miles saw a substantial improvement after they were trained in the Lace Park.
- The Design Development wing of the Park has been successful in creating more than 80 innovative and novel designs that have been well received in international markets.
- It has helped to enhance the earnings of artisans and their families.

### **Saukaryam – An initiative spearheaded by Sanjay Jaju, Commissioner, Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation**

Saukaryam was Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's IT initiative launched by Sanjay Jaju in the year 2001 when he served as Commissioner, Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation. There is an interesting story about what triggered off the initiative. On one of Sanjay Jaju's routine inspections of the city, he saw a huge gathering around a tax collector's office. On approaching the gathering and enquiring about the reason for the commotion, Jaju was given to understand that the crowd was awaiting the arrival of the local tax collector who had to write the demand note for them to pay their taxes. And when asked what they would do

if the tax collector did not turn up, the taxpayers said there was nothing they could do, revealing their helplessness. It was difficult for Jaju to digest the fact that for something as simple and basic as paying taxes, there was no arrangement that could rid the citizens from the harassment of waiting in long queues. This incident and many other similar instances where citizens had to wait endlessly for government officials to fix problems in services such as drinking water, street lighting, sanitation, etc., made Jaju realize the need for a reform in the way the civic body was delivering services. As he saw it, Information Technology was a powerful tool that could bring about improvement in the delivery of public services.

Spearheaded by Sanjay Jaju, project 'Saukaryam' recognizes that the government should disseminate and make accessible information relevant to the citizen, so that his interface with the government becomes much more pleasant and easy. Consequently, the corporation's unique website [www.saukaryam.org](http://www.saukaryam.org) or [visakhapatnamunicipalcorporation.org](http://visakhapatnamunicipalcorporation.org) delivers a host of civic services online, catering to most of the basic civic needs of the citizen. The citizens are now rid of harassment at the hands of corrupt and insensitive bureaucracy. The project has made the civic body more accountable to citizens, more customer-oriented and has brought in transparency in its dealings with customers.

Funds for the project were sourced through public-private partnerships, at no cost to the corporation. The partners included:

- *Excell Media* – the leading Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Vizag. Vizag Municipal Corporation has taken up 15 Internet service lines from Excell Media to establish a VPN (Virtual Private Network) to various banks in the city for online bank collections.
- *Net Savant* – a company known for developing web sites and portals among other services it provides. This company was involved in designing and developing the website [www.saukaryam.org](http://www.saukaryam.org) of the Municipal Corporation. The tie-up with Net Savant is on a revenue sharing basis.
- *Starnet* – another ISP in Vizag also known for providing e-commerce solutions has provided a touch screen kiosk at the city's Civic Center, free of cost.
- *Shri Vishnu Infotech* – a company in Vizag that provides e-commerce solutions and corporate internet solutions, contributed to project Saukaryam by assigning six software professionals to develop the necessary software for the Corporation.
- *Pyxis Technologies* – a company that is involved in providing software services and product development integrated the other application software of Saukaryam into the accounting software.
- *Banks* – partners in the banking sector included IDBI Bank, Siripuram; SBH, MCV Branch; Vijaya Bank, Jagadamba; Visakha Coop Bank; Corporation Bank, Dwarakanagar; Maharaja Bank, Dwarakanagar; Global Trust Bank, Aseelametta; United Bank of India; and Mahesh Coop Bank, Dabagardens

Along with the efforts to provide speedy, effective public services in a transparent manner to customers, Saukaryam also initiated improvements in the Municipal Corporation's internal work processes and systems. Computers were installed in the all the departments and wings of the corporation, which were networked together through a local area network. With this arrangement in place, information and communication between departments happens at a

much faster pace, saves a lot of time and energy for municipal officials, and has catalyzed the decision making process. The project was completed in two months. This initiative was nominated as one of the finalists for the Stockholm Challenge award instituted for innovative Information Technology projects globally.

***Services offered by Saukaryam***

- *Online Collection of Property Tax through Service Banks* – citizens get to view details of their assessment records, their dues, their balances, and can request for alterations to their records online, in order to correct discrepancies. The corporation can trace the receipt of the property tax amounts in various banks.
- *Complaints & Grievances* – the comprehensive software package developed helps to record all grievances (received through email, post, or direct complaint registered at the civic center) in one database. This then gets transferred online to the concerned officer for redress.
- *Building Plan Approvals* – it is the duty of the corporation to approve building applications, make sub-division of plots and regularize structures within the city limits, if these plans adhere to the norms laid out by the corporation. Saukaryam enables online receiving application forms and clearing them. This enables the corporation to fulfill its commitment to the citizens to dispose off these applications within a short time frame.
- *Birth & Death Registration* – registration of birth and death is mandatory. Certificates for authentication of the same are provided by the municipal corporation. With the help of Saukaryam, registering a birth or death at the municipal corporation happens within minutes, and the corporation issues the relevant certificate almost instantaneously.
- *Online Payment of Municipal Dues* – the website enables citizens to make online payments of their electricity bills, telephone bills, water charges, road and irrigation cess, vehicle tax, commercial tax, house tax, water tax, etc. through a wide choice of banks that are listed on the site.
- *Public Health & Sanitation* – the municipal corporation’s responsibility to ensure that garbage is lifted has been made accountable and transparent to citizens, by providing garbage lifting performance details of respective wards/city on a daily basis. Citizens can access this information online. A computerized weigh-bridge connected to the internet through suitable interfacing software facilitates the viewing of these details.
- *Infrastructure Works* – elected officials and citizens can keep track of the civil works (laying of roads, drains, water pipelines, buildings etc.) being implemented in their city, the speed at which these works are being carried out, the estimated costs and other relevant details, as these details are readily available on the Infrastructure Works section of the website.

- *Water Tap Connections* – the municipal corporation is the authorized supplier of drinking water in Vizag city. Keeping track of the innumerable applications received for tap connections and their subsequent disposal is a very cumbersome job. This has now been made easy for the corporation as the website provides the facility of online filing, tracking and disposal of applications.
- *Online Tenders* – the general perception is that the tendering procedure that government organizations follow while undertaking any work lacks transparency. The Saukaryam project has made the tendering process transparent by furnishing online the details of the name of the contractor and the amount sanctioned for each project. The contractors too can view the tender notices online.
- *Citizens Forum* – through the website citizens can discuss issues relating to the city, the problems they face and can provide probable solutions. Airing out opinions by citizens is a way to bring about social change.

## **2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) by Civil Services Officers**

A group of senior civil services officers came together over several sessions to discuss certain common concerns. The write-up below presents a summary of the broad consensus that emerged during the discussions. Obviously, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and the summary is being presented more as a food for thought.

### **1. Many bureaucrats feel that politics is degenerating day by day and quality of public life is going down. What is the solution to this?**

It is not in the hands of one single officer to change the system. It requires an army. Therefore, officers have to accept the reality and try to change things that are in their control, to the extent possible. Each officer's efforts in this direction will help move the bureaucracy and government system forward in a meaningful way.

### **2. It is difficult to mobilize resources to initiate new projects in the government. How does one mobilize resources that are required to do anything meaningful?**

The first thing that an officer should do is to manifest fearlessness, and this fearlessness will come from being clean. The moment an officer involves himself in an underhand dealing, or in any other way soils his/her hands, or seeks personal favours from the political system, everyone in the chain gets to know that the credibility of the officer is questionable. Such an officer is bound to be disrespected, and such stigma lasts for the entire duration of his/her career.

If an officer has been party to corruption either directly or indirectly, and thereupon embarks on trying to change the system and the status quo, the system will not spare him. Such an officer will not be able to initiate any change in the system and will have to reconcile to a career of perpetration of the system.

The situation for an officer with credibility is however very different. If a new project does not receive the support of official government funding, there are alternate means to get funding. Since the officer has credibility and is known for being honest, MLAs, MPs and affluent businessmen, etc., are usually willing to make generous financial contributions towards the project and offer their support. Apart from this being a gesture of appreciation of intent and efforts of the honest officer, it enhances the politician's / businessman's popularity. In the case of the politician, it improves his chances of getting re-elected. Hence they are generally willing to fund any good initiatives through the funds at their disposal, such as the MP and MLA development funds.

As long as the funds mobilized for a project are put to good use, there is transparency in their use and in the reporting of their usage, the best of products have been purchased at the best price, all transactions and purchases made are genuine with vouchers to support them, there is a clear record of the capital purchases made through a transparent process and the items purchased have been put to use, the officer has nothing to be scared of. The prerequisite, however, is that the officer be honest in his dealings. His honesty should be beyond doubt. In

short, if the entire project is handled in a transparent manner, the officer has nothing to worry about.

**3. How should an officer motivate his peers and subordinates? Unlike in the private sector, government officials do not have the power of rewarding achievements and punishing under-performers for repeated failures.**

Civil Services officers must first overcome this misconception of not having the liberty to reward achievements and penalizing consistent under-performers. In a bureaucracy, the rights, freedom and latitude of an officer are never clearly spelt out. Instead, the officer has to find them out for himself. For example, a District Collector (DC) should never be under the notion that he cannot implement the 'carrot and stick' approach with the district officials. On the contrary, the DC is an all-powerful person in the district. The ACRs of all the project officers, district revenue officers, district development officers, etc. are finally signed-off by the DC. Further the DC is in control of their transfers, postings and suspensions.

A troublemaker or a consistent under-performer can always be warned of an adverse remark in his ACR, a suspension or transfer, which often have the necessary impact of disciplining such people. These officials may leverage their association and contacts with MLAs and people in power in the political circle to revoke orders passed by the DC, but the DC can overrule such requests. Politicians are generally wary of interfering with the workings of an upright officer. In some cases however, it might lead to the DC himself getting transferred out. In such cases, the DC may be able to take the concerned minister or even the Chief Minister of the State into confidence. If a senior officer is honest and upright, be it a DC or District Magistrate or any other officer, ministers generally support him. He will be given a free hand. Ministers seldom interfere in his affairs. If an officer is sincere and his intentions are made clear to ministers, then the chances of him being pressured into reversing his decisions is remote.

Superiors rewarding subordinates although not very common in the government, is not impossible. There have been instances of civil services officers in senior positions having given above-average performers and performing teams intangible and even tangible rewards such as financial incentives.

**4. If an honest officer is transferred to a department or organization that is used to being corrupt and the existing set-up sees him as an impediment in their workings, how should the officer deal with the situation? The fact that the officer himself does not accept bribes is well-known to the people in the new department to which the officer is being transferred. Should the officer turn a blind eye to the prevailing corruption in the organization?**

An honest officer being passive to the prevailing corruption in the department or organization is equivalent to being corrupt himself. His intent should not only be to keep himself clean and honest, but should ensure everyone working with him, including contractors and other agencies that are not part of the government system but associated with the working for his organization, uphold honesty as well.

At an individual level, each one is sincere, honest and needs guidance. If they are shown the right path and instilled with courage and confidence, things will be done in the right way. Officers should attempt to build a strong rapport with subordinates, peers, contractors and everyone associated with their department or organization. This builds up respect and trusts for the officer, and puts tremendous pressure on subordinates and peers to disengage themselves from unethical activities they might have been involved with in the past.

If an officer is sincere, honest and result-oriented, bad elements hesitate to demand anything unethical or illegal from him. Politicians, four out of five times, hesitate to interfere in the workings of honest officers, because one negative statement by such an officer if given to the press or in the court of law can ruin the politician's political career. They allow the officer to continue to do his duties, patiently wait for his tenure to be completed, and try to get their dubious schemes executed through the next officer who comes in his place.

Alternately, they ensure that the particular officer who is proving to be an obstacle is divested of his powers over that particular matter or subject, or is transferred out, effectively removing him out from their way. Actions such as these are beyond the control of an honest officer. But this should not deter him from standing up against unscrupulous practices.

The officer also has the option and authority of challenging his transfer order in the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT). He can file an affidavit against errant politicians and senior officials in the High Court and his case will be heard. There have been instances of upright officers having filed corruption charges against ministers and senior government officials in the High Court. After a thorough inquiry, if the charges are proved to be correct, the courts have in the past passed orders such as suspension of the corrupt officials or awarded other forms of punishment. Hence, it is wrong to assume that justice will not be done. All it requires is for an officer to be tough and show courage.

**5. Why is it necessary for a civil services officer to maintain a high profile? How does a high-flying bureaucrat manage not to get into trouble with politicians?**

If a civil services officer keeps a low profile, he/she cannot bring about significant changes, given their short tenures in any particular position. This drawback demands the person to maintain a high profile. Keeping a high profile may antagonize peers and others in the system, and this is where the officer needs to be tactful and sensitive in handling relationships. Being high profile in terms of informing stakeholders of the good work being done, helps people get to know the credibility and honesty of an officer, helps them to develop confidence and trust in him, and convinces them of his ability to deliver.

The one mantra that civil services officers who have a lot of political interface in their work need to follow is to 'keep politicians happy'. This does not mean officials should dance to the tune of politicians, but should give them due importance, praise them when they do a good job irrespective of which political party they belong to and give them due credit for having rendered support in implementing new projects and initiatives.

**6. Civil services officers find rampant corruption in the system, and often the most corrupt people do not get punished. Given this background, why should an officer motivate himself to be upright?**

First and foremost, an officer requires guts and determination to stand up against corruption. Once he embarks on this path, he must make his stand unequivocally known to his peers, superiors and subordinates. When they get to know of the officer's integrity, they will render support and together they can alleviate corruption in the system to a certain extent. For instance, the police force in any district invariably feels that there is no point in going after corrupt officials, as the district collector will order their release. Therefore, if the collector gives the police the assurance that he is with them in fighting corruption and tells them not to let go of offenders, it will put an end to all such activities in the district at least during the tenure of the honest collector.

**7. One of the worries of civil services officers is that if they take a stand against any of their superiors or politicians, their families will suffer a transfer, children's schooling will suffer and in the worst case their lives will be endangered. Given this reality, what is the point of fighting the system?**

Officers join the civil services not to provide their children good schooling or their families the comfort of permanent settlement in one place. Civil services officers are special cadre officers, held in high esteem by citizens of the country. Their purpose in life must be to serve the public and not serve their family's best interests. Bribing higher officials or adopting illegal methods to revoke transfer orders, only to keep the family together, would be an act of shame on the officer's part. If an honest officer is subjected to repeated transfers, such as being transferred five times in a year, then it could be difficult for him to cope with. In such cases, the officer needs to fight back. He can approach the CAT (Central Administrative Tribunal) to look into the matter and get his transfer order annulled. This is the legal right of a civil services officer. Tribunals create a lot of publicity and everybody gets to know that an officer was transferred, because he refused to concede to illegal demands. Once officers begin to take this stance, politicians will think twice before passing a transfer order, for the wide publicity that the CAT attracts has the potential to mar their reputation and consequently their political career. Civil services officers can even write directly (bypassing the central and state governments) to the President of India about such issues, pleading his intervention in the matter. This is a right enjoyed by all civil services officers, and especially those from the IAS cadre must exercise this right if necessary. Upon receipt of such a petition, the President of the country orders for a report from the central government pertaining to the issue and action is taken in a very short span of time. Civil services officers need to exercise their rights. There is a misconception that appealing to the Tribunal kills the reputation of the officer. On the contrary, if the officer wins, which is likely to be the case, if the officer is upright, his reputation is enhanced, he gains public confidence and politicians will keep aloof.

Officers who are honest and clean need not be anxious about organized intimidation and organized killing. Even the most corrupt officials and politicians have a liking towards proactive and honest officers. Only those officers who maintain double standards (employ corrupt methods in some dealings and pretend to be honest officers in other dealings) usually make it to the hit list of politicians and the police. Real, honest officers are never touched.

**8. Civil services officers have a lot of fear about the ACR. They worry that their career will be badly affected due to adverse remarks made by their superiors in the report.**

ACRs are nothing to be feared of. In fact, if an officer is outstanding, no one can put a black spot on his ACR. For this to happen, the officer must be vigilant, scrupulous and bold.

No adverse remarks go into the ACR without the officer being given an opportunity to explain his position. The general practice is to alert the officer well in advance about the adverse remark. He is given one to two months to prepare an explanation for his actions. Once the concerned officer provides the explanation, the chief secretary of state passes an order either accepting or refuting the explanation provided. If the chief secretary does not accept the explanation, then it makes an entry into the ACR as an adverse remark. If the officer is convinced that the chief secretary's verdict is unjust, he has the right to move the CAT and get the negative remark expunged. On winning the appeal, the original remark made in the file will be removed. Subsequent superior officers seeing the file will never get to know about the adverse remark made. Thus, adverse remarks are part and parcel of the Indian Administrative Services or other civil services. An honest officer should not be too sensitive about it.

The one message to officers who fear ACR is that they have not enrolled themselves into the civil services to maintain outstanding ACRs, nor to serve in plum postings on account of excellent ratings obtained in their ACRs, but to serve the public. Hence, ACR must not be given too much of importance. If an officer has got an adverse remark, which he does not deserve to get, he should fight it and defend himself. Eventually when he is proved right, the adverse remark will get expunged, and there is no cause for worry.

**9. Why should a civil services officer stick his neck out and put his heart and soul into doing good work, given that he might be transferred at short notice? And even after the transfer, his successor might undo all the good things he did. Hence, what is the point taking any initiative?**

Although this is a bitter reality all officers will have to live with, it is no excuse for not delivering to one's best potential or initiating innovative measures and projects that are in the best interest of the public. People get married and have children. There is no guarantee that children will take care of their parents. It is quite possible that the children will desert their parents when they grow old. But this does not mean that people should put an end to creating new life or to take care of their children when they are young. It does not happen that way. The wisdom lies in having children, taking care of them when they are young and yet being prepared to face all the consequences. Similarly, every civil services officer carries with him the threat of a transfer, the risk that his successor may kill initiatives started by him. But, this should not dampen his enthusiasm to do good things for his organization and the public.

The one way for an officer to ensure survival of his initiatives beyond his time is to make government employees own the initiative. Once government employees take ownership, they have interest in continuing the system and keeping it alive. Any attempts made by the successor to discontinue the efforts of the predecessor will fail.

