



livelihoods

today and tomorrow

January 2009



Street Vending

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Happy New Year!

International Human Solidarity Day! Christmas! Moharram! Pongal! Transition into 2009 with hope from the scary 2008! Sri Lankan Army is marching ahead – it appears LTTE is in its end game for the time being! Sheik Hasina wins in Bangladesh with a landslide majority! Pakistan is still dodging to act fully! Omar Abdullah becomes the youngest Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir as the citizens seek local development!

Recession seems to have hit India. Now, we talk of 100 million job cuts in India. Near home, Satyam's Chairman resigns accepting frauds.

At least one out of five families is having a livelihood of street vending. There may not be any product or service that is not available through street vendors! There are some street vendors who move from house-to-house or street-to-street; there are some who bring home the products and the tools at the end-of-the-day after sales at a certain point or set of points of sale on the street(s); some are using foot paths and some others are using temporary shops or dabbas; some are also make purchases in addition to sales; some provide services at the houses of the clients who come to 'addas'; some make products and/or add value at the site of sale; some operate alone; some operate in groups; some operate in families; some are distributed without any method; some stay in clusters of shops although they are independent; some loose associations and rules may bind some; some do both street vending and shop vending; some specialize, some micro-specialize and some enjoy a special micro-niche; and so on. However, not all but only a proportion of them, have street vending as the principal livelihood. The returns are not uniform and wildly different – from a mere Rs.10 to more than Rs.1000 per day are not uncommon. Some are seasonal and some do not work in slack season on this; similarly some are part-timers; and these make the street vending for many is a supplementary source of income. And for many others, it is the only source of survival. It is in this context, 'livelihoods' is exploring the street vending, as the first in the series on sub-sector/sector explorations from 'livelihoods'.

Elections to Lok Sabha and some legislative assemblies are expected in April/May. Many a party is looking at finalizing their manifestos. Therefore, an in-depth effort to reflect the needs of the people in general and the poor and not-so-poor in particular through the lenses of livelihoods and reducing poverty has been made and presented in 'People's Manifesto 2009-14'. Many of these are needed/essential and are realizable/feasible. We hope that these items in the manifesto find their way into the common minimum program of the next government(s) at Union and State levels. We have faith in many associated with 'livelihoods' that they will make efforts directly and indirectly towards this end.

Ela Bhatt is a legendary organizer who has organized the unorganized women, many of them are street vendors, through SEWA and its associated agencies. This effort is showing a way forward in organizing the unorganized across the country and outside. Dr PDK Rao, a development 'guru', is a living example of service to the oppressed and suffering. A source of inspiration to many of us! Myrada has sown the seeds for the now wide-spread women self-help groups movement. It is always ahead in developing the models in community development. The project of 'kutumbam' supported by Centre for World Solidarity is another example of food security that can be adapted for replication.

Ela Bhat, in "We are poor but so many" tells us her story and SEWA's story of organizing the unorganized and for poor numbers matter. If more of us, poor, come together, we will be heard and our voices will be heard. We will not be ignored and our bargaining power increases in all of our transactions and negotiations..

'livelihoods' wishes all its associated travelers, in the journey of the going ahead in 2009 and thereafter, peace, love and joy. With the faith that this association gets stronger for sure as we go along, I remain.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Li.' with a horizontal line underneath.

G. Muralidhar
the 'livelihoods' team

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Street Vendors make ‘invisible’ but indispensable contribution to all categories of people in India and the national economy but they are deprived of their due share. ‘livelihoods’ attempts to explore some of this largely diverse sector.....

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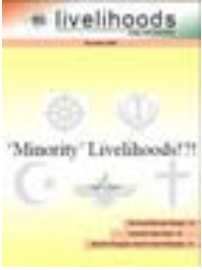
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Response



The December 2008 issue of 'livelihoods' is very informative. The Editorial is good. The titles of the articles sound interesting. The articles on various issues are analytical. But the solutions should be more clear. Book review is interesting. Cartoons are also explanatory.

M Vijaya Babu

Thanks for sending in this edition. The improvements are very noticeable and much appreciated. I loved the 'Elephantine Decision Making' article. Apart from the dreamy picture, I completely agree with the message. The angle put forth here completes the concept of how stagnation - and our past - tends to stymie progressiveness in the best of minds.

Oommen George

Contributions Solicited

If you would like to contribute an article or have something interesting to share, email or mail it to us. If it contains pictures or files please remember to attach them to the email. Please include your name, email, contact information such as phone number, location (nation) and area of expertise. If your article is accepted an editor will prepare the article for publication and may edit it for accuracy, grammar, style, and length.

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India is my country and all Indians are my brothers and sisters. I love my country and I am proud of its rich and varied heritage. I shall always strive to be worthy of it. I shall give my parents, teachers and all elders, respect, and treat everyone with courtesy. To my country and my people, I pledge my devotion. In their well being and prosperity alone, lies my happiness.