**10. In a system that is choked with people craving for money and stooping to any level to earn it, what is the motivator for an honest officer?**

There are two paths that exist in a system that is filled with corruption. An officer can sail through his job, make money, have a faster career by succumbing to peer and political pressures, and not contribute anything significant to the system. Alternately, he can go by his convictions, make meaningful contributions to the system by facing all obstacles and at the end of the journey feel satisfied and proud of his achievements. Even if the officer chooses to tread the former path, he will still be confronted with all the problems prevailing in the system. He will still not be able to escape a transfer, or an adverse remark in his ACR or a suspension. He will be doing routine, unintelligent work required by the position, eating up 12 or more hours of the day. Therefore, the choice is for the officer to make.

The sense of accomplishment is what inspires an honest officer. He is committed to the cause of doing good for the common man, and therefore channelizes his potential and capabilities in that direction. In the process, he will encounter huge roadblocks, but he faces them and makes sacrifices if necessary.

**11. Many civil services officers, especially those from the IAS, feel that if they choose to be different they might lose out on a prosperous career path. Given this perception, why should one exert himself beyond what is minimum expected of him, which is not very difficult to deliver?**

Fear of a stalled career should be the last of the worries of a civil services officer. In fact, they have job security like few others in the country today. The belief that service can be done only in the so-called 'glamorous' posts is wrong. All officers should aim at being meaningful, effective and fruitful to society and if this is the intent, then plum postings and career path will not matter. If making money through illegal methods is the intention, then plum posting hold value. It is a disgrace to the dignity of officers to request to be given a particular posting. They should accept whatever post given, and work towards making effective contributions being in that position.

**12. Upright officers feel that most of the people in government organizations and departments spend time in plotting and scheming against one another. How does one handle such situations?**

Scheming and plotting against others is wrong. If someone is hell-bent on toppling an honest officer and moving ahead, then there is nothing one can do. But this should not begin to breed negativity against the system within the honest officer. Once negative energy gets developed, the officer begins to hold a grudge against the system, and the person may become cynical. This kills his focus and weakens his spirit. The honest officer has to accept all such actions as part of the game and concentrate on doing what he thinks is right.

### 3. Champions of New India

There have been many heroes in the public domain who have been working quietly to transform the lives of marginalized communities and disadvantaged people. With the media being so inured to publishing stories of corruption and self-aggrandizement, articles of such individual heroism have hardly ever made the headline. These prophets of a 'New India' have not confined themselves to merely disbursing charity, but have pursued their vision adopting an entrepreneurial mindset, which today has manifested into institutions with people to carry on the noble work. In keeping with the saying 'self help is best help' these champions have gone all-out in raising necessary funds to fulfill their visions, without seeking any support from state governments. Because communities have been made to take ownership of these projects, with the state and other agencies being facilitators, the projects have realized enduring results. The following stories narrate the altruistic deeds of these great persons, most of who are relatively unknown. They have truly demonstrated a high degree of social entrepreneurship.

#### **The Headmaster who turned a savior – Mr. Tushar Kanjilal**

The poverty-stricken island Rangabelia in Sunderbans, just 130 km away from flourishing city of Calcutta, had many distressing stories to tell. Even after 28 years of Independence and 20 years after initiation of block development projects, there was acute deprivation in the villages. Under the feudal system existing in the island, a handful of wealthy landlords owned more than 10 acres of land each, while the larger population owned less than one acre, and with a few families having no land at all. This unequal distribution of wealth along with various other factors such as lack of irrigation facilities, non-cultivation of land during the winter season, huge debt burdens of villagers, etc. had made life a misery for the people on the island.

Tushar Kanjilal was posted as the headmaster of the High School in Rangabelia, and the children were anxious to see their new headmaster from Calcutta. Like any other teacher, Tushar Kanjilal (Kanjilal) went about teaching the children science and mathematics, day-in and day-out, which his students could hardly relate to. Life started to become uneventful for Kanjilal, and although he was aware of the poverty existing in Rangabelia, he chose not to be disturbed by the truth.

One morning in 1975 when Kanjilal was taking his routine classes, a boy stood up and requested to be relieved, for he was feeling dizzy. It was still the fourth period. Kanjilal granted the boy half-a-day's leave, but the boy's condition started to worry Kanjilal. The very same evening, Kanjilal learnt that close to 50 children (out of the 300 in the school) had come to school that day without having food. Kanjilal was shaken. He felt, he had to do something to help these children. 'The situation should change' he told all the teachers, in a meeting that ensued. And at that very instant, Kanjilal resolved to change the fate of not only the children of his school but also the whole of Rangabelia.

Poverty and deprivation were the worst enemies of Rangabelia. And Kanjilal believed that his strategy of eradicating hunger in Rangabelia had to be complementary to the state, for,

attempting to do something outside the socio-political system, however practicable it may be, would crumble against the compelling power of the state machinery.

A.K. Dutta was the then head of the state agricultural directorate. Dutta was of the strong opinion that the solution to the economic problems of the Sunderbans lay in agriculture. He wanted to introduce to the farmers the idea of growing groundnut and cotton as a second crop during the winter months, which would then enhance their incomes. Accordingly, Sushil Chatterji, joint director of agriculture, came to Sunderbans with the intention of implementing Dutta's idea, and happened to meet Kanjilal.

Farmers of Rangabelia, who had immense faith in their traditional wisdom, were hesitant to experiment with new crops, given their limited resources. However, a farmer, Kushdhwaj Dey decided to take the risk. He cultivated the new crops on one-third of his 2.66 acres of land. To overcome the lack of irrigation, a pond was constructed to store water. The huge success of this experiment encouraged other farmers to take the plunge during the next season.

Almost all farmers had mortgaged most or all of their small assets to landlords and moneylenders, and the rate of interest charged on the loan advanced was more than 100 percent per annum. In order to reduce the debt burden of these farmers, Kanjilal started approaching all such moneylenders and landlords and requested them to let the debtor farmers cultivate their lands (i.e. the landlord's land) during the rabi season (winter months), which otherwise is usually left uncultivated by landlords for the lack of irrigation facilities. This would then add to the farmer's income and he could repay the debts faster. The headmaster's request received a positive response.

At this very point in time (1976), two members from the state planning board – Pannalal Dasgupta and Ajit Narayan Bose paid a visit to Sunderbans to study the drawbacks of the region. Kanjilal met up with both and discussed how agriculture could be improved in Rangabelia. He suggested that a farmer should grow enough paddy to last him and his family for a year, and during the winter months should grow mustard or other oil-seeds, potatoes, onions, chilies, etc. which would fetch him a better price depending on the market rates. Kanjilal also discussed his integrated rural development plan for Rangabelia. Impressed by these suggestions, Dasgupta advised Kanjilal to submit his plans to the state planning board. Unfortunately, the government had no money. However, Dasgupta donated Rs.5 lacs towards Kanjilal's project through his own voluntary organization Tagore Society for Rural Development in Bhirbhum district. With this first contribution was born the Tagore Society for Rural Development at Rangabelia in 1976, headed by Kanjilal. Later, the society received additional Rs.20 lacs from Bread for the World, a West German organization.

The society, which included three villages with 671 families in 1976, has today grown to a society encompassing 28 villages and 8,243 families. During the 2003 kharif season, 7,630 families associated with the project produced paddy worth an overwhelming Rs.1.96 crores, giving rise to an average earning of Rs.2,500 per family, an amount that most of the farmers in that area had never imagined they would earn in their lifetime.

Kanjilal realized that imparting education to the villagers was very important for sustenance of his efforts. As he saw it, providing villagers formal education would be of no relevance to

them. Therefore, non-formal education centers (240 centers) have been created, each center comprising of a teacher and 40 students. There are no permanent classrooms, instead teachers move with blackboards and books, and teach for 2 hours a day, at a time convenient to students.

Through the society, an agro-service center that caters to the agricultural requirements of 28 villages has been set up. Its activities are to lend farm implements, sell seeds and fertilizers, and provide warehousing facilities to farmers. The rent of the goods and services provided is recovered in kind by farmers only after harvest.

Kanjilal's wife, in recognition of women and the role they play in society, has established the Mahila Samiti. The center imparts training in the areas of weaving, tailoring, mat making, poultry, fishery, vegetable gardening, etc. The Samiti earns substantial revenues from the products produced by women, and in 1984, its turnover was more than Rs.1.6 lacs.

Tagore Society for Rural Development at Rangabelia demands that each family does its planning twice a year, one before the monsoon season and the other before the winter season. The plans should include articulation of what services and goods the family would require from the agro-service center, the estimated expenditure of the family over the next six months including on items such as clothes, medicine, household articles, etc. These plans pass through the village committee and finally reach the governing board of the center, which sanctions the plan. The board is not authorized to alter any plan, but can request the farmer to make changes according to the resources available.

Today, the destiny of Rangabelia has changed. It stands as a prosperous island whose inhabitants look at life optimistically. Its per capita income has gone up two-fold from Rs.502.08 in 1976 to Rs.1,038.72 in 2004. Villagers enjoy the minimum comforts of urban life with the island boasting of schools, roads, hospitals, sanitary latrines, piped drinking water, etc. all built by villagers. Birendra Nath Mondal, a primary school teacher and a farmer has this to say: 'since the inception of the project, we have forgotten about the role of government agencies or even the panchayat. All our farming needs and other needs are met by the society'.

### **The messiah of leprosy patients and the tribal community in Hemalkasa – Sri Baba Amte**

It was a rainy night. A leper completely devastated by the disease lay in a gutter howling in pain. His rotted stubs of fingers and the two wide-open holes in place of the nose was a ghastly sight no one could forget, not in the least Murlidhar Devidas Amte (Amte). The gruesome picture of the leper kept haunting Amte and proved to be the turning point in his life.

Born into a Brahmin family, Amte was, as a boy, always seen eating with Harijan servants in his hometown in Maharashtra. He grew up to be a prosperous lawyer, but soon renounced his practice for he felt guilty collecting fees from the poor. He gave up his claim to the family property, although he was the son of a rich jagirdar, and started living with scavengers of

Warora carrying night soil like any of them. And on one of the nights while he was carrying a can of night soil on his head, he saw the leper in the gutter.

With the intent to banish the fear of leprosy from his mind, Amte set out to obtain scientific knowledge about the disease by enrolling himself in the School of Tropical Diseases, Calcutta. When Amte was convinced that he had learnt all that he had to about leprosy, he dropped out of college. Thereafter, he set out to breath life to his dream of showing the way and lending a helping hand to the forsaken and shunned lepers in the country. Amte's possessions at this point in time was 25 acres of barren land near Chandrapur, a cow, six leprosy patients, 14 rupees in his pocket, a supportive wife and faith.

In June 1951, Amte went on to establish the Maharogi Sewa Samiti at Warora, which was the first step towards fulfilling his dream. But his vision and enterprise demanded more of him. He decided to make use of his 25 acres of arid land in building an ashram of his dreams. Part of this land was covered with dense forest and the rest had large rocks hidden deep within the soil. There was no sign of water. But Amte and his six leprosy patients were far from being disheartened by these unpleasant realities. They began work. Their toil eventually led to the creation of Anandwan, the garden of joy for leprosy patients.

Thousands of leprosy patients are cured and rehabilitated in Anandwan every year. It houses a general hospital, which treats along with leprosy patients, people who are blind, deaf, dumb and handicapped. Dr. Vikas Amte, the eldest son of Baba Amte, heads the hospital as its medical director. When one enters Anandwan, none of the inmates actually look like patients with leprosy. They all look hale and hearty, are engrossed in their work and only on taking a close look does one actually notice their stump fingers or toes. Each one of them has been transformed into carpenters, tailors, masons, mechanics, electricians, experts in water management and construction. The sole idea behind encouraging patients to take on such jobs within Anandwan is to make them feel confident and capable of earning a living, once they go back to their respective villages.

Today, Anandwan has grown to a small village in itself, with a bank, a post office, a school for the blind (started in 1966 with financial support received from the Netherlands), an orphanage and an old age home, each of which is managed by cured leprosy patients, the blind and the deaf. Keeping in mind the compulsory requirements for rural community development, Baba Amte created Somnath – a community farm organization and Ashokwan (near Nagpur) - a farming-cum-treatment center. The 1,200 acres of land offered by the government towards Somnath earns the money required to run the other projects. The caretaker of Somnath is a cured leprosy patient and has done a phenomenal job there. In the year 2004, Somnath sold hundreds of quintals of seeds to the State Seed Corporation. The irrigation system here, which comprises of four tanks constructed one below the other and the 100-foot long dam, were both constructed entirely by inmates of Anandwan without the help of engineering experts or contractors.

Apart from growing a variety of fruits and vegetables, wheat, paddy and jowar are grown by farmers in the 300 acres of farmland in Anandwan. From the very beginning, farmers have been diligently digging one well each year, which has now resulted in 35 wells and 4 bore

wells in Anandwan. Water management and irrigation systems adopted in Anandwan are simple and ensure that not a single drop of water goes waste.

Anandwan is self-sufficient. Everything is done collectively here. The members live, work and eat together like in a community. There are common kitchens and dining halls. But mere existence in a commune is not the be all and end all for these leprosy patients. They deserve to lead an individual family life and this truth dawned on Sadhanatai (wife of Baba Amte) who in 1961 started a ritual of getting cured leprosy patients married. Baba Amte furthered the idea with a programme in which each married couple could adopt from the old age home at Anandwan, say, a father or mother or both or in-laws, to make the unit a complete family. This system gave the elders the joy of being looked after by children and the couples received parental love.

In order to show the outside world what leprosy patients are capable of doing and to connect leprosy patients to the outside world, Baba Amte has established four colleges (agricultural college, arts, science and commerce college), which are affiliated to the Nagpur University. Buildings for the same have been erected entirely by leprosy patients. The lecturers are all cured leprosy patients. Students from different parts of Maharashtra come to study here.

Another of the challenging projects of Baba Amte is at Hemalkasa, which is a five-hour drive from Alapalli in Ghadchiroli district. The Madia-Gond tribes found in the Dandakaranya forests of Hemalkasa led a stone-age life, and were totally cutoff from the rest of the world. Baba Amte noticed that the culture of the Madia-Gonds was being gradually invaded by the modern world. With the earnest intention of preserving the tribal community's culture, Baba Amte started the Lok Biradari Prakalpa project in 1974. The first issue Amte addressed under this project was the deteriorating health of the tribals, caused due to attacks of malaria, tuberculosis, anemia and filariasis. Initially, a thatched hut served as a hospital to the Madia-Gonds, but over the last three decades Baba Amte has constructed for them a complex consisting of a hospital, a school, a hostel and a residence for volunteers. A diesel-powered generator caters to the lighting requirements of the complex.

The second big step taken up by Baba Amte was to teach the Madia-Gonds the usage of the plough to till their land. Having successfully learnt the art of tilling and farming over the years, the Madia-Gonds today earn substantial returns from sowing the 500 quintals of seeds they get free of cost every year.

Project Lok Biradari Prakalpa at Hemalkasa is one of its kind in the country, trying to uplift the tribals without disrupting their cultural identity. And projects Anandwan, Somnath, and Ashokwan have been remarkable creations that have come to the rescue of leprosy patients and have put their lives back on track. Says Baba Amte when he looks at his leprosy patients: 'They have lost the battle against the disease, but have won the war. Earlier, they used to ask me, "What is the use of all this Baba? We will die." But now look at them. They have fallen in love with life. And the smile on those faces is my reward.'

### **The scientist working wonders – Dr. B.V. Parameswara Rao**

It was in mid-1967. Parameswara Rao was on his flight back to India. It was just the previous day that he had declined the offer of an associate professorship in Pennsylvania State University with a monthly salary of \$2,500. Astounded by his thesis on nuclear chemistry, his American professor had said: ‘In the 32 years of my career, I have never come across such an original idea. I wish you good luck.’ Saddened on learning that Parameswara Rao (who was now Dr. Parameswara Rao) had refused the associate professorship, the American professor said, ‘If you ever change your mind, take the next flight and come here. If it is after two years, give me 15 days notice.’ With this exchange of words, Dr. Parameswara Rao had parted ways with the professor and bid adieu to a successful career in Pennsylvania.

Dr. Parameswara Rao (Rao) was working for the Atomic Energy Establishment in Bombay. Dr. Brahm Prakash had asked him to come back after getting a doctorate from the United States. But Rao did not wish to go back. The one thing that kept haunting him was the picture of two illiterate old men in his ancestral village Dimli reciting the *Gita* and the *Bhagavat Purana*. He was a lover of rural India. The simplicity and intellect of Indian villagers never ceased to baffle him.

The very day Rao returned to Vizag, he informed his parents of his plans of settling down in Dimli (which is about 50 km from Visakhapatnam) and improving the neighborhood. His father agreed reluctantly. Rao and his wife packed their bags and were immediately off to the ancestral house in Dimli. Rao’s mind that was in trouble for so many years now started to find solace in the primitive neighborhood of Dimli.

The first thing that Rao learnt about Dimli was that it had no school. The closest school was at Yellamanchili, five miles away. How was Rao to get a school started without any money? He started arranging for meetings in the village to discuss the need for a school. Although the villagers did not disapprove the idea, they were suspicious of Rao’s intentions, for all said and done he was a stranger to them. In one of the meetings, Chilukama, the richest man in the village asked Rao: ‘What is the guarantee that you won’t run away with the money to America?’ The rest of the gathering, who had learnt a bit of Rao’s background told Chilukama that Rao had turned down many jobs that would have paid him enough to start more than one such school in a year. But Rao had chosen to come to Dimli. He wanted villagers to contribute towards the cause only to make it their school, a people’s school, and not his. In a meeting that took place at Rama Mandir the next day, Chilukama walked up to Rao and handed over a thousand rupees. This act of Chilukama was enough assurance for the rest of the villagers to trust the stranger.

By June 1968, the school building was ready, having received Rs.19,000 from American Peace Corps and Rs.57,000 being the generous contribution of the villagers of Dimli. The very same year, the state government stopped granting permission to private parties to start schools. Rao met the Chief Minister, but it was a futile attempt. The next meeting was with the Governor Khandubhai Desai, who after talking to Rao at length, agreed to help him. Thus, Dimli High School was opened in October 1968. Initially, the government released grants to take care of staff salaries. In 1976, the school was entrusted to the Zilla Parishad.