Lakshadweep Bags E-governance Award

Lakshadweep's online medical inventory - cum - cargo management system, 'Ever alert' has won the award for the best e-governed project at the sixth international conference on e-governance held in New Delhi. The award is instituted to recognize and replicate the successful initiatives of states and union territories in achieving good governance.

Malnutrition Kiosks In Rajasthan

The Government of Rajasthan has decided to set up malnutrition treatment centers in the districts. The treatment at the centers will be conducted as per the guidelines of the WHO. The centre will check the children's height, weight and appetite and identify those in need of treatment. The children will then undergo a diet therapy, drug therapy and investigation. The treatment process will take 15-20 days to complete. The services of Sahiyas and Aganwadi workers in the district will be used.

Rural BPO In Andhra Pradesh

HDFC Bank has established its first rural BPO in Tirupati in AP. The objective is to provide employment opportunities for the poor unemployed rural youth. The Bank projects that about 1500 rural youth will be employed by March this year. The initial salary will be Rs.3500 per month for the BPO workers. The BPO is called At last Documentary Facilitators Company Pvt Ltd.

High Value Products From Rice Straw

A 32.7 million rupee project by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has been launched. The project called 'Novel Biotechnological Processes for Production of high value products from rice straw and bagasse' aims to develop technologies for separation of cellulose, hemi-cellulose and lignin for bioconversion and utilizing protein enriched rice straw as animal feed. The project will be undertaken by a consortium comprising Guru Nanak Dev University, Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering and Technology and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

Polyhouses In Himachal Pradesh

To improve the farmers' income in the state during the harsh winters, the state government of HP is promoting farming inside modern greenhouses called polyhouses. NABARD has approved a loan of 1.55 billion for this project. Under this project, around 30,000 polyhouses would be set up in the next four years to promote off-season farming, particularly in the lower- and mid-hills. The government will provide 80 percent subsidy for land up to 1,000 square metres to establish sprinklers and drip irrigation systems, and the remaining 20 percent would be borne by the farmer himself. Each farmer will be receive 50 percent financial assistance to create water resources like shallow wells, pumps and water-drawing systems for the polyhouses. Polyhouses are based on the greenhouse concept to let in heat and light, while preventing the heat from getting out. Polyhouses are made of cheaper polythene. By reducing evaporation, Polyhouses also allow farmers to use sprinkler and drip irrigation systems and save water.

Move To Liberalize Insurance Sector

The Government of India has tabled two bills in Parliament – The Insurance Laws (Amendments) Bill and The Life Insurance Corporation (Amendment) Bill in a move to encourage more private/foreign players into the Indian insurance market and tap more capital. To mobilize more money from the capital market means reduced government shareholding or public control. The recent developments in the US with the world's biggest insurer American International Group (AIG) which had to be bailed out of the financial mess raises a red flag on the issue of private entrants into insurance industry. In India the nationalized insurance industry like LIC are sound performers having large volumes of capital for investment. More importantly LIC is addressing the problems of the insurance of the poor with its various customized insurance products. When market gains control, ROI will assume highest priority than addressing the needs of the poor and money in the

insurance sector will be invested in the high risk investments thus increasing the chances of both private loss and social loss.

Climate Change And Asia Monsoon

A team of researchers from China and the US observed that change in the Asian monsoon cycle could be the result of human induced climate change. They reached this conclusion after the analysis of the cave deposits found in West China. Records show that, before 1960 warmer years associated with stronger monsoons, and the temperature decreased when the monsoon weakened. But the recent study in West China found a reversed association after this date. The rising temperature now leads to less precipitation.

Global Measles Deaths Fall

According to the United Nations, global Measles deaths fell by 74% worldwide. This is due to improvements in the routine and supplementary immunization activities. In the Eastern Mediterranean region including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan the deaths from Measles have been cut by 90%, thanks to the vigorous vaccination campaigns done. On the other hand, South-East Asia experienced only 42% decline in Measles deaths due to delayed vaccination campaigns in India. India currently accounts for two-thirds of global measles deaths.

All-Women Bank In Rural Assam

The Konoklota Mahila Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd in Jorhat, Assam is the first all-women bank in Assam. The bank facilitates micro-banking, micro-credit advances, and micro-insurance facilities. With more than 2280 beneficiaries, the bank disbursed amount close to 210 million rupees as loans. Thirty per cent of the loans are given to SHGs and other seventy per cent to facilitate women entrepreneurs. The bank so far has provided finance to 160 SHGs. It has 10000 account holders. The bank will also facilitate services meant for beneficiaries under NREGA, old age pension and widow pension schemes.

Ellavarum Padathekku - 'Everyone to the paddy field' movement in Kerala is gaining momentum. The movement seeks to rehabilitate rice cultivation and bring down the bill for imports from other parts of the country. Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) in Kerala launched a paddy cultivation drive by using development funds on 10000 acres of farmland. The LSGIs will procure quality seeds locally and also make use of the newly introduced 100 per cent subsidy on seeds and 50 per cent on fertilizers and pesticides. To encourage this movement the state government is also providing interest-free loans, free electricity and crop insurance. However environmentalists fear that such rapid conversion of paddy lands might block the natural drainage system and cause threat to frogs, crabs, lobsters, worms and small fishes.