Vakapadu, which is 12 miles from Dimli had stretches of marshland that was being subjected to recurrent cyclonic storms from the Bay of Bengal. There were some habitants on the periphery of the land, who lived a miserable life. Rao told himself that by adopting scientific methods, salt production in this 1000-odd acres of wasteland could be started. He also felt that the area could be protected from the onslaught of the storms. With this conviction, Rao approached various government agencies requesting 380 acres of the land to be leased out to him. For days his papers kept shuttling from table to table through various government departments. Tired of being tested for his patience, Rao traveled to Hyderabad to track the papers. When he had finally located it, the clerk in possession of the papers asked for a bribe of Rs.25. Rao refused to pay and hence the papers did not move. He approached the then Chief Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who luckily remembered Parameswara Rao whose school he had inaugurated in Dimli as education minister. The proposal was cleared in quick time thereafter.

The neighboring villagers of Vakapadu who used to laugh at Rao when they saw him on a bicycle making regular trips to Vakapadu, started holding him in high esteem once the salt production began at Vakapadu in 1973. The villagers started production of salt using modern technology. Prawn culture has also been tried in the reservoirs of the salt pans.

In November 1976, Rao registered the Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT). The trust provided relief and rehabilitation to the cyclone-affected areas in coastal Andhra in 1977. Subsequently, through the trust Rao started wasteland development projects. There was 25,000 acres of land lying waste in Yellamachili block. Rao got in touch with the District Collector who agreed to sanction only 50 acres on a 20-year lease. The land thus obtained was on the slopes of Panchadharia Hills with huge boulders, thorny shrubs and weeds, and five perennial springs. Rao sought the help of agricultural laboratories who updated him with a list of plant species that could be grown on dry land. With this information and the dedicated involvement of members of BCT, the slopes of Panchadharia were transformed into a prosperous farm in three years.

Although Rao's BCT was helping men in the village by providing them employment under the wasteland schemes, the women were complaining that nothing was being done for them. Thus began the mahila mandalis, which come under a federation, the Mahila Samakhya. Initially, the women under this program were given an opportunity to earn small incomes through raising nurseries and stitching adda leaves. The trust started giving these women loans against their small savings with which they could buy sheep, poultry, etc. For a long time now, BCT has been using these women as agents of social change. There are women health workers, women para-vets, women thrift workers and mahila mandalis who run balawadis (playhomes for children).

A team of World Bank experts visited Delhi in 1981. One of the visitors had heard of the benevolent activities of Dr. Rao through an international funding agency. Curious to learn more about the man, the visitor asked Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, if she had heard of him. Mrs. Gandhi contacted her cabinet colleague, Mr. Narasimha Rao and told him that she wanted Dr. Parameswara Rao to join her and the World Bank delegation for lunch the next day.

Impressed by the accomplishments of Dr. Rao in Dimli, Mrs. Gandhi started showing keen interest in the activities of BCT. Dr. Rao believes that Dimli is what it is today because of the dedicated work of the villagers and BCT is only showing them the way.

### **Astonishing accomplishments from a wheelchair – Mr. Ramakrishna**

It was a bright morning in January 1975. Ramani (now Ramakrishna) was in a train to Bangalore. He was excited about the armed forces recruitment tests that he would be attending over the next four days. It was just a few days ago that defence personnel had come to his village searching for potential recruits, for the post of naval officer. The thought of carrying out an adventurous job and serving the nation tempted Ramani to appear for the recruitment tests. Little did he know that this would be the end of all his happiness.

Ramani was off to a fine start on the first day of tests. He did well in the IQ test and handled group discussions with confidence. Over the next couple of days, Ramani had to perform individual tasks of negotiating 10 obstacles in three minutes. Ramani did the first four of them quite well, but it was the next obstacle test that almost proved fatal. The fifth test required Ramani to jump 15 feet from a tree to a mid-air platform and from there to the ground 10 feet below. Ramani muttered a small prayer, climbed the tree, and from the treetop jumped onto the mid-air platform. Without even holding himself together, Ramani took the next jump, stumbled, and landed on the floor 10 feet below with a bang. He could not feel any sensation from below his neck.

Jawans rushed him to a nearby air force hospital. The freak accident had caused Ramani severe damage. His cervical spine was subjected to multiple fractures and was dislocated; he lost control over his bowel and urinary tract; most of his organs had become partially dysfunctional; and his limbs were paralyzed. The special treatment provided at the military hospital in Kirkee in Pune for 16 months, helped revive his bodily functions and limbs to a minimal extent. Dr. Amarjit Chahal, Ramani's physiotherapist, was largely instrumental in getting Ramani out of his depression. After 20 intensive months of treatment, Ramani was discharged and he returned to his village Ayikudy (in Tamil Nadu). This time Ramani had a different dream, a dream to serve many of the young children who like him were disabled. He kept telling himself, 'I must be useful to society.'

Ramani's first attempts to set up a printing press and match factory proved futile due to lack of money and tedium of official clearances. Therefore, he engaged himself most of the time teaching the village children. In 1981, Ramani sent letters to the President and Prime Minister of India requesting their help. In response, Ramani got a mere Rs.1,000 from the President. On the advice of one of his relatives, Ramani set up the Amar Seva Sangham at Ayikudy in 1981 (that year also being the International Year of the Disabled). The Sangham had started with a nursery school in a thatched shed with only five students. On one occasion when the Rotary Club wanted to organize an immunization programme for children of Ayikudy, Ramani volunteered to help them out. Although the Club members had doubts of Ramani being able to handle the responsibility, they were overwhelmed to see thousands of kids being immunized on the first camp itself. Similar voluntary activities of Ramani helped him and Amar Seva Sangham (ASS) gain popularity, which gradually led to aid from a few

institutions. The Jindal Trust of Bangalore helped ASS with an annual grant of Rs.60,000. With this money, a tuition center and Hindi classes were started in the Sangham.

Ramani decided to start a primary school. While everyone assumed that raising Rs. 6 lacs (which was the project estimate) was impossible, Ramani never lost hope. And rightly so, donations started flowing in from various celebrities in Tamil Nadu. The first donation received was from Madurambal of Vellore who gave Rs.5,000 towards the cause. She had read an article on ASS in *Kalki*. Many such contributions received including a cheque of Rs.15,000 from Tamil writer Sivasankari, made it possible to inaugurate the primary school building in 1991. But, this was only one hurdle crossed. Ramani shot out a series of lengthy letters and paid several visits to the education minister's office for three years, before the government could recognize his school.

In March 1991, a home for the handicapped was set up. What started off with 5 children has 25 children today. Most of these children who are polio-afflicted live in the school building itself. These children come from very poor families and the ASS selects the most needy children. The rehabilitation center with special facilities that is on the verge of completion provides therapy to these children. ASS received substantial funding from the Heart and Hand Foundation of the US towards this project.

The Sangham also runs a women's training center, sponsored by the Dorabji Tata Trust. The center teaches destitute women tailoring and handicrafts.

ASS depends entirely on outside contributions and sponsorships for its operations. It is confident that it will continue to receive such support even in the future. It has launched many schemes for sponsorships from generous donors and firms. A donor can make a one-time payment of Rs.2,500 under the Kamadhenu Scheme. This amount serves to feed the 25 handicapped children for one day of the year. The need is for 365 such donors, which will take care of the children's needs for the whole year. Donors can also adopt handicapped children of their choice by making a donation of Rs.30,000 under the Amudhasurabhi Scheme. Ramani also organizes charity concerts for ASS. Renowned singers like Maharajpuram Santhanam and Yesudas have helped raise big amounts.

Today, Ramani's body is a twisted cluster of muscles that sits on a wheelchair with a determined will to live and to serve. His body cannot endure variations in the weather. It leads to an unbearable pain in his chest. There is nothing Ramani can do on his own, not even drink a glass of water. When the telephone rings, his attendant has to shuffle his body in position and hold the phone to his ears. His body quivers when he gets his frequent spells of seizures and his aide rushes to pin him to the wheelchair and help him regain his breath. But Ramani faces all his suffering with calmness. He believes in the strength of his mind. He finds solace in the Chinese proverb: 'I was unhappy because I could not buy a pair of shoes, till I saw a man who does not even have legs.'

### **Everyone receives justice in his open court – Harivallabh Parikh**

When Harivallabh, the son of the diwan of Pratapgarh in Rajputana, accompanied freedom fighter Madan Mohan Malviya to the nearby villages, he was amazed to see the great man

touch the untouchables. In response to Harivallabh's astonishment, Malviya handed him a small book on Mahatma Gandhi in which he wrote: 'Dear Harivallabh, I hope you will become a social worker when you grow up; this book comes with my blessings.' This book that impressed Harivallabh as a lad influenced him into becoming Gandhi's disciple.

On a cold evening in 1949, Harivallabh and his wife Prabha arrived at Mota Vata village on Hirna. The couple had no idea of the animosity prevailing in the tribal society of the village, whom the Mahatma had told them to serve. Harivallabh was welcomed with drawn bows. When the tribals noticed that the couple was unarmed, they lowered their weapons. Harivallabh told them that he was sent by Gandhiji to serve them and relieve them from the clutches of their landlords, but the tribals understood nothing. They returned to their huts ignoring the strangers.

Seven days had gone by since Harivallabh and Prabha had started cooking and sleeping in the open. They were still not welcomed into the village. The predicament of the couple finally managed to touch the heart of Bhagwan and Rathwa, who helped Harivallabh build a small hut outside the village. The inhibitions of the villagers towards Harivallabh gradually started to fade.

Prabha started connecting to the villagers by giving their children a bath, washing their clothes and teaching the women how to keep their huts clean. Harivallabh walked through the villages making efforts to learn more about the tribal culture and occupation. He found out that landlords and moneylenders (who were the only non-tribals) were charging 300 per cent interest on loans given to tribals. This made it impossible for tribals to repay the loan, and in the bargain they were losing their land and ending up becoming bonded laborers. Says Harivallabh: 'There were originally no landlords in this area as the land belonged to the tribals. But the usurers acquired their land and became landlords.' The word of the usurers was the law of the land.

Determined to liberate the tribals from slavery, Harivallabh started addressing small gatherings of villagers every night, telling them stories about the freedom struggle, love and sacrifice, bondage and freedom, and principles of social life. When Harivallabh realized that the villagers had developed sufficient confidence and trust in him, he told them to ask the moneylenders for accounts (earlier, one of the tribals was burnt alive for showing such audacity). He also taught and explained to them, using a slate, how to write and keep track of their accounts. One at a time, Harivallabh took up each of their cases, writing to the usurers to explain the accounts before the tribal panchayat. And he compelled the police, using the influence of his friends in the Congress, to file cases of defrauding against the usurers. This marked the beginning of a revolution in the lawless and uncivilized tribal society. Harivallabh's attempt was to give the tribals two paraphernalia: the plough and the law.

In 1949, Harivallabh built himself a house at Rangpur, which gradually grew into Anand Niketan, a Gandhian ashram, comprising 300 full-time workers and thousands of tribal volunteers. Harivallabh fought with the landlords and retrieved the tribal's lands. He then taught the villagers the art of tilling on the ashram land.

Introducing law and justice on a land where people understood no law except that of the arrow was a huge challenge confronting Harivallabh. The tribals often kidnapped each other's wives and on most occasions such kidnaps would end in a murder. Relatives of the murdered person would avenge another murder as payback. Murders would continue leading to a never-ending family feud. Women who were pronounced as vampires by the village witch doctor were being burnt alive. And women and children who happened to be inflicted by fatal diseases were left to die, as the tribals had no idea of medicines.

Harivallabh started going to villages to settle small disputes. Men who would come to the ashram to learn farming, writing and reading would update him on quarrels if any in the neighborhood. He would rush to the spot on his bicycle and settle issues before it could end in bloodshed. Villagers began to like Harivallabh's way of reconciliation. Further it did not involve the police and the court of law where the offenders would have to spend a lot of money. Soon, people started coming to the ashram, seeking Harivallabh the judge. And thus began the open court of Rangpur.

One of the first fights to be settled by the open court was that of Thakore of Boriyat. The Thakore was levying unheard of taxes such as a tax on hearth for instance. Villagers oblivious of the fact that thakoredom had ended with the dawn of Indian independence, continued to pay up. Phatu, the headman, refused to pay the hearth tax on the behest of Harivallabh. In response, the Thakur's men beat up Phatu. Harivallabh took the matter to the police, but the Thakore had already bribed them. He then wrote to the newspapers about the Thakore and his activities. He also pleaded to his acquaintances in the Congress not to defend the Thakore. For the first time in the history of Gujarat, a Thakore was arrested. Ashamed by her son's doings, the Thakore's mother wrote a letter of apology to Harivallabh and said that her son would apologize for what he had done in a sitting of the court at her manor house. Thus, the Thakur who was on bail, wept in front of the villagers, paid Rs.1,00 towards Phatu's medical expenses and promised to be a good man. Says Harivallabh: 'We understood the feelings of the Thakurani. The idea was not to humiliate anyone, but to seek justice. The Thakore has since been one of the finest gentlemen in the region.'

The open court has settled over 60,000 cases till date. This translates into Harivallabh having been successful in stopping at least as many murders from happening. The open court also dealt with cases that have helped drive out many superstitions from the tribal mind.

Meanwhile, keeping in tune with the Bhoodaan and Gramdaan movements started by Vinoba Bhave, Harivallabh walked across Gujarat (including Narmada Valley) and collected 18,000 acres of land, primarily in the tribal belt, which was given to the landless. Local councils established in the villages helped the tribal farmers to till their land. The Anand Niketan ashram has developed scientific methods of farming, horticulture and dairying and it rears hybrid seeds and livestock for distribution among tribals.

Anand Niketan has helped form 23 forest protection cooperative societies of tribals, to protect the forest habitat. Bio-gas plants have been fitted in over 2.5 lakh houses thus reducing the villager's burden of collecting firewood, and preventing the felling of many grown-up trees a year. With regard to irrigation in the upper reaches of the Narmada Valley, where villagers thought it impossible to water the uphill tracts, Anand Niketan has made it possible by

building 27 check dams. Apart from having been taught the art of spinning and weaving (tribals spin and weave their own clothes now), tribals are trained in crafts like carpentry, biogas plant repairing and mat making in the ashram.

The once lawless tribal community at Rangpur has now been transformed into a civilized neighborhood. Harivallabh makes clear that his machinery of justice is complementary to the state machinery and not competitive. Cases of assault are passed on to the police. Harivallabh only prevents revenge that usually follows a conflict, and settles all disputes amicably and justly. The ex-Chief Justice of India, P.N. Bhagwati, wrote in a message to an Anand Niketan publication: 'Harivallabh was the first person to start the concept of lok adalat, long before the idea was mooted by me on an all-India basis. The adalats, which Harivallabh is holding are real lok adalats because the people participate in the conciliatory and adjudicatory process. If only the experiment were to be replicated throughout India on a massive scale, we shall be able to remove, to a considerable extent, the bitterness and strife affecting rural life.'

### **An industrialist with a heart – Mr. Kantisen Shroff**

April 10, 1970 was the most memorable day for Kalubhai Durbar. The leprosy home he was living in had an unusual visitor, Kantisen Shroff who was the Managing Director of the Rs. 300 crore Excel Industries. Kantisen was in Bhavnagar (Gujarat) to set up a factory on the site that was right opposite the leprosy home. Kalubhai and Bapu being the first two inmates to be spotted by Kantisen when he walked in were asked, "What do you do?" and the two replied, "We *were* electricians'. 'What do you mean you were electricians?' asked Kantisen. 'Have you forgotten your skills?' 'No but we can't find work' they lamented. 'Come join me' said Kantisen. Kalubhai's joy knew no bounds, when he was taken in as helper in Excel's electrical department. Today, being fully cured, he is a supervisor in the department. Bapu, who also was hired by Excel, died a few years ago.

Sukhlal Panachand Badgujar, 54 of Jalgaon in Maharashtra has a similar experience to share. Even after being cured of leprosy, nobody was prepared to hire him as a sign painter. And when he was advised to undergo surgery in Bhavnagar hospital (which is visited by managers from Excel's rehabilitation cell once a day), he ended up in the hospital and moved on to do some painting work there. On July 24, 1972 he was hired by Excel Industries, and was the only painter in the entire complex. Even those who were hesitant to seek his help had to come to him. Not employing another painter was Kantisen's way of making certain that Sukhlal got respect. 'Nobody makes me feel like I am a leprosy patient' says Sukhlal, who has been painting machine parts and signboards in Excel for over two decades now.

There are many like Kalubhai and Sukhlal whose lives have been rejuvenated by Kantisen Shroff (often referred to as Kaka) and the Excel factory. And most of them, in their own small ways, have helped other leprosy people like them to lead productive lives. Meanwhile, when the new plant of Excel was under construction at Bhavnagar, Kaka heard of the Adodias, a community of thieves and hooch (illicit alcohol) makers. No one dared to enter their colony or look them in the eye. The surrounding neighborhood despised the Adodias. But, Kaka realized that as long as society continues to hate them, the Adodias would never change. And he decided to make the first move in showing his concern for this detested community by hiring 40 of them for his new factory. Magan Hira, the most villainous of them all was the

first to be hired, and his transformation was so complete that people soon started calling him Maganbapa. Kaka renamed the colony Mahavirnagar.

Maganbapa died two years ago. There are only two Adodias now left in Excel, the others having deserted or died. Mahavirnagar did not manage to transform completely. Adodias are still involved in hooch making and selling. But, Kaka perseveres in his efforts. Excel staff and social workers are still working at transforming the colony and bringing the Adodias into the mainstream.

While most of Kaka's activities revolved around building Excel into a multi-product industry, he was frequently drawn to the sufferings of the people of Kutch, this being his native land. Draughts and famines are a regular feature in Kutch. During such times of distress, Kaka and his family would fly down from Bombay and participate as volunteers in the relief operations launched by Ramakrishna Mission, industrialist Arvind Mafatlal and several others. Being a volunteer was just not satisfying to Kaka. The state government was making no attempt to find a lasting solution to the various problems in Kutch. Government plans to source water from rivers of the neighboring states remained as plans. Scanty rainfall and the parched land were forcing people to leave their roots and seek menial jobs in other states. This disturbed Kaka.

During 1973-1978, Kaka made a number of visits to Kutch, spent hours traveling all over the district, meeting villagers, collating information about the existing irrigation facilities and studying the district's topography. Villagers came up with brilliant ideas for all round development of their villages and were more than willing to carry out these small projects. All it required was a competent organization to monitor and facilitate the implementation. Thus was born Kaka's farmer service and guidance center, in 1978, under the name of Shree Vivekanand Research and Training Institute in Mandvi town. The institute that aims at social development of villages, which according to Kaka means reaching out to people and teaching them ways of overcoming natural and man-made scarcities, is teaching the farmers techniques of rainwater harvesting, land management, afforestation, horticulture, animal husbandry, bio-gas production, milk processing, bee-keeping and solar energy. With the help of the institute, villagers have built about 135 rainwater storage tanks, farm ponds and percolation tanks. Other irrigation facilities built include 70 check dams, 168 sub-surface dikes and 100 recharging wells.

Jayantibhai Thakkar, the sarpanch of Dhumra village says, 'Kaka has done so much for Kutch in terms of funds, ideas and project initiation. No one else has ever done so much as far as I can remember. And I know the history of this place.' Inspired by Vivekanand Institute and Kaka, Thakkar along with five other families built a cooperative irrigation system consisting of two check dams, two sub-surface dikes and ponds on their farms. Farmers of the village who used to earn paltry compensations of Rs. 10 a day doing menial labour are now into horticulture, farming, dairying and afforestation, earning regular incomes throughout the year. Although Thakkar admits that the government has spent Rs. 78 lacs on irrigation projects, he is not happy with the idea of government subsidies. 'How much and how long can you do it? That only makes us beggars. Instead, give us the basic infrastructure – irrigation – and we will help ourselves.' says Thakkar.

The Institute's water conservation projects and dedicated work of the 100 permanent employees and 300 volunteers has helped a number of surrounding villages like Baladiya (20 km from Bhuj) and Godhpar village (10 km away from Kutch) build their own irrigation facilities. Says Devshibhai Karshan Patel, one of the coordinators of the effort in Godhpar village: "We don't want to wait for the government. We have realized that we can help ourselves."

Mohammed Seth, a trader of Naliya, who had seen the Institute transform 400 acres of uncultivated land into prime agricultural land in just 4 years after it began work in Naliya, was motivated to give 35 acres of land in Abhdasa (76 km from Mandvi) free to the Institute. This land has been converted into an orchard of chikoo, kaali pathi and pomegranates.

Gandhigram, a model village in Kutch created by the Vivekanand Institute, has made life a heaven for its 75 families. Surrounded by forests and wasteland with no sign of water, the villagers today get water from a pond and sunk bore wells. A check dam has been built to irrigate the 300 acres of farms. The institute also plans to set up a 'Sanskar Kendra', self-help groups of 25 members each, lok adalat, smokeless ovens in each house, fodder bank in each house, community irrigation, gram vikas mandal, savings schemes for women and children, mahila mandals for women's education, health and employment, and many more.

Shrujan Trust at Bhuj, which was started with a government grant of Rs. 3.75 lacs by Chandaben (Kantisen's wife), has grown into a major revenue generator, helping women artisans earn a living throughout the year. The trust provides the artisans raw materials, designs and market support. Artisans who are experts, train others in their village with the help of the Vivekananda Institute. The artisans can earn anything from Rs. 700 to Rs. 8,000 for a single dress, depending on the pattern and quality of work. Their work is also being marketed overseas in Paris, Washington and Amsterdam.

Kaka has started the Excel Institute of Technology, Environment and Management to make people across the country aware of how to protect the environment. Putting industrial wastes to productive use, as a fertilizer for trees, is another area Kaka is channelizing his efforts on. And his interest in solid waste management has led him to set up two garbage processing factories in Bombay and Ahmedabad.

Showing the way to leprosy patients and reviving the villages of Kutch has not been an easy journey for Kaka. But his philosophy is: one can overcome any obstacle and do the impossible if one has shraddha (faith and dedication), ekagratha (concentration), saka virayam (spirit of togetherness) and shraman (self-respect). And if one proves that something is achievable, others will follow.

### **The doctors-turned-social healers – Mr. & Mrs. Bang**

September 23, 1975 was a day of soul-searching for Abhay Bang, who was pursuing his junior residency program from the Post-Graduate Institute (PGI) of Chandigarh. He was disturbed by the fact that health care projects were not focused on the Indian reality – TB, diarrhoea and neo-natal pneumonia. What was the purpose of his medical education if it could not be of use to society? Abhay said to himself, 'What am I doing here? I will become useless

for the Indian reality.’ Despite his disillusion, Abhay took the MD selection test, and he stood first. But in the ensuing meeting with the PGI faculty, Abhay rejected the admission. The members of the interview board were taken aback. The director convened the general council where Abhay was asked to explain his actions. Abhay had two questions he asked the council: Are Indian doctors being trained for the US? Is it worth spending huge amounts on some rare heart problem when the money could have been enough for the health care of one lakh rural poor? Although the council did not have an appropriate answer to Abhay’s questions, it surely warned him that he would regret his decision of rejecting the admission.

Abhay spent 6 months in the rural areas of Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh and established the Medico Friends Circle in 1975 to deliver public health care. Though young doctors from other disciplines signed on, the idea of social change did not appeal to them, and hence Abhay’s efforts failed. Thus, Abhay went on to complete his MD in pediatrics from Nagpur University in 1977. Rani, with whom Abhay was acquainted ever since the days he was training to be a pediatrician in Nagpur Medical College, had turned into a dear friend. After Rani had specialized in gynecology (in 1977), the two decided it was time that their strong friendship ended in marriage.

Initially, Rani and Abhay worked at Chetna Vikas, an NGO for rural development set up by Abhay’s parents in Wardha. The doctor-couple began working in rural areas, and after a while, Rani moved on to working as an honorary consultant at the Wardha district hospital. In 1983, the couple received fellowships from the Ford Foundation to the Johns Hopkins University in the US for a one-year masters course in public health. On completion of the course, the couple arrived at Gadchiroli district (200 km from Nagpur) to change health care for 50,000 people, spread in 58 villages in the district.

The very next day after their arrival, Rani and Abhay started interacting with community health workers. The idea was to encourage the villagers to give up their dependence on hospitals, and rely instead on arogya dhoots (health workers) and dais (traditional birth attendants) to take care of their health needs. A society called SEARCH (Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health) was set up by the doctor couple, and findings of SEARCH revealed that 92 per cent of women in the 58 villages had gynecological disorders and that pneumonia was a killer disease amongst children.

SEARCH was registered in 1986 and started operating out of a godown that the Bangs got free from Vasant Rao Sawkar, a rich tendu trader in the district. The society’s goals were to conduct research, supplement the government health service by paying more attention to the neglected health problems of the rural folk, developing solutions in line with their needs, as well as training and equipping the arogya dhoots and dais in basics of health care. The Ford Foundation, Indian Council of Medical Research, Oxfam (UK), and Ashoka Foundation have made generous contributions to SEARCH among others.

Initially, SEARCH entered into a joint venture with the government. It undertook the management and day-to-day operations of two government primary health centers (PHCs) and the Gadchiroli district hospital. The 11 civil surgeons at the district hospital used to visit the hospital only five days in a month and one of them was even caught taking a bribe. The hospital staff and doctors were not comfortable with the ‘outsiders’ interfering in their affairs.

Large-scale absenteeism of staff and corruption were key reasons patients were avoiding the district hospital. But with SEARCH on board, things at the district hospital changed to a great extent. Attendance had increased by 50 per cent and corruption had dropped drastically. The two PHCs managed by SEARCH were rated the best in the district for their service and efficiency.

Despite their success with the government PHCs and district hospital, the Bangs did not approve of the insensitivity of the highly centralized health department towards the people's needs. The health department's only concern was to achieve targets. For example, the department was happy that Gadchiroli was the number one district for three successive years in family planning. It did not matter to them that mortality rates were increasing, and that childhood pneumonia and gynecological disorders were chief problems in the district. Thus, disillusioned by the ways of the government, SEARCH ended its tie-up in 1988.

Arogya dhoots and dais were trained to diagnose pneumonia in children and treat them with oral antibiotics. An ingenious device called 'breath-counter' was developed by Abhay to count heartbeats and check respiratory tract of a child. The simplicity of the device made it possible even for an illiterate dai to handle it. Between 1988-1990, health workers handled 2,000 critical cases, through which the mortality rate became negligible. Childhood mortality due to diseases fell by 30 per cent. Infant deaths due to pneumonia fell by 33 per cent and that of children fell by 75 per cent. SEARCH also educates parents on symptoms of diseases and advises them to rush the patients to health workers, unlike health campaigns that only treat the disease and provide no education.

Rani, through interviews and discussions with 800 women and dais, discovered that 92 per cent of the women in the district had gynecological diseases, half of which were reproductive tract infections. Considered a curse among tribal women, the 'white discharge' problem was always kept a secret, until it reached the fatal stage. The inability or unwillingness to communicate the problem as it was to the doctor was worsening the problem. Women kept stressing on the symptom of 'weakness' and doctors treated them for anemia. The actual problem persisted and remained unattended. After identifying this problem, Rani educated SEARCH dais on the disease and taught them what medicines to prescribe. The dai's better understanding of the symptoms and appropriate medication has proved more effective than the traditional remedies that were being taken by infected women earlier.

Dais have also been trained to handle childbirth in a hygienic way. Manjulabha who had received training in a government project where she was being paid Rs. 300 a month says: 'We were asked to give our thumb impression and collect the money. There was no proper training, monitoring or follow-up. It is far better in SEARCH.' One of the practices of the tribal community in certain villages was to lock the mother and child in a room for five days after she gave birth. Both had to suffer all the stink and germs caused due to childbirth, as this was the custom. This was one of the factors causing pneumonic fatalities among infants in the district. But Maya, a dai trained by SEARCH, who handled over 100 neonatal cases in a two-year span, says that more and more tribals were giving up such harmful practices. 'They have developed faith in us', she says.

In 1993, the Bangs set up Shodh-gram, 17 km from Gadchiroli on 13 acres of land. It consists of wards, outpatient departments, a canteen, a pharmacy, a de-addiction center and quarters for the staff. The doctor couple and their two children built a house for themselves in the premises of Shodh-gram.

Many women's groups and youth started approaching Abhay and Rani to help them fight the social evil of drinking. The couple recommended possible ways of dealing with the situation, but deliberately did not take the lead to support the cause, in keeping with their philosophy of encouraging self-help i.e. to make villagers deal with it as their problem and find solutions themselves. Accordingly, an action committee of 15 villages was formed at a SEARCH awareness camp. One of the village panchayats of the committee forced the district magistrate to shut down two licensed liquor outlets. This angered the liquor lobby. A Zilla Parishad Chairman happened to be one of the leading distributors, and he threatened the Bangs that he would end their lives. When the Bangs showed no signs of fear and took it as an empty threat, the liquor mafia filed a charge sheet against the duo trying to slur their reputation. The state government which ordered an inquiry into the charges, found the charges to be baseless. And the character assassination ceased with Rani one day treating the seriously ill child of the leader of the denigration campaign. He spread the word around that Rani was a caring and loving woman and did not deserve to be troubled this way.

For Abhay and Rani, reaching out to people is the best way to solve their problems. They are motivated by the staunch belief that doing good to others without anticipating anything in return is a reward in itself.

### **Restoring life in the foothills of Aravallis – Mr. Rajendra Singh**

On the evening of October 2, 1985, five youth had landed themselves in Kishori village, 20 km past Thanagazi town in the foothills of the Aravallis. One amongst the team was Rajendra Singh (Rajendra), the son of a zamindar from Uttar Pradesh. A postgraduate in Hindi from Allahabad University and a qualified Ayurvedic physician from Rishikul Ayurvedic Mahavidyalaya in UP, Rajendra had given up a government job as project coordinator for youth education in Jaipur, to work for his brethren in the villages of Rajasthan.

Ramesh, a worker in the Gandhi Peace Foundation, had been a large influence on Rajendra as a young boy. Later, as a youth coordinator in Jaipur, Rajendra had joined the Tarun Bharat Sangh and went on to become its general secretary after three years. In keeping with the mission of their organization, Rajendra and his four companions – Narendra, Satendra, Dedar and Drighpal - renounced their luxuries and families and came to Kishori village to renew it.

Mistaking the bearded young men for terrorists, villagers fled from the spot. And it was one of the seniors of the village who took Rajendra and his team to a one-room shelter in a nearby Hanuman temple, where they spent the next seven days. Then the kind gesture of Seth Badri Prasad which came to Rajendra as a surprise, made it possible for them to stay in his two unoccupied havelis in the neighboring Bhikampura.

The drought-stricken village of Gopalpura, a village in the vicinity of Bhikampura, had not seen a single drop of water in the last five years. The existing check dams were wrecked, and

the government had not bothered to repair them. The village pond had dried up. When Rajendra and his friends started to undertake the repairs themselves, the government objected to it. Refusing to back out, Rajendra motivated the villagers to dig further and deepen the village pond. With the onset of the monsoons, the water level in the pond went up, and had also recharged the close-by wells. The villagers danced in celebration.

Seeing the first signs of water in their village, villagers of Gopalpura sought Rajendra's help in restoring the check dam, which was 1,400 feet long, 20 feet high and 50 feet wide. Yogendra, an engineer friend of Rajendra, was called to guide the villagers through the challenging task. As the 350 families of Gopalpura were not sufficient to undertake repair work all by themselves, people from the neighboring villages were roped in and paid for through donations collected. In this manner, the check dam was repaired in 10,000 mandays, which facilitated irrigation of 600 bighas of land. The success story not only prompted people of other villages to seek assistance of Rajendra in building similar water harvesting systems in their villages, but also gave birth to the Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) in the Aravallis.

The next water harvesting system was installed in Govindpura, and in a span of 10 years hundreds of ponds and check dams were built along the tributary of Arvari, which has also helped revive the stream. At Hamirpur, a 2.5 km long reservoir costing Rs.3.5 lacs was built, which benefits five big villages. Five percent of the costs of erecting the reservoir was borne by TBS and every beneficiary in the five villages has also contributed money based on their capacity. To preserve the ecology, villagers went on a 100-day satyagraha, pressurizing the government to withdraw fishing contracts for the reservoir. Even if a single fish is caught here, the village sabha, without hesitation, charges a fine. Sometimes, the fine can be as steep as Rs.1,100.

The Ruparel river, which was the only source of water for inhabitants living on the tip of Sariska Hills, had dried up. This had caused many of the villagers to flee, and some had died. A TBS volunteer who climbed the hill sometime in 1987 suggested to two women on the hills (who were the only ones left), to dig a pond. Acting on the suggestion, the two women dug two ponds in four months time, with the help of few volunteers who visited them regularly. Although the pond had water only for three months that year, it was swelling with water all year long after two years. The villagers settled at the foot of the hill had also made efforts in installing water harvesting systems. In due course, 350 ponds and check dams were constructed in the Ruparel basin, bringing the river to life once again.

Meanwhile, TBS's activities started attracting help from European agencies. With their financial aid, TBS managed to build 2,500 ponds and check dams in 650 villages of Rajasthan, scattered over the districts of Alwar, Jaipur, Dausa, Karoli, Sawai Madhopur, Udaipur and Jaisalmer.

Sariska, a dangerous and rough terrain, was declared a national park in 1978. This forced the villagers to migrate to cities in search of labour, leaving behind their wives and children to fend for themselves. The terrain also had marble mines owned by well-known filmmakers and politicians. These mines had wiped out large patches of grazing land of the cattle. Taking cognizance of the plight of the Sariska villagers, TBS appealed to the Supreme Court to pass an order banning mining in the Sariska terrain. The orders were passed the following year.

The Rajasthan government, which wanted the mining activities to continue, filed false affidavits. Furious mine owners made attacks on TBS volunteers. Rajendra had narrow escapes from three attempts on his life.

The Union government was forced to pronounce the Aravallis as a fragile ecosystem by the Supreme Court, thereby prohibiting mining. But the mine owners managed to get the notification revoked. The counter reaction to this was a three-month satyagraha launched by TBS in January 1993. They blocked all roads leading to the mines. Mine owners once again resorted to physical attacks on the protesters. They filed 42 cases on TBS, including three rape charges against Rajendra. None of the charges could be proved. The Supreme Court ruled that Rajendra could not be arrested without its permission. But this did not stop the Rajasthan government from harassing Rajendra and TBS. An all-party legislative committee formed to conduct an inquiry into the matter reported to the Supreme Court that Rajendra and his team were doing good work in the region. With this verdict, Rajendra had won half the battle.

In order to help villagers start farming on their land that was declared as a wildlife sanctuary, TBS started harassing the forest officials. They denied them food and water, forcing them to take transfers. Fateh Singh Rathore, the new forest officer who empathized with the villagers devised rules to protect the forests and permitted villagers to start water-harvesting work. The forest was rejuvenated once again, streams became perennial, cattle had sufficient fodder in the forest and all this had a positive impact on the government too. The government, which had earlier threatened to demolish the check dams built in Gopalpura and Bhavta claiming them to be illegal, started cooperating with TBS.

People's Action Watershed Development Initiative (PAWDI) was a Rs. 16 crore project started by the Rajasthan Government in collaboration with TBS. The grants were obtained from a Swiss agency by TBS, assuring them that the government could work like an NGO. The government through TBS encouraged the people to rebuild and maintain 2,800 irrigation dams that were non-operational.

TBS has grown into an organization comprising 42 full time workers, 120 part time workers and 2,000 volunteers. Rajendra aims to green the entire 2,400 km stretch of mountain ranges from Delhi to Himmat Nagar. His dream is to ensure that communities manage their own water, forest and land resources along the whole of the Aravallis.

### **Providing a home for the nowhere communes – Mr. Ratan Katyayani**

It was January 1990. Outside the magistrate's court at Thanagazi in Alwar district of Rajasthan, three policemen were dragging an old man into court. He belonged to the Banjara clan, the largest nomadic group in the state of Rajasthan. Half-a-dozen other Banjaras, who were pleading the policemen to let go of him, followed the old man into court. Lawyer Ratan Katyayani, who witnessed the episode, was curious to learn the reason for the old man's arrest. When Katyayani asked the magistrate what crime Krishna (the old Banjara man) had committed, the magistrate said that Krishna was being charged under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which permits imprisonment on suspicion of a person unable to provide a fixed, permanent address. The magistrate decided to sentence Krishna to a fortnight in prison. Before he could pass the order, Katyayani moved a bail application on behalf of

Krishna. The magistrate, laughing at Katyayani's insanity, granted bail and fixed a surety of Rs.10,000. Knowing well that no one would stand surety, Katyayani offered to do it himself.

Krishna and his people were waiting outside the court to thank Katyayani. Katyayani gave Krishna his address and told him to appear in court after 15 days. The Banjaras decided to camp in the Aravallis hills, 20 km from Thanagazi town, so that they could be close to Katyayani's house and appear in court whenever required. Katyayani often visited the Banjara camp. During his interactions with Krishna and his group, Katyayani discovered that the nomads no longer enjoyed their way of life and wanted to settle in one place. The salt and multani mitti (Fuller's earth, a body cleansing powder), which they used to sell for a living in the past was not in demand anymore. They neither had citizen's rights nor featured in the voters list. Most of the women had resorted to prostitution for survival. Their children never went to school.

Camping was becoming an ordeal for the Banjaras. Villagers would shoo them away. Even cremating their dead in the cremation grounds of villagers was not being allowed. The government official's stand was that nomads never approach the land allotment committees set up in every block, to ask for land that they are entitled to. And nomads complain that officials turn a deaf ear to their pleas. The pathetic state of the Banjaras touched Katyayani's heart. Quitting his legal practice, he resorted to fight for their cause through Muktidhara, an NGO he had set up for peasants in 1988. His philosophy was explicit: *Jo zamin sarkari hai, wo zamin hamari hai*. But this did not mean the nomads could encroach on private land, disputed land, land allotted for projects or notified forestland. The emphasis was on occupying only untaken and unassessed revenue land.

The twenty Banjara families that were associated with Krishna were settled at Bamanwas Chogan village, 20 km from Thanagazi in mid 1991 by Katyayani and volunteers of the Muktidhara. Krishna died in 1995. Katyayani was successful in settling 25 other nomadic groups, giving 20,000 people a place to live in. Most of the nomads have settled in Alwar district, with a few in the districts of Jaipur, Sikar and Dausa. Says Vinay Kumar, tehsildar at Thanagazi: 'What Katyayani is doing should hardly be encouraged. The nomads should ask village panchayats for land. They have no right to simply occupy!' But to Katyayani, these nomads are no encroachers. He feels when officials who are mandated to distribute surplus land, do not do their job, then there is no harm in nomads occupying such land. "If what we are doing is illegal, why has the government not evicted the settled nomads yet?" asks Katyayani.

Villagers look down upon Banjara settlements. They do not allow them to use the village wells and bore wells, the reason for this hostility being villager's presumption of Banjaras as drug traders, and stealers of their livestock. Once, in the village of Haldina, there was a fatal attack on the 70 Banjara families who had just settled there three months earlier. Villagers burnt down several houses and stripped woman naked. Only when Katyayani and his volunteers launched a huge protest in front of the district collector's house did some villagers get arrested. The arrests were avenged with the burning down of all the houses of the 70 families a year later. The Banjaras never returned to Haldina.

Most nomadic groups continue to live on lands provided by Muktidhara, despite atrocities. Even if villagers have terrorized the settlements forcing them to flee, most of them have returned. Every time such violence breaks out and Banjaras are harmed, Katyayani has come to their rescue by launching marches, protests and petitions at the collectorate. Villagers have not spared Katyayani either. He has been beaten, kicked, and has had his bones broken on several occasions. 'But I never filed cases' he says. 'Had I complained, my nomads would have been rendered even more vulnerable. Why should they suffer for my sake?'

Getting the nomads a place to settle down is only the first step towards ensuring their rights. Getting them ration cards, getting them land deeds, enrolling their names in the voter's list, providing their children a school, providing the elders work, and setting up bore wells are all issues Katyayani has had to tackle. He submits petition after petition, meets officials umpteen number of times and pursues each of the issues in a very patient manner. And when officials demand bribes or prove irrational, he holds demonstrations. It was one such demonstration held from Alwar to Jaipur during August 1993 that led to the Banjaras being recognized as OBCs.

Katyayani's perseverance and dedication has resulted in most of the nomads in 26 settlements getting their voting rights and ration cards. Bore wells are seen in some of the early settlements. Nomads in Bamanwas and Ganeshpura have even got pattas (title deeds) for their lands, and Ganeshpura is proud to have a telephone.

Although the Banjara children were enrolled in nearby government schools, they were bullied, beaten and sent away by the other children. And teachers were silent spectators to such bullying. Katyayani started setting up non-formal schools in the settlements. There is no fixed classroom. Classes are conducted in the open, and there is only one teacher. Children are taught to read, write and are given basic lessons in arithmetic. Teachers double up for councilors and helpers as well. They listen to women's problems and try to find solutions, take the ill to nearby hospitals, and encourage women to save money by opening recurring deposit accounts in their favor.

Katyayani's only regret has been his inability to provide new employment opportunities for the nomads. They continue to sell salt and multani mitti and work as construction labourers. Very few have moved on to becoming farmers.

To make the nomads fight for their existence and less dependent on himself, Katyayani has started setting up Vikas Sangathan committees in each settlement. Two members from each committee (one male and one female) are sent to an apex body called Ghumantoo Vikas Panchayat (GVP), which is a policy formulating body. GVP's motto is social reform amongst the nomads. Curbing alcohol consumption, eradicating blind faith, and putting an end to prostitution is high on its list. Says Katyayani: 'The GVP decides everything. Their members meet government officials. I am already in the background.'

It is saddening that only a handful of respectable people have a few nice things to say about Katyayani's work. But, the nomads adore and worship him. And what's most satisfying to Katyayani, he says, 'is the fact that I have settled people, not destroyed them.'

### **Giving education in Ladakh a new lease of life – Mr. Sonam Wangchuk**

Uleytopko, a village 70 km from Leh had no schools. Sonam Wangchuk learnt everything his mother could teach him, till he was seven. The next 18 months Wangchuk spent at his uncle's house in Nubra Valley, studying Class I to Class III. All the whisking and torture of having to learn by writing came to an end when his father, Congressman Sonam Wangyal became a minister in 1975, which required the family to move to Srinagar. Wangchuk was sent to the Kendriya Vidyalaya, where classes were conducted in English, Hindi and Urdu. Everything that was taught here went over Wangchuk's head. He felt disgraced when teachers punished him by making him stand outside the classroom.

Tired of the Kendriya Vidyalaya School, the 12-year-old took a train to Delhi and headed straight to the Vishesh Kendriya Vidyalaya, a school for children from the border areas. He pleaded his own case, and the principal who was touched by his innocence, enrolled him into Class VII. Wangchuk soon began to enjoy school. The teachers in Delhi did not insult him, but instead boosted his morale. They forced him to participate in debates, dramatics and other co-curricular activities, and though Wangchuk was nervous initially, his teachers' confidence in him helped overcome his nervousness. Wangchuk who always secured the last rank in his class in Srinagar, now stood third in a class of 40.

Concave mirrors always fascinated Wangchuk. He wanted to make use of the science of reflection and refraction in providing light to dark buildings use this principle of concentrating the sun's light for cooking. Thus, after completing Class XII at Model Academy in Jammu, Wangchuk pursued his mechanical engineering from the Regional Engineering College in Srinagar. His father who wanted Wangchuk to study civil engineering, refused to pay for his son's studies. While pondering on how to raise the fees of Rs. 300 a month, it occurred to Wangchuk that he could provide coaching to students in Ladakh.

Wangchuk skipped an all-India tour of students conducted by the engineering college during that winter. Instead he started coaching classes in Leh. Students were charged one-fifth the price charged by regular coaching centers. Wangchuk made a phenomenal Rs.17,000 at the end of two months, which was more than enough to see him through college. Wangchuk chose 'renewable energy' as his subject during his seventh and eighth semesters and successfully graduated in 1987.

Providing the coaching classes in Leh was an eye opener to Wangchuk. Even the brightest students were failing due to their inability to write in English. Passing the Class XII exams and matriculation exams had become a nightmare to students. They could answer questions in Ladakhi, but not English. It was disheartening to see students fail despite knowing everything. 'I have to change this' Wangchuk told himself.

In 1988, Wangchuk with his brother and five others created the Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (Secmol). They got five individual parties to invest Rs.40,000 each in Secmol and promised to pay 50 per cent interest. The 'Pride of Ladakh' a cultural show organized by Secmol was a huge success, which not only helped Wangchuk return the money borrowed along with the interest, but also left Rs. 1 lac in Secmol's kitty. Between 1988-1990, Secmol undertook coaching Class X students for the board exams and provided training to dropouts in different trades. But the coaching classes were not helping students

attain good marks. Wangchuk then realized that merely coaching the tenth grade students was not enough. He realized that coaching has to begin from the elementary school level and that there was a need to reform the entire government education system.

Teachers of government schools were untrained and what was even more glaring to Wangchuk was that people had no feeling of ownership of government-run schools. There was no agency to ascertain accountability of teachers. The many government schools that had been established between Srinagar and Leh after the late 1950s, did not have enough teachers. To overcome this shortage, the government started appointing Ladakhis who had passed Class VIII (gradually the qualification was raised to Class X and Class XII) as teachers. The District Institute for Educational Training that was mandated to train government teachers in service was not doing its job.

Secmol introduced teacher's training. Government teachers were made to undergo a ten-days' training program that included child-centered and activity-based methods of teaching. Secmol has been successful in training 900 out of 1,000 teachers in Leh. But despite the teacher training exercise, quality of education did not register a major improvement. Wangchuk made a thorough study of the National Policy on Education of 1968 and found out that there was provision for forming Village Education Committees (VEC) for management of elementary education. The policy emphasizes that parents and elders in the community assist teachers in proper functioning of the school; help raise resources for maintenance, repair and construction of school buildings; and involve themselves in deciding the school calendar and timings.

In 1991, Wangchuk was successful in creating a VEC in Saspol village. The education department permitted the hiring of teachers from the neighborhood and promised Secmol that the teachers will not be transferred for the next five years. Secmol trained the teachers in English and taught them to use creative methods of teaching. The results of the training and VEC model started showing in 3 years. A private school in Saspol closed down and other villages requested Secmol to replicate what was done at Saspol in their villages. Secmol undertook the task of converting 30 government schools in the surrounding villages based on the VEC model, and the villages had to bear the cost of training the teachers.

In 1996, 'Operation New Hope' was a project launched by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. The project became the basis for the official education policy for all the 260 schools in the district. Secmol, which was the motivator of the project, converged the VECs into a Block Education Committee (BEC), and these BECs together formed a district Education Committee (DEC). Secmol was helped by 10 other NGOs at the DEC. The larger goal of Operation New Hope is the 3Hs – a skilled Hand, a bright Head and a kind Heart. This goal has been realized in the Centralized Residential School, a model residential school set up at Durbuk. Although the school has been officially handed over to the government, a representative body comprising of members from the government, villagers, teachers and students basically manage it. Dorje Lonpo, chairman of Durbuk BEC says that people resisted the idea of the residential school for the fear of losing the existing schools. But Secmol's efforts in making them realize the importance of such a school encouraged each family to volunteer four weeks labour at the construction site. The school faces south, which helps trap sunlight. The thick walls made of mud help absorb and retain heat in the building, thus

enabling the school to operate even during winter (when other schools close for 2 months). Earlier villagers used to steal doors and windows of the government schools. 'Now their hearts flutter even if a brick moves. It is not what they contribute by way of money, but the feeling of ownership that is the result of their labour. After all, their labour is worth Rs. 15 lacs.' says Wangchuk.

In 1996, Secmol was granted Rs. 2.7 crore from Denmark's Operation Dagsvaerk project. Operation Dagsvaerk voted Secmol's project the best amongst various projects undertaken in different parts of the world. The funds have gone into various school buildings, the Secmol training center at Phey and Secmol's publishing wing. The training center campus has two huge concave mirrors that deflect sun's rays to provide 24 hour power supply and heating to cook for up to 200 people when training programs are in progress. The solar water heater designed and built in-house provides hot water for students to bathe in. The campus also grows fruits and vegetables. During winter, a greenhouse made of ultraviolet-stabilized plastic film, is added to the south side of the building to provide more warmth. An innovative powerhouse (built with clay mixed with hay) that houses the solar batteries has costed Secmol Rs.25,000 as against the government's estimate of Rs.1 lac.

Rebecca Norman, an MEd from Harvard, whom Wangchuk married in 1996, says that Wangchuk does not want to have children of his own for it would hinder his work. Wangchuk has devoted his life for the benefit of Ladakhi children. And when people ask him whether he regrets sacrificing a career in engineering, 'Sacrifice is giving up something you enjoy doing. I have not sacrificed anything.' he explains.

### Reference

All the stories narrated in this chapter have been sourced from the book 'Prophets of New India', a man of the year compilation from The Week, published in Penguin Enterprise by Penguin Books India in the year 2004.

#### **4. Successful Governance Initiatives taken up by Various State Governments in India**

A few state governments in India have realized that the primary reasons for government programs and schemes not reaching intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level are: shortage of public investments, weaknesses in project designs, and poor implementation of schemes. The governments of these states have taken up path-breaking initiatives that have been successful in addressing these failings. These initiatives, although mooted by the government, have been driven through the coordinated efforts and perseverance of many state-level and district level officials. The entrepreneurial zeal and leadership of project leaders have been major contributors to the success of these projects. The projects cater to improvements in the spheres of human development and social services, land and water management and areas of major public interface with government. With these projects in place, communities have been transformed from being passive recipients to proactive stakeholders. <sup>[1]</sup>

##### **Land and Water Projects <sup>[1]</sup>**

For the poor and the marginalized whose livelihood depends on access to land and water, managing these resources is of great importance. Hence some governments like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala have employed successful strategies to use land and water more productively ensuring reduction in poverty and improved food security.

##### **The Swajal Project in Uttar Pradesh & Uttaranchal <sup>[1]</sup>**

Swajal is a project implemented in 26 districts of Uttar Pradesh and 12 districts of Uttaranchal. This is a government initiative in collaboration with the World Bank. The project work started in 1996 and was completed in 2002.

UP suffers from an acute water scarcity. Nearly one-third of its population does not even receive the basic water service level prescribed by Government of India. Due to lack of maintenance, more than one-third of the water supply systems in rural areas, which are open wells, hand pumps and piped water, are dysfunctional at any given point in time. In addition, the sanitation level is way below the national average. Hence, Swajal aimed at integrating rural water supply and environmental sanitation. This community-driven project was also designed to improve the knowledge, attitude and practices of health & hygiene, and improve the quantity, quality, coverage and access of water.

*The basic approaches employed by the Swajal:*

- Making communities exercise control with regard to poor utilization of water resources, using a participatory bottom-up approach
- Building up a feeling of community ownership and responsibility
- Making the operations transparent and
- Efficient dissemination of information

### ***Project Planning***

The pre-planning phase involved selection of villages and support organizations (SO). Support organizations comprised of select NGOs, private firms, public sector organizations like Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam. These SO's had to satisfy certain criteria such as: the SO should be legally registered, should have constitutional provision to undertake rural water supply and environmental sanitation service delivery, should have had at least three years experience in rural water supply and environmental sanitation service or community development activity, should have necessary staff to expedite the proposed project, etc. The SOs primarily acted as social mediators, and activators of the community. Communities had the backing of the village Panchayats in the form of community development and engineering support.

Involving the rural communities in the processes of planning, construction and maintenance of facilities has been one of the key features of project Swajal, which has ensured its sustainability. Communities were asked to collectively come up with three community action plans (CAP), which then provided the broad framework for implementation of the project. The three plans under the CAPs were:

*Technical Plan* – This highlighted the method by which the construction of the water supply system, latrines and drainage would happen. It also had the village environmental action plan (VEAP).

*Contribution and Management Plan* – This included monitoring and evaluation plans, operation and maintenance plans, and cash and labor contribution plans.

*Community Empowerment Plan* – This included plans on women's development, non-formal education plans, and plans on how to bring about hygiene & environmental sanitation awareness.

- The non-formal education plan was a scheme designed to provide the community information and literacy.
- The Hygiene & environmental sanitation awareness plan aimed at increasing awareness about diseases and how these diseases can be prevented through safe water and sanitation. The communities had to determine their own health and hygiene standards, fix performance indicators, set targets for these indicators, and announce the methods they would use to attain the targets.

- The Women's development initiatives aimed at empowering women through the formation of self-help groups and Swajal Saheli Samoohs. These self help groups were made active participants of various economic activities and the water and sanitation development scheme.

### ***Project Implementation***

The implementation phase of the project saw the creation of VWSCs (Village Water and Sanitation Committees) by communities. Each VWSC consisted of 7-12 members elected by the community. The VWSC had a 20 percent reservation for SCST candidates and 30 percent reservation for women. The community had the consensus of all the VWSCs on the proposed CAPs.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Department of Rural Development, a state government body, undertakes all project implementations. It was assisted by ten District Project Management Units (DPMUs). The SOs and the DPMUs put forth their choices of technologies for water supply and sanitation before the community, which then selected the most feasible technology. The community also drew up a plan featuring methods of handling sanitation issues, how it would go about providing training and non-formal education, etc. The implementation of the project was done collectively by the community, the SO and the PMU. An agreement between the three clearly defined each one's roles and responsibilities. A joint account was created with the VWSC and SO as account holders and operators. All funds of the PMU and community were transferred to this account.

### ***Unique Features of the Project***

Swajal encouraged the idea of cost sharing, whereby the communities had to share the capital cost of the water and sanitation facilities. This included i) a 10 percent share in the capital cost, funded in the form of cash and labor in variable amounts, based on the region and kind of technology chosen; and ii) the operations and maintenance costs funded completely by the community, of which 50 percent was claimed during the planning phase as proof of their commitment to the scheme. This cost sharing idea developed a sense of ownership of the project in the community, assisting smooth operation and maintenance of the facilities.

Resources tapped for additional funds to carry out operations and maintenance included:

- The VWSC, which contributed funds by selling water, purchasing tent-house equipment and renting it out at a fixed charge.
- Depositing of operations and maintenance funds as Fixed Deposits in banks and meeting expenses from the interest accumulated.
- Loans obtained from self-help groups

The second unique feature of Swajal was its community contracting strategy. The village community, DPMU and SO engineers would conduct market surveys to determine the most

economical prices for materials and labor. Materials were then procured from authorized dealers and manufacturers to avoid compromising quality and quantity.

The third feature is that the project provides choice in technology and service level to customers. The rural water supply (RWS) and latrine components in the hilly region include piped water supply methods, capturing springs with hand pumps, rainwater harvesting and spring development. In the foothill regions, RWS provides choices of piped water schemes from tube wells, dug wells and hand pumps.

### ***Project Outcomes***

A survey conducted by the PMU, Department of Rural Development, Government of UP revealed that Swajal had directly benefited about eight lakh rural people. Further it has:

- Enhanced the rural population's access to better, sufficient and reliable water and sanitation facilities, positively impacting their health and productivity.
- Improved hygiene and sanitation practices, thereby protecting the environment from bacterial contamination.
- Improved drainage systems built in each of the villages, leading to the controlling of diseases and curtailing breeding of mosquitoes.
- Provided healthier quality of water sources due to catchments protection.
- Facilitated active participation of women through self help groups.
- Motivated community members to take ownership of the water and sanitation facilities.
- Developed a participatory approach, which empowers communities with a key decision-making role in development planning.
- Created an awareness of the connection between health and sanitation.
- Maintained transparency in dealings within and between PMU, DPMUs, SOs, and VWSCs, thus almost weeding out corrupt practices and the misuse of village funds.
- Made the PMU, a government unit, become more sensitive to customer needs.

### **Samridha Krishak Yojana, Assam <sup>[1]</sup>**

The state of Assam has always been a victim to erratic monsoons and floods, which has hampered the main occupation of its population, viz., agriculture. The Basic Agricultural Statistics Report of 1997-1998 revealed that the annual food grain production in Assam was almost 19 percent below the requirement of about 44 lakh metric tonnes. Floods, insufficient irrigation facilities and lack of research support were the three factors hindering agricultural productivity in the state, despite the state having adequate cropping area.

In view of these drawbacks, the government of Assam decided to i) uplift low productivity by increasing production of rice in summer and ii) provide supplementary irrigation facilities to meet need of water for production of food grains in the winter season. The existing irrigation facility during winter was adequate for only 2.73 lakh ha, which was way below the required level. The government launched the Samridha Krishak Yojana (SKY) in October 1999. Along with improving agricultural productivity of the state, the project also had as its objective to provide employment to the workforce in the rural areas and improve the income level of

farmers. These objectives were accomplished using administrative initiatives and a participatory approach.

### ***Project Implementation***

A project report was prepared by the Chief Engineer, Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Project, The World Bank and the Central Ground Water Board suggested that about 9.63 lakh ha area of the state (covering 18 districts) was viable for setting up of tube wells (STWs). The project cost was estimated at Rs. 230 crores, of which one-third was to be contributed by farmers who were the beneficiaries, and the balance was to be shared by the Assam government, Government of India and NABARD (National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development) loan under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund. The project was to be completed by March 31, 2001.

Field Management Committees (FMCs) were formed as the grassroots-level implementers of the project. Their duties involved collection and submission of applications to Executive Engineers for installation of STWs, depositing the farmer's share of the funds with Executive Engineers for purchase of materials and installation of STWs, collecting the government's share of funds for sanctioned STWs, undertaking actual installation of the STWs and maintaining the record of deposits collected and number of STWs installed.

In less than 14 months from the commencement of the project, close to 82,700 STWs were installed, and the total area covered under irrigation from STWs was 20.45 percent.

### ***Project outcomes***

- An appraisal of the scheme done by the Evaluation and Monitoring Division (a division under the Planning and Development Department, Government of Assam) in January 2001, revealed that irrigation coverage had improved leading to a substantial increase in food grain output and employment potential.
- The gross production increased from the earlier 36 lakh metric tonne to 41.35 lakh metric tonne, due to irrigation from STWs. Additional area covered for irrigation through installation of STWs increased up by over 20 percent.
- SKY has enabled farmers engage additional labor on daily wages. They even lease out a portion of their land to other cultivators and landless farmers on a contract basis. Landless farmers have also been able to get full-time as well as part-time employment during the winter season. These factors have led to an increase in employment and income levels of farmers.
- As farmers have been equal contributors (one-third of the project cost) to the scheme, they have developed a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the scheme.

### **Human Development and Social Services Projects <sup>[1]</sup>**

One of the key components to an individual's development and his well-being is education. Providing education and bringing about improvements in education give rise to increased productivity and hence enhanced economic growth. The National Human Development

Report of 2001 reported that close to one-third of the population in the age group of seven years and above was illiterate. The Ramamoorthy Committee (Government of India, 1991) recommendations suggest that government (both center and state) expenditure on education should be at least six percent of the GDP (gross domestic product). Regrettably government expenditure on education was only 4.5 percent in 1998-1999 (UNDP 1999).

Given the importance of education in the human development of the nation, many states like Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal took up education initiatives, which significantly bettered the accessibility of children to schools, created a favourable environment for education, increased enrolment ratios, and improved the quality of teaching to reduce the number of drop-outs.

Additionally, poor health conditions caused due to poverty and malnutrition, especially in rural India, is another important factor that leads to degeneration of productivity of the country's human resources. As public spending (both revenue and capital) in general has been on the decline since 1983 due to budgetary constraints, some states like Madhya Pradesh have resorted to enforcing user charges and decentralizing public sector expenditure to rejuvenate the local health delivery service systems in the state.

### **The Education Guarantee Scheme, Madhya Pradesh <sup>[1]</sup>**

The 1991 census revealed that literacy in Madhya Pradesh (MP) was trailing behind the country's average of 52 percent. Only 44 percent of its population was literate. The district of Jhabua in western MP had a record low of 19.01 percent literacy.

In response to these disturbing findings, Madhya Pradesh established an autonomous registered society called Rajiv Gandhi Prathmik Shiksha Mission, headed by the Chief Minister. The purpose of the mission is to augment the MP government's efforts in propagating primary education. Between July-August 1996, the mission conducted the Lok Sampark Abhiyan (LSA), a door-to-door survey of 55,295 villages in 34 District Primary Education Project (DPEP) districts. The survey which contacted close to 1 crore children in the age group of 5-14 years, confirmed that only 73 percent of the state's children in this age group were enrolled in primary schools. It also found that schooling was not actually reaching remote villages and the socio-economically deprived groups. Taking cognizance of the situation, the MP government felt a pressing need to strengthen the ailing education systems across the state by redefining education priorities. They also understood that boosting education would reduce social inequities, and empower the disadvantaged. Thus, in January 1997 the state government initiated the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), to address the findings of the LSA.

#### ***Project Objectives***

The EGS encouraged partnerships between the government, the panchayat and the community in solving issues of education in the state. The core objectives of the project were:

- Create a favorable environment for education
- Boost enrolment of children in schools

- Better the quality of teaching to minimize drop-out levels

### ***Project Implementation***

The EGS provides a school to any community having a group of 25 or more children from a tribal area or 40 or more children from a non-tribal area, and having no access to a school within a radius of one kilometer. The community elicits the demand for a school to be established. Then it nominates its own ‘guruji’ or teacher, who is a local resident. It enjoys the rights to hire and fire the guruji. The community also decides on the space where school buildings will be erected.

The panchayat’s participation in the entire process is through monitoring school functioning and dealing with issues related to everyday functioning of the school. They are also responsible for keeping a check on teacher absenteeism and school dropouts.

The state government provides its support by providing necessary funds to build and run the school. It guarantees setting up of a school within 90 days from receiving a petition for it from the community. It pays an amount of Rs.50,000 per school per year, which is received by the gram panchayat. This fund gets disbursed towards teacher services (Rs.8,500 annually), purchase of books and materials, and other administrative overheads. The government also provides for training of teachers, conducts regular surveys of the schools to verify the quality of services being rendered, and processes necessary feedback for improvement in quality.

### ***Alternative Schooling & Fund raising Initiatives***

The Madhya Pradesh government has encouraged various other education initiatives like the Shishu Shiksha Kendra (centers for education of children in the age group of 3-5 years) and Mahila Shiksha Abhiyan (undertaken to increase the enrollment of girls into schools across the state) under the EGS program. It has also developed a website called [www.fundaschool.org](http://www.fundaschool.org) on behalf 26,000 EGS schools, which enables a person or organization to own any EGS school for a period of one year through a contribution of Rs.16,000. This novel idea has earned the EGS schools more than Rs.200 lakhs.

### ***Project Outcomes***

- Literacy rate of the state shot up to 64.09 percent by 2001, with Jhabua recording a literacy level of 36.87 percent.
- Within a span of two years of the EGS implementation, the state had a school for every community, in the proximity of a kilometer.
- EGS has led to a phenomenal growth in school services in the state in a four-year time frame. 26,311 schools have been built in 30,274 communities as against the 80,000 primary schools that were instituted in the preceding fifty years through the formal DPEP system.
- EGS has made it possible for even remote villages and marginalized communities to have a school for themselves, and educate themselves.

- The state saw the creation of 19,289 schools in a year-and-a-half through the EGS plan, whereas the total schools founded by the DPEPs were only 10,985 in 34 districts.
- In 2002, 12.21 lakh children in the age group of 6-14 years were studying in EGS schools of which 5.7 lakh were girls.
- The EGS has brought in a decentralized education system, whereby the responsibility of educating communities, which rested solely with the state government, was devolved down to the panchayat and community level

### **Rogi Kalyan Samiti, Madhya Pradesh** <sup>[1]</sup>

Being healthy is an important criterion not only for an individual, but also for the nation as a whole. Good health contributes significantly to productivity and in turn towards the country's economic & human resource development. Although the government at the center and the local state governments have implemented a variety of policies to improve health services, they have not had the necessary impact. Low public expenditures on health care coupled with fiscal constraints faced by central and state governments have left public hospitals and the entire public health system in a state of perpetual funds starvation. Unfortunately, majority of our population situated in the rural and tribal areas still look up to these neglected public hospitals for medication and treatment. The Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital in Indore was also one such public hospital that rendered sub-standard health care services to its patients.

The Rogi Kalyan Samiti (RKS) or Patient Welfare Committee was an initiative started by the Madhya Pradesh government in the wake of the plague epidemic that hit many states such as Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, situated in North India in 1994. The primary initial objective of the RKS project was overhauling the Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital, to control the spread of the deadly disease. The second broader objective was the revitalization of the public health service delivery of the Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital through decentralization and community participation, which would then be proliferated to the public health care systems in all the 450 government-owned hospitals scattered in 61 districts of MP and Chattisgarh.

#### ***Project Implementation***

The District Collector (DC) of Indore and local residents of the district resolved to combat the disease in their district. The Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital, being a potential source for spreading of the disease, prompted the DC and his team to initiate a massive clean-up operation in the hospital premises. Loads of rubbish and junk furniture were done away with. The hospital complex was sanitized, which saw an end to rodents and pests. The clean-up was followed by revamping of the hospital building. At all stages of the clean-up and revamping process, inputs were elicited from people of the town, which helped draw up a policy framework for the operation. The whole exercise was funded by the district administration, which amounted to a little over Rs.45 lakhs.

With the completion of the above operation, the focus shifted to improving management of public service delivery of the hospital through public participation. Accordingly, the RKS took the initiative of:

- Upgrading of the hospital equipment and health services

- Scrutinizing the hospital staff and maintaining discipline in the institution
- Increasing its level of participation in the running of the hospital
- Disposing hospital waste in a scientific manner
- Providing necessary and appropriate training to doctors and staff
- Providing subsidized food, medicines and drinking water to patients and the family members attending to them.
- Implementing national health programs
- Maintenance of hospital equipment and machinery

The success of RKS in improving the public health service system at The Maharaja Yashwantrao Hospital motivated the people behind RKS to replicate and implement the concept in all public hospitals in the state. RKS collaborated with the hospital staff, representatives of local population, distinguished people in the community, elected officials, environmental scientists, and the district administration and developed an operational policy for implementation. The RKS then approached the state government to solicit its support to propagate the concept by handing over rights and responsibilities related to delivery of health systems to the local communities. The state government was required to formulate policies and measures for smooth implementation of the project, while the district administration was required to create Rogi Kalyan Samitis and other similar committees.

### ***Activities and Sources of Funding of RKS***

The initial success story of RKS in Indore culminated in the formation of RKS society, a registered society that works like an NGO. The society is authorized to make functional decisions for hospitals in the state. RKSs have been established in medical colleges, community health centers and district hospitals of the Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. Its members include local representatives, health officials, district officials, eminent citizens, representatives of the Indian Medical Association, members of the Panchayat and other important contributors. The Executive Committee of the RKS carries out administration and management of the hospitals.

RKS generates funds by the levy of user charges, raising funds through donations, accepts grants from the government and donor agencies and raises loans from financial institutions. It also generates funds by managing canteens, bus stands, ambulance services, etc., within the hospital premises owned by the government.

The user charge was introduced to maintain good health care on a continuous basis. These charges have been kept at a bare minimum, at a level that the poor can afford. For example, the outpatient department ticket costs Rs.5, the Intensive Cardiac Care unit charges Rs.150 per bed per day, and poorer sections of society as identified by the government can avail hospital services free of cost.

RKS is empowered to utilize its funds as it deems fit. These funds are used for undertaking its activities such as:

- Hospital maintenance, repairs and upgradation of equipment

- Effective management of hospital sanitation, security, waste, information systems, etc., through affiliations with private agencies.
- Purchase of equipment and other hospital related materials.
- Providing comfortable facilities and hospital environment for patients and attendants
- Free or subsidized medical services to poor sections of society

### ***Project Outcomes***

- The project was conferred the Global Development Network (GDN) Award in Tokyo in the year 2002.
- Introducing nominal charges for services being provided by the hospital has enabled patients to avail of their right to demand and obtain better medical attention, along with the developing of a feeling of ownership
- The average daily earnings of RKS varies from Rs. 500 to Rs.25,000 in each hospital depending on its location.
- RKS has led to the restoration of safe and healthy surroundings in government hospitals.
- The efficiency levels of hospital staff has gone up
- During 1995-1999, a sum of Rs.38 crore was raised by citizens through RKS

### **Projects that have improved public interface with the government <sup>[1]</sup>**

There are large areas where the public have direct interface with the government. With the explosion of information available to citizens, their awareness levels of what is possible have greatly increased. Consequently, the huge gap between public service delivery and public expectations has become a cause for concern. Bringing in positive changes to the functioning of these areas, even if these changes are small, can contribute significantly to public well-being. Better governance and effective implementation of programs is what the people of the country require today. Improving the citizens to government interface (C2G) provides great scope for any administrator to reinvent the government.

### **Municipal Management and Capacity Building, the case of Municipal Corporation of Ludhiana in Punjab <sup>[1]</sup>**

To the people in Ludhiana, the Municipal Corporation of Ludhiana (MCL) spelt nothing but inefficiency. Its poor delivery of civic services had not only earned it disrepute but also a created a city of disgruntled citizenry who were most unwilling to pay taxes. This had led to a drastic drop in the corporation's recoveries of taxes from its citizens. The reasons behind the malfunctioning of MCL were:

- Rapid urbanization resulting in the widespread growth of unauthorized colonies.
- The traditional record-keeping systems failed to keep up the pressure of increasing documentation, leading to lawsuits and MCL had to face huge losses
- Repeated political intervention and official collusion leading to indifference, demotivation, unionism and corruption amongst employees
- An ineffectual performance appraisal system and lack of accountability in work dealings

- No efforts towards improving skills
- Ineffective accounting, planning and budgetary methods
- Lack of involvement by the populace

To meet these challenges in the system, MCL came up with a comprehensive action plan, which included the following objectives:

- Offer citizens services of the right quality and at a reasonable price
- Human resource development and institutional strengthening
- Bring in accountability amongst all employees
- Encourage community participation and privatization to help manage the city better
- Improve municipal planning and asset management
- Improve financial management

### **What was done**

#### ***Community Participation Efforts***

MCL had a shortage of supervisors and managers, but hiring more staff was not a feasible option as it would increase their overhead costs. Therefore, MCL decided to explore the option of involving the community to improve the neighborhood. They promoted the concept of 'Manage your Neighborhood', which propagated the idea of communities working as 'managers without salary'. MCL relinquished its responsibility of management of parks to Neighborhood Park Management Committees. These committees performed the duties of hiring gardeners, executing gardening activities and overall maintenance of gardens, in return for a fee of Rs.1 per sq. meter per month from MCL. The Park Management committees maintain over half of MCL's parks. This scheme has helped MCL overcome its funds shortage. It has ensured 80 percent savings to the corporation in terms of expenses for these activities, and has reduced problems of unionism and need for constant upkeep of gardens. The condition of the parks has also improved due to continuous supervision by the Committees.

#### ***Privatization Efforts***

MLC privatized most of its activities and work. For example, MLC tackled the problem of overflowing garbage bins through a one-of-its-kind scheme where advertising agencies could cover the bins with their advertisements, and instead of paying MLC for putting up the advertisement, the agency had to take responsibility of maintaining the garbage bins, and keep the container sites clean by engaging the services of container attendants. MLC takes pride in being the first corporation in India to use locally manufactured big vacuum cleaners for sweeping streets, which saves the organization 50 percent of its costs and leaves the roads much cleaner.

Streetlight maintenance of the city (both independent and composite lines) has been completely privatized, resulting in 50 percent reduction in costs. Furthermore, for every streetlight that is not functional, a penalty of Rs.50 per day is imposed on the contractor. Thus the efficiency of streetlight maintenance has increased.

MCL has also contracted out its water supply system to private contractors. It launched the Neighborhood Tubewell Operator Scheme in which anyone from a shopkeeper to a housewife from the neighborhood where the tubewell is located is given the responsibility of maintaining the tubewell. MCL trains the person on the tubewell operations and pays the person Rs.1,500 per month. This has saved MCL over 85 percent expenditure on salaries. Apart from this scheme, over 100 tubewells with time switches have been installed which do not require any manpower to run them.

Private contractors also handle MCL's activities of chlorination of water, desiltation of sewers, night sweeping in crowded areas, and maintenance of roads. Due to the competition among private contractors to procure work from MCL, MCL has been able to bargain for better prices and quality of service resulting in enhanced savings to the corporation.

#### ***Asset Management Efforts***

MCL's Estate department was in a complete mess. There was no complete listing of the lands owned by MCL, the land revenue records had discrepancies, and most of its lands were under litigation due to encroachments. To address these problems, MCL took the first step of requesting technical consultants to trace hidden properties belonging to MCL. This was then matched with the old land and revenue records available in the Revenue Department. This initiative resulted in the addition of more than 800 properties to MCL's existing land inventory valued at about Rs.190 crore. As these 800 unearthed properties were a combination of encroached lands and vacant lands, MCL developed some and disposed off the rest of the vacant properties. An amnesty scheme was announced to legalize the encroached lands. A computerized database management system has been established, which stores and provides requisite details of all properties belonging to MCL. In addition to this, a geographical information system has been developed by MCL, which furnishes all details pertaining to different properties in the city. Using this system, MCL can easily identify properties that belong to the corporation.

#### ***Financial Management Initiatives***

MCL was scrupulously following the single-entry cash-based accounting system, and when the financial reports so produced are compared against the budget outlay, the figures fail to give the complete financial picture. MCL changed over to the double-entry accrual-based accounting system, and through this system management can now better monitor the financial situation on a day-to-day basis thereby enabling them take better decisions.

MCL was the first corporation in Punjab to raise Rs.17 crore from the capital market through municipal bonds and solely on the basis of credit rating of AA-(SO), devoid of any government guarantee. It also saved sizeable resources by introducing Zero-Based Budgeting.

#### ***Organizational Management Efforts***

Performance Appraisal: MCL scrapped its earlier Annual Confidential Roll (ACR) system of performance appraisal and instead introduced a monthly performance appraisal system. In the new system, all employees are given job specifications in accordance with their positions in

the hierarchy. Each job is linked to a certain weighted score, which is used to appraise the employee's performance at the end of the month. The offer of incentives for better performance has been introduced. Thus the new performance appraisal system has made employees more accountable, has developed a competitive spirit within them, and they are under constant pressure to perform.

**Management Information System (MIS):** MCL had no authentic information system in place. Reports were being prepared in a haphazard fashion, leaving no room for verification. Departments had no databases in place for the speedy retrieval of information, and hence various decision-making processes were getting delayed. An MIS was developed with the assistance of consultants. As a first step, the critical levels of decision-making, planning and information needs were ascertained. A comprehensive management audit system was developed with reference to a set of important indicators for processes of policy making, administration planning and community development. The new MIS system produces reports that are more specific, provides facts and figures that can be compared, and also highlights departmental and individual performances enabling quick decision making. This has resulted in greater efficiency in management.

**Computerization:** MCL was choked with complaints from customers regarding faulty charges for services not used and consequently inflated bills. The corporation invariably lost records, payment receipts, etc. As a first step, the payments and receipts pertaining to water/sewerage and house tax were computerized first. This revealed startling arrears amounting to over Rs.40 crore. Details relating to employee provident fund, gratuity, salary details and increments have been computerized. MCL has also launched a website [www.ludhianacorp.com](http://www.ludhianacorp.com) which provides information related to the corporation, encourages dialogue between elected municipal officials and the citizens. MCL is yet to provide web-enabled services.

**Organizational restructuring and staff rationalization:** It proved difficult for one single head office to deliver civic services to an entire city as large as Ludhiana. Hence MCL divided its operations pertaining to the entire municipal area into four zones, thereby creating a new organization structure. Tax collections, redressal of complaints, etc. have been decentralized to the zonal level, and thereby 90 percent of the workload of MCL is being handled at the zonal level, leaving only policy matters to be tackled by the head office. The taxation department had one inspector each for house tax, water and sewerage, license, tehbazri, advertisement, building and sanitation within the same area. Consequently, the public had to transact with seven different inspectors, which caused a lot of inconvenience. Now the taxation department has made only one inspector responsible for all the seven portfolios in a particular area.

Having introduced the above initiatives, MCL has been able to achieve its objectives and has in effect transformed the urban local body to a proficient and dependable conciliator between the citizens and the elected local government.

### ***Challenges faced by MCL during Reinvention***

Reinventing MCL has been an uphill task for the corporation. It was the leadership at the top that was committed to the change and pushed the organization on the path of reform. As top

management at MCL realized that the corporation alone could not single-handedly achieve all the objectives that it had set for itself, it actively involved the community to bring in reforms.

- There was a lot of internal resistance to the changes introduced within MCL. Employees who were used to the traditional ways of delivering services resisted undergoing training, which was required to update their knowledge and skills on computers. MCL sorted this issue by offering incentives to employees to get trained, thus thwarting all attempts to disrupt the reform process by employee opposition.
- MCL had to put up with tremendous resistance at the political level, as the new system left no scope for them granting favors. MCL made public its reform initiatives by going to the press and media. They clearly stated how the citizenry would benefit from these reforms, which helped MCL gain a lot of public confidence. The role of the media and the public confidence it generated together helped MCL overcome resistance to change by politicians.
- MCL also had to tackle opposition that sprung up from employees' unions. The unions were opposed to privatization initiatives and implementation of the new score-based monthly appraisal system. Employees were not accustomed to such high levels of accountability and hence did not want the introduction of the new system. However, MCL pushed for the system and ensured the appraisal system was applied to all levels in the hierarchy, including top management level. The idea of presenting incentives for high performance brought acceptance of the employees.
- Unlike government departments, municipal bodies have constant interventions from two circles: the elected councilors (many of them full-time politicians) who interact with officials of the municipal body on a day-to-day basis, and unions who comprise of Class-IV employees like sweepers, sewer men, gardeners, etc. Sometimes resistance comes from the middle of the organization as well, as people at these levels perceive their power diminishing. In the case of MCL, these two groups, viz., the elected councilors and the Class-IV employees tried everything in their power to kill reforms as they perceived that these reforms would adversely affect their interests. For example, if the community representative who is given the task of implementing a scheme has a different political affiliation from the elected councilor of that area, the councilor may try to put an end to such a scheme. Hence MCL had to approach higher levels of authority like the Chief Secretary and even Chief Minister to execute many of its privatization and community empowerment schemes.

### **Project Gyandoot, Madhya Pradesh <sup>[1]</sup>**

It is a sad reality that use of information technology in everyday life has been a luxury of the privileged, with the fruits of its many benefits failing to reach the rural communities. Most of the internet connections are restricted to cities and do not extend to the rural populace on account of lack of telephone connections and other requisite infrastructure. Further it is not financially viable for Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) to grant connections beyond these big cities.

January 1, 2000 marked the beginning of project Gyandoot in Madhya Pradesh. A scheme kicked off by the state government, this was an experiment towards providing inexpensive,

self-sustainable and community-owned intranet services to the far-flung, tribal-dominated district of Dhar. The district known for its art and rich soya market, produces agricultural commodities worth Rs.400 crore, with soya, cotton and wheat being the chief crops.

### ***Objectives***

The Gyandoot project targeted accomplishing the following objectives:

- Making information technology touch and improve the lives of the rural population, by creating an inexpensive, economically sustainable G2C (government-to-citizen) model that would fulfill the social, economic and developmental needs of the villagers.
- Improve the level of community participation.
- Enhance the quality and speed of the delivery of public services by the state.

### ***Project Implementation***

Under the project, a survey of the villagers and rural communities was conducted to obtain their suggestions and advice. The recommendations thus obtained were incorporated in the project. Soochanalayas or rural information kiosks have been installed in the various villages of the district in the proximity of either the Gram Panchayat, or at block headquarters or at the weekly market areas of the tribal people. The entire district has 31 Soochanalayas, the server being a Remote Access Server (RAS) grounded in the computer room in the Zilla Panchayat (district council). Each Soochanalaya - which has a computer, a telephone connection, modem, UPS and printer - is intended to offer services to 15 Panchayats and about 25-30 villages. The Soochanalaya generates its revenues from providing services such as job-work, training and computer education, and desk-top publishing services.

### ***Soochak (operator)***

The Soochanalaya is manned by a Soochak, who is a local matriculate with essential knowledge of computer maintenance and numeric data entry skills. The appointing of Soochaks is the joint effort of the village committees and the local community. The district council provides them training for a period of one month.

The Soochak is the 'owner' of the Soochanalaya. Initially, he needs to enter a one-year contract with the village committee, which then declares him as the manager of the soochanalaya. The Soochak pays from his pocket expenses incurred on electricity, telephone and maintenance of the cyber center. The Zilla Panchayat collects a 10 percent commission from each Soochanalaya towards maintenance of intranet facilities, and the district council collects Rs.5,000 per annum as license fee. The Soochanalaya has to generate a net minimum income of Rs.36,000 per annum.

### ***Services of the Gyandoot intranet network include:***

- *Economic services* – access to land records (Bhu Abhilekh), rates of agriculture commodities at auction centers (Mandi Bhav), information regarding employment

(Rozgardoot), trade facilities (Nirmiti Kendra, and Roopayan and Charm Vikas Parisar), and access to village auction sites (Gram Haat).

- *Social Services* - email facility (Gram Daak), e-learning (Shiksha Gyandoot and Gyanmitra), access to on-line matrimonial sites (Vaivahiki), and health services (Swasthya Seva).
- *Governance-related Services* – online filing and redressal of public grievances (Samasyain), update on government programs and schemes (Suvidha), download of required application forms (Avedan Patra), Below Poverty Line list, transparency in government functioning.
- *Other Services* – village newspaper (Gaon ka Khabar), local weather details (Meghdoot), emergency services (Teevra Doot), facility to post queries, which will be answered (Sawaliram se puchiye)

#### ***Charges for the various services offered by the Soochanalayas***

<b>Services</b>	<b>Charges in Rs.</b>
Gyandoot Services	5-25 as user charge per service
Internet Surfing	50 per hour
Job work	10-20 per page
Data Entry	10 per page
Computer Training	150-300 per student per month
Offset Printing	500-2,000 per contract
Video games	10-20 per game per usage
Preparation of horoscopes	50-250 per horoscope

#### ***Software & Connectivity***

The main server, situated in the Zilla Panchayat, has five modems connected to five dedicated BSNL lines. Each of the Soochanalayas is connected to the main server through a BSNL dial-up line. All the government departments are connected through a local area network present in the collector's office premises. This arrangement facilitates speedy communication and flow of information between departments resulting in quick action. The intranet also facilitates sending of local emails in Hindi.

In order to support the project, a registered society called Gyandoot Samiti has been formed which has evolved locally developed software called Gyandoot Software to run the intranet and its allied services. The society provides this software to any other district administration interested in replicating the project.

#### ***Project Funding***

Funds towards setting up the Gyandoot network (Rs.25 lakhs) were sourced in by the local rural community, at no cost to the government. The cost of setting up one kiosk was Rs.75,000. The sources of funding the project included:

- Private contributions
- Participatory funding from the village committee
- The village committee's annual share of the State Finance Commission fund
- Funds allotted to the Zilla Panchayat towards national social aid programs
- Advertisements on pre-printed stationery and on the website

***Examples of how the project impacted the villagers***

- A survey conducted by Jafri et al (the Overseas Development Institute Livelihoods Option Study) in 2002 revealed that the middle class and lower-income groups used the Gyandoot services extensively to obtain mandi rates, verify land records, and obtain redressed of grievances.
- In the remote village of Baidi Awar, close to 39 households are supported by only one handpump for drinking water. As the handpump was out of order for six months, villagers were forced to walk over 2 km to neighboring villages to fetch water. The concerned department did not respond to the complaints lodged by the villagers. Thereafter, a villager went to the nearby Soochanalaya and filed an online complaint by paying Rs.10. Although deep within he felt that his online complaint would produce no results and that he had unnecessarily wasted Rs.10, he and the villagers were taken by surprise when a handpump mechanic arrived at the village within two days of lodging the online complaint. The handpump was set right within 3 hours. This incident earned the confidence of the Baidi Awar villagers in the Gyandoot services. They have now become regular users of Gyandoot.
- Farmers in Bagadi village were selling their potatoes at Rs.300 per quintal to the local traders. Through the mandi bhav service offered by the Gyandoot network, farmers found that the potatoes were selling at a rate of Rs.400 per quintal at the mandi in Indore. Armed with this information, farmers now sell their produce directly at the mandi at Indore.
- A villager of Mirjapur wanted to sell his cow. In an effort to seek prospective buyers for his cow, he posted the details of the animal online through the kiosk available at the nearby Gunavad village. In response, he received four offers for his cow, and he sold it to the highest bidder.
- An epidemic had broken out amongst the milch cattle of the village Kot Bhidota. A villager sent a message of the outbreak of the epidemic through the Teevra Doot facility available on the Gyandoot website. The very same day a veterinary rescue team was dispatched to the village by the district head of the veterinary department. The team detected the disease and undertook vaccinating the animals against the disease in Kot Bhidota and surrounding villages. Thus, the government machinery has been able to provide prompt relief due to timely information received via Gyandoot.

- The beneficiaries of the old age pension scheme in the district of Tirla had not received pensions over the last 5 months. Three old women sent an online complaint to the district magistrate from a nearby Soochanalaya. Their grievance was promptly addressed.

#### References

- [1] “Successful Governance Initiatives and Best Practices”, a document prepared by the Planning Commission (State Plans Division) Government of India and Human Development Resource Center (HRDC) United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

## 5. Emergence of Entrepreneurial Government in Developed Countries

Reinvention of government has not been an easy journey even for the developed countries. Where these efforts have succeeded, they have been through the determined will of the political leadership. In the countries where these efforts have succeeded, the dynamic leadership of their top political leadership (Prime Minister / President) was vital in making the transformation to an entrepreneurial government. The ability of the political leadership to unleash the entrepreneurial energies of officials in various government departments, organizations and agencies has made the challenging journey a phenomenal success. Entrepreneurship has become the norm and bureaucracy the exception in these governments. This chapter elaborates on what approaches they adopted to transform to an entrepreneurial government. Although they have made remarkable progress in public sector reform, reinvention continues to be an ongoing process. <sup>[1]</sup>

The concept of reinventing the government came into existence during the late 1970s. The American tax revolt in 1978 and the emergence of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister during the British elections of 1979 marked the beginning of the concept of public sector reform in the West. It gained popularity and prominence throughout the 1980s, and spread to countries like Australia and New Zealand. The recession in the United States (U.S.) in the early 1990s and the appalling fiscal crisis at every level in the government, forced the then President Bill Clinton to take steps towards reinventing the government. By 1995, mayors and city managers of cities in various states in the U.S. such as Florida, Oregon, Texas, Ohio, North Carolina, Iowa, Utah, Minnesota, New York and Wisconsin were measuring performances of their local city governments. In order to improve their management, they were simplifying personnel systems, were experimenting with competitive public-versus-private bidding for service delivery, and were implementing quality initiatives. <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Reinvention in the British Government** <sup>[1]</sup>

With the victory of the Conservative Party in the 1979 British elections, Margaret Thatcher took over as Prime Minister of Britain. She inherited a nation which had a falling gross domestic product (GDP), rising inflation (rising at 10 percent per annum), stagnating revenues in the public sector, escalating government spending and public services that were visibly breaking down. The government owned most of the industries like coal mines, oil, gas and electricity, a few auto companies, an airline, an aerospace firm, and numerous other nationalized industries, constituting about 44 percent of the GDP. These daunting statistics made Thatcher announce several efficiency measures to dramatically improve the situation.

#### ***Initiating Privatization***

The government stopped all recruiting activities. A 5 percent cut in civil services was imposed. Thatcher resolved to root out waste and inefficiency in the government. An Efficiency Unit was created which scrutinized all government departments over three years and eliminated 12,000 positions. This led to a recurrent annual savings of 180 million pounds

(A pound was equivalent to US \$ 1.5 to \$ 2.3, depending on the year). Thatcher also introduced a series of reforms to deal with strikes and protests of public sector unions. In 1985, the powerful mine workers union went on strike to prevent the government from closing coal pits that were losing money. Thatcher came down heavily on the union and refused to negotiate. This sent strong signals that she indeed meant business.

Privatization was one of the key initiatives on her agenda of public reforms. Hence during her 11 year tenure as prime minister, Thatcher divested more than 40 major state-owned enterprises (SOEs). This included British Petroleum, Jaguar, British Telecommunications, British Steel, British Airways, Rolls Royce, many smaller enterprises and more than 1.25 million public housing units. The sales of these enterprises contributed over 5 billion pounds a year to the government exchequer. The state owned sector of industry was reduced by about 60 percent.

In the 1980s, Thatcher introduced several reforms to instigate local governments to cut spending and change the way they did business. Compulsory competitive tendering (competitive bidding between public and private providers) was introduced for the purpose of construction of all local buildings and highways. An independent Audit Commission was created to keep a check on auditing of local governments and coerce them to improve efficiency. These reforms brought down government spending from 44 percent to 40.5 percent of the GDP. Privatization unshackled companies like British Airways to rejuvenate themselves and become front-runners in their industry.

### *The Next Steps Initiative*

Civil servants in the British system of public administration were neither trained in management nor did they show interest in it. Civil service officers of higher ranks used to perform the honorable job of advising ministers on policy issues and would leave all the dirty work of implementation to the managers lower down the hierarchy, who they treated as second-class civil servants. As power was centralized at the top of the departments and in the Treasury Department, managers at the lower rungs in the hierarchy had little control over what they were supposed to manage. Further civil service managers had no control over recruitments, choice of staff, promotion, pay, use of information technology, etc. This resulted in an inefficient system that cared little about delivery of public services. It led to the budget and finance systems concentrating more on cutting costs and reducing spending rather than making it effective. Government Managers did not bother about improving performance for their organizations faced no external pressures.

In 1982, Thatcher decided to reform the civil service bureaucracy. As a first move she initiated staff cuts. Next she enforced the 'Financial Management Initiative'. This initiative went about making departments set performance objectives for all managers which clearly spelt out what managers were expected to achieve, by when, and at what cost. Departmental budgets were broken down and each unit was made responsible for managing its own funds. But these reforms had no impact on the bureaucracy, and did nothing to change the behavior of civil service.

In 1988, the Efficiency Unit came up with a report “Improving Management in Government: The Next Steps” and Thatcher agreed to implement all of the unit’s recommendations. A very senior official from the Treasury department was appointed as project manager to oversee the Next Steps program. He was given clear personal responsibility for achieving the change. Following were the improvements made as per the recommendations of The Next Steps program:

- Service delivery and compliance functions of each department were separated. Unwieldy departments were fragmented into smaller discrete units called ‘executive agency’. During the first year of implementation of the Next Steps initiative, i.e., 1988-1989, eight executive agencies were created. And by late 1996, nearly 75 percent of the civil service worked in 126 executive agencies.
- a chief executive was appointed for each executive agency. They were offered attractive salary packages comprising of a high basic component and bonuses of up to 20 percent of their salaries. But they were denied the normal lifetime tenure of the civil services and had to re-apply for their jobs every three years
- each of the chief executives were given more control over their agency’s budgets, personnel systems and management practices. They were treated like entrepreneurs managing their own small agencies.
- chief executives were required to draw up corporate plans for the next three to five years, and business plans for the next one year for their respective agencies.
- the chief executive had to create a three-year plan in close working with the concerned departmental minister, indicating the results the agency would achieve and the flexibilities it should be provided in order to achieve results.

The separating of service-delivery organizations from compliance organizations enabled each of them to focus on their mission, and gave them control over their decisions and operations. The creation of executive agencies brought in further improvements to the civil service bureaucracy. The formulating of corporate plans and business plans by chief executives of agencies opened up many of the problems. Agencies found effective methods of dealing with these problems. It forced them to set objectives, as well as ways to achieve the objectives and performance targets. They improved agency performance through a combination of activities like contracting out, public versus private competition, restructuring of personnel systems, performance bonuses, total quality management, business process reengineering, marketing to new customers and so on. Although each of the agencies was moving at its own pace, they managed to accomplish 75 percent of their performance targets during the initial years of their evolution. By 1995, they touched 83 percent achievement of targets.

### ***Increasing Consequences for Performance***

Although, Thatcher was impressed with the phenomenal improvements in civil services, contributed largely by the creation of executive agencies, she and her advisors aimed at improving productivity of the agencies to an even greater extent.

And for this to happen, Thatcher knew she needed much more than the performance contracts and bonuses being used in agencies to achieve required productivity levels. What was required was a new strategy that could introduce more competition into public service delivery. And this task was carried out by John Major when he succeeded Thatcher as prime

minister. He implemented the strategy called “Competing for Quality” in 1991 (which was a strategy prepared during Thatcher’s reign). This strategy required agencies to be reviewed once in three years (now every five years) to see if the agency was achieving its objectives, and if it were not, then to decide on whether the entire agency or parts of it should be abolished or sold. It also required the concerned department of an agency to tell how much of its work it must competitively bid.

The idea of competing for quality was applied to all government activities. Even local governments were required to competitively bid (public versus private) many white-collar services. Local governments also had to decide on services in their government that needed to be privatized and contracted out, and they were allowed to keep any savings achieved in the process. Civil servants were given no job guarantees. However a pledge was made to re-employ any surplus staff elsewhere within the system.

By 1995, the government had competitively bid services close to 2.6 billion pounds, which resulted in annual savings of more than 500 million pounds. Thus, injecting competition inside public organizations enhanced productivity drastically.

### ***Making the Customer Powerful***

Implementing Next Steps and consequences for performance no doubt brought about improvements in internal management and efficiency levels, but quality of public service still suffered. The government’s obsession for efficiency was well satisfied, but this was not what citizens wanted. They wanted effective public service.

John Major came up with a reform ‘Citizen’s Charter’. The reform aimed at ensuring that agencies produce quality services by making them directly accountable to customers. Public organizations (national and local) were made to develop customer service standards, and offer redress if they failed to meet their standards. They also had to establish systems to deal with customer complaints. Further these organizations (such as local service providers, public schools and health service providers) would be subject to inspection and audit, and comparative performance would be widely published. The ‘Charter Mark’ was created as a new symbol of public sector quality. Any government organization that succeeded in meeting nine charter criteria (which included customer choice, service quality standards, independent validation of performance, and continuous improvement in both quality and customer satisfaction) could apply to use this new symbol. Initially, the Citizens Charter strategy did not take off well, but it subsequently gained momentum. By 1995 most of the local authorities, hospitals, police departments and schools started publishing their charters.

Following are but few examples of organizations that leveraged their service standards to improve their services

- The normal waiting time in The National Health Service was two hours. This was reduced to 30 minutes (on the upper limit). Further patients had to wait for a minimum of one year to get hospital admission for elective surgery. In 1990 there were more than 200,000 patients on the waiting list. By 1995, the number reduced to 32,000.

- The British Rail (BR) made considerable improvements to its service on many commuter lines. In 1991, 78 percent of trains used to arrive within ten minutes of their scheduled time on the 'Misery Line' (a heavily used commuter line in the London area), and this train arrival touched 88 percent by the end of 1994. On account of not having met their service standards, BR had to pay out 4.7 million pounds as compensation to passengers and 2.4 million pounds as discounts to season ticket holders in 1993-1994. The following year BR got these figures down to 3.5 million pounds and 0.2 million pounds respectively.

### ***Conclusions***

Margaret Thatcher and her successor John Major essentially set out to understand real problems that hindered public sector performance, and devised a set of systemic changes to improve core government functions. They used the following levers to reform their government:

- privatization of a large number of state owned enterprises
- uncoupling service-delivery and compliance functions
- performance contracts
- decentralization of authority and encouraging entrepreneurial behavior
- enhancing competition through competitive bidding
- making customer powerful by ensuring organization accountability to customers through customer choice, customer service standards and redress

Reinventing government has been an uphill task for the British government. Thatcher endured two long pickets by public sector unions, and she did not succumb to their pressures. She went ahead with privatization of public corporations despite various protests. Although her Financial Management Initiative was a huge disappointment in changing fundamental dynamics of government organizations, Thatcher was not demoralized. She pursued the Efficiency Unit to solve problems of public management. Her Next Steps program began showing results. Her successor John Major continued the reinvention process and supported it to the hilt. It has taken the British government a long time to reinvent itself, and work is still in progress. One startling feature of this reinvention is the political will at the highest levels in the country. This is conspicuous by its absence in India. This necessitates a more grass-root level reinvention by individual civil services officers, who need to do many small little things to improve their organizations, which can cumulatively contribute to the reinvention of the totality over a period of time. This is both a challenge and an opportunity to the individual civil services officers, who can take on the role of 'reinventors' of the organizations they are associated with.

### **Reinvention in the New Zealand Government** <sup>[1]</sup>

New Zealand was a prosperous island nation in the 1950s. With a population of 3.4 million, it had the third-highest per capita income in the world. Unemployment was virtually zero till the early 1970s. But good times were not here to stay. The first jolt to the New Zealand economy came from the international oil shock and Britain's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973. These two factors created serious competition in New Zealand's major export market and shattered its economy. Its annual rate of productivity growth drastically

slowed down. By 1983, unemployment was at 5.4 percent, and by 1984, the country was twenty-first in per capita income.

Like the British government, the New Zealand government too owned most of the industries like banking, finance, insurance, oil, shipping, telecommunication, railways, hotels, airlines and various other nationalized industries. Its markets were heavily regulated, and its business was protected by widespread public subsidies, high tariffs and import controls. Further, services like health care, housing and college education were heavily subsidized. By 1984, the national budget was a whopping 40 percent of the GDP, leading to escalation of government borrowings and inflation averaged 15 percent. In 1984, the Labor Party won the elections, and within a few days of its coming to power, the government defaulted on its foreign debts forcing the Reserve Bank to suspend foreign-exchange transactions.

Seeing the economy in a precarious condition, the Treasury Department put together a report called “Economic Management” and handed it over to the newly elected Prime Minister Robert Muldoon. The report suggested economic deregulation and a fundamental change in the country’s public bureaucracies. Accordingly, the government streamlined its domestic economy by revamping public subsidies, regulations and social programs. Tax rates were lowered, tariffs that protected industries were lowered, and price controls and wages were lifted. Most of the controls imposed on foreign investment were eliminated. Public subsidies to agriculture and industry were eliminated. Many industries including finance, transportation and energy were deregulated.

Although the Economic Management program helped New Zealand’s economy move forward, there was more the government had to do to drive the publicly-owned businesses, which contributed to 12.5 percent of the country’s economy. The government owned and ran some of the largest banks, the entire telecommunications industry, all the ports, the rail system, a national shipping line, the largest automobile insurer, most of the coal industry, a major hotel chain, over fifty percent of the commercial forest land and two television channels. The government was not operating these businesses efficiently. Poor management, low productivity and weak investment decisions had resulted in under-performance of the 5 billion dollar investment made over two decades in these business activities.

### *Corporatization Efforts*

The Finance Minister Roger Douglas decided to go in for a huge corporatization effort. He won cabinet approval for the same, and the parliament adopted the legislation in 1986. The corporatization effort turned all government agencies producing goods and services into public corporations called state-owned enterprises (SOEs). On April 1, 1987 nine SOEs (coal, electricity, land, forestry, Post Office, the Postal Bank, telecommunications, air traffic control and property management) were set up. These SOEs had to face market pressures, lost their monopoly status (the Post Office continued to maintain monopoly on first-class mail and the air traffic controllers also retained their statutory monopolies), had to pay taxes and received no funding from the government. They had to report to independent boards of directors. Each of the SOEs had a chief executive, who received corporate direction from the board members and ministers.

The first initiative of the SOEs to enhance productivity and competitiveness was to downsize their organizations. Over the first five-year period, all the SOEs had cut employment by more than 50 percent, had increased their revenues by 15 percent and profits increased four fold. They were paying close to 1 billion dollars in dividends and taxes by 1992.

### *Privatization Efforts*

Creation of SOEs was indeed a brilliant step towards reforming publicly owned businesses and it resulted in phenomenal economic effects. This created a lot of disgruntled ministers since ministers had public accountability for the SOEs but no control over them. It also did not reduce the deficit. Most importantly however it convinced the Labor Party that higher efficiencies could be achieved by terminating public ownership. Thus in 1987, the government started auctioning and selling off most of the SOEs and other public businesses. The privatization process weathered many public controversies, legal squabbles and wrangling within the cabinet. By 1995 it had sold off businesses in the banking, finance, insurance, oil, film, printing, hotel, steel, shipping and telecommunications industries. Likewise Air New Zealand, the coal and forestry businesses, and the rail system were sold. The government earned a whopping 8.2 billion New Zealand dollars (about 5 billion U.S. dollars) from the sale of these assets.

### *Changes at the Core*

The above privatization and corporatization efforts by the New Zealand government did not manage to set right the waste and inefficiency rampant in agencies such as defense, police, criminal justice, health, education, welfare agencies, etc. Neither did it bring about any fundamental changes to the bureaucracy. Most of the government agencies were performing all functions of policy making, regulation, service delivery and compliance. They had no clear objectives or management plans. Managers had very little control over personnel and budgets, and they had no incentives to perform well. In the existing system of bureaucracy, Treasury officials deemed it extremely difficult to save money.

In 1988-1989 Douglas introduced the State Sector Act and Public Finance Act, which applied management practices of the private sector to the public sector. Both these laws brought about the following changes:

- *Separated policy-making functions from other functions* – each department's functions were broken down into specific functions. For example, the Department of Transportation was broken down into six organizations. Five of them provided services such as maritime safety, accident investigations, civil aviation, etc. The sixth organization, which was the Ministry of Transportation, advised ministries (policy-advisory organizations) on policy issues. Each of the organizations so created had a chief executive and less than 50 members in them. The chief executive functioned like an entrepreneur in his organization.
- *Performance agreements* – Ministers negotiated annual contracts with chief executives of organizations (typically 5 year agreements), which gave them control over the

department and ministries. They could choose to purchase output produced either from the department, from the ministry or from other providers.

- *Fixed-term performance contracts for chief executives* – chief executives came not only from the civil services, but they were also being hired from the private sector. Chief executives had to face the consequences for their performance. They had a fixed term (5 years) and were assured of the continuity of their jobs only if they were successful in delivering the outputs negotiated with ministers. They were paid high salaries and given bonuses for high performance.
- *Freedom to manage* – the chief executives were at liberty to hire, fire, fix salaries and negotiate with unions, based on their discretion. They were empowered to manage their budgets, and could spend the money as they deemed fit. They also were given the power to take all purchase decisions of buying and negotiating prices for the goods and services that they required.
- *Incentives* - the administrative funds and assets in the custody of departments and ministries were being charged an interest by the government. This was called ‘capital charge’. This provided an incentive for managers to use funds carefully and prudently.
- *Change in role of central administrative agencies* - the treasury department no longer micro-managed the department’s internal resources. This power was given to the chief executives. Instead the Treasury was to perform functions of setting broad budgets, advising ministers on economic policy and managing government-wide finances. Similarly, the State Services Commission no longer controlled personnel systems and staffing. The chief executives would do this for their individual organizations. The Services Commission was given the responsibility of appointing and reviewing the performance of chief executives, and setting some fundamental personnel and labor-negotiation policies.

### **Outcomes**

New Zealand’s economy started picking up in 1991 and inflation was maintained at under two percent. By 1995, unemployment had dropped to 6 percent (it was 11 percent in 1991), exports saw phenomenal growth, government expenditure dropped to 35 percent of the GDP (which was 40 percent in 1984), government’s publicly- owned businesses which consumed 12 percent of the GDP in 1984 paying zero taxes and dividends had now been reduced to 5 percent of the GDP and contributed 1 billion dollars in dividends and taxes. The reinvention effort contributed to the overall economic improvement of New Zealand and is now entrenched in the framework of the government.

### **Reinvention in the Canadian Government** <sup>[1]</sup>

The reinvention effort in the Canadian government is a classic example of the halfhearted efforts of elected officials at the top to see the process through. Although Prime Minister Brian Mulroney wanted to follow in the footsteps of Margaret Thatcher to bring about public sector reform and break down bureaucracy in the government system, which he managed to

accomplish to a limited degree, he lacked the conviction of Thatcher. He lacked the courage and political will required to transform the government.

***The various initiatives undertaken to reinvent the government***

On becoming the Prime Minister of Canada in 1984, the idea of ‘a smaller government and less bureaucracy’ was on the top of Brian Mulroney’s agenda. A ministerial task- force, headed by the deputy prime minister, was formed to review all government programs and decide on which ones should be eliminated, consolidated and improved. On completion of the review (which took a year and a half), the task force came up with its recommendations in a report. The report strongly suggested a cut in government spending and taxes by 7-8 billion Canadian dollars. This was to be achieved by reducing business subsidies, eliminating programs, privatizing agencies and contracting out functions. It also recommended streamlining the procurement system by adopting a policy of “make-or-buy” across the board, whereby the government would weigh the options of contracting out by soliciting bids and picking the most cost effective options, be it public or private.

Just when the recommendations of the report were on the verge of being implemented, the deputy minister was removed from the cabinet, which left the taskforce in search of support in the government. The make-or-buy policy had made headway, and by mid -1988 a dozen departments had accrued potential savings of 12-20 percent. But very soon this initiative got muddled in a controversy and which resulted in its end.

In 1985-1986, Mulroney came up with the Increased Ministerial Authority and Accountability (IMAA) initiative, which aimed at providing more flexibility to government departments. It emphasized reduction in central rules and controls, and required the Treasury Board to provide departments with adequate operational flexibility in return for clear and specific performance commitments. The Treasury Board had to negotiate three-year memoranda of understanding (MOU) with the departments to codify their flexibilities and accountability. Only one-third of the government departments signed the MOU with the Treasury Board, and were unhappy with the massive paperwork involved, the reporting requirements and the limited freedom provided by the central agency controls.

In 1986, Mulroney announced a comprehensive privatization plan, which was an effort to privatize publicly owned corporations in Canada. But when the time arrived to take a firm decision on selling these public owned businesses, Mulroney backed out.

When Mulroney won the elections once again in 1988, he announced a third initiative called “Public Service 2000” (PS 2000) to bring about management reforms in public service, resource management, administrative policy and organizational structure. The ten task forces set up to carry out PS 2000 came up with some 300 recommendations, mostly in the areas of decentralizing control and improving customer service. Some of the recommendations were put into action by June 1991. However Mulroney was unwilling to take the big step of reducing the power of the Treasury Board, the Public Service Commission and similar central administrative agencies.

In its efforts to enforce another of the many recommendations of PS 2000, the government went about creating 'special operating agencies' (SOAs) which were to be on the lines of executive agencies created by Thatcher in Britain. In a span of 4 years, only 15 SOAs were created employing 3 percent of the civil service. These SOAs enjoyed a fair amount of flexibility, but were given a step motherly treatment by the host departments. The idea of SOAs did not go well with the host departments and hence failed. But the primary reasons for its failure were the unwillingness of Mulroney to personally embrace the initiative, and the lack of a senior government official to spearhead the initiative and be accountable for it.

### ***Conclusions***

Mulroney was most certainly in favour of an entrepreneurial government, but wanted it to happen without having to lose much. He was risk-averse. He did not want to risk taking on those interest groups that would lose through privatization. He did not want to risk investing large sums of money in the task of improving government performance. He did not want to risk shifting real power of the central control agencies to SOAs. Above all, he lacked perseverance. He was unable to push the IMAA initiative, the PS 2000 initiative and the SOAs initiative until they realized their promises.

### **Reinvention in the Swedish Government**<sup>[2]</sup>

The Swedish government took to managing their huge public sector by employing a more market-oriented approach. The government injected more competition into providing services such as health care, education and day care, thereby increasing the quality and efficiency of the service.

Sweden's mammoth employment and training system now bids out most training on performance contracts. The government treats its clients as customers. The private sector training providers face direct competition from the public sector training providers. Most of the taxpayers are allowed to choose the hospitals, day-care centers or other government service agencies they want to use. In order to advocate long-term planning, the government has put in place a three-year budget cycle. The government undertakes a thorough examination of expenditures, performance, productivity and outcomes of each government agency, once every three years.

### **References**

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- [2] David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, "Reinventing Government – How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector", Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, 1992