Health Management Information System - The Government of India launched the Health Management Information System (HMIS) portal to convert local health data into real time useful information, management indicators and trends which could be displayed graphically in the reports. This will enable policy makers to make better decisions for public health delivery. The application has been developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in technical collaboration with iBILT Technologies who will also provide maintenance support for the next five years. HMIS can be visited at <http://www.nrhmis.nic.in/>

Child Rights And Child Exploitation - The National Human Rights Commission awarded Prof Madhusoodan Tripathi for his book 'Child Rights And Child Exploitation'. The book talks about the present scenario and various dimensions of child rights and exploitation. It also dealt in detail with child welfare and expectations. Prof Madhusoodan authored nearly 60 books on various socio-economic issues. His books The Gandhian Philosophy for National Uplift, The Gandhian Message, Indian Education in the Light of Western

Concept have been widely appreciated.

MP To Provide Shelter Homes For Women - The Madhya Pradesh government has issued directions to provide shelter for women affected by domestic violence in already existing Nari Niketans under Usha Kiran Yojana. Until now widows, destitute and abandoned women were being provided shelter in these Nari Niketans. Beside shelter such women will also be rehabilitated.

Information Management System Will Link Hospitals With PHCs - The Tamil Nadu government will link 270 hospitals and 1400 Primary Health Centers via Hospital Information Management System (HIMS). The idea is that HIMS will help doctors to serve in rural areas where they can carry on with their continuing medical education and remain connected worldwide through internet.

Gujarat Tops Blood Donors List In The World - The highest per capita blood donations in the world are registered in Gujarat.

National Agricultural Bio-diversity - Based on the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers headed by M S Swaminathan and National Policy on Farmers 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture will set up National Agricultural Bio-diversity system. The move is to counter the emerging threat to the country's bio-security due to increasing international trade and emergence of trans-boundary diseases of plants and animals. Bio-terrorism is a potential threat.

Energy Conservation In Schools - To bring awareness about the importance of conserving energy, Haryana government will launch 'Bal Urja Rakshak Mission' in schools across the state. Under this program two teachers and twenty designated energy leaders among the students would be trained who would in return sensitize about 1000 students in every school. The program will be replicated in 25 schools in every district and energy soldiers would be trained not to resort

to power theft and also not to allow others to steal power.

World Bank Green Bonds - The World Bank recently launched its first green bonds. The bonds are designed to raise additional funding for projects or programs that support low-carbon activities in client countries. These green bonds will support the Bank's climate action projects both mitigation and adaptation. A special green account will be used for proceeds from green bonds. At the end of every quarter, funds will be deducted from this account and added to the World Bank lending pool in an amount equal to that quarter's new green disbursements to support eligible projects.

Stimulus Package For Rural Development - As the Union government announced stimulus package for Indian industry, rural developed received some boost as well. The expenditure on rural development projects would be as much as 55% higher than the original budget allocation. Major part of the budget will be spent on NREGA. Emphasis will also be placed on enhancing the skills of the rural poor so that they can additional livelihood through self-employment.

The State Of The World's Children 2009 - UNICEF's flagship report 'The State Of The World's Children 2009' addresses the problem of maternal and newborn mortality. With an estimated 1600 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. UNICEF is supporting midwife training throughout the country to encourage young women to serve their rural communities.

ADB Assistance To Increase - Asian Development Bank's assistance to India will increase from \$2.45 billion in 2007 to \$2.85 billion in 2009. The assistance will be used in transport, energy, urban sector, developing agriculture infrastructure, modernizing commodity markets, improving water and coastal resource management, tourism etc. ■

National Youth Day January 12th

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, .. that is the way great spiritual giants are produced.”

- Swami Vivekananda



Organizing The Unorganized - Ela Bhat

Ela Ramesh Bhatt is a well known social worker who is striving for the cause of benefiting the women working in the unorganized sector. She organized lakhs of women and formed “Self Employed Women’s Association” which has been recognized as a replicable model.

Ela Ramesh Bhatt was born on 7th September, 1933 in the city of Ahmedabad in India. Her father Sumanth Bhatt was a successful lawyer in Surat and her mother Vanalila Vyas was active in the women’s movement.

She completed her schooling at Sarvajanik Girls High School in Surat from 1940 to 1948. Later she joined in M.T.B. College in Surat and completed her Bachelor of Arts in English in the year 1952. In 1954 Ela received her degree in Law from Sir L.A. Shah Law College in Ahmedabad and also received Gold Medal for her outstanding work in Hindu Law.

After completing her Law, she taught English for a short time at SNDT University, Mumbai. Later she joined the legal department of the Textile Labour Association (TLA) in Ahmedabad in the year 1955. In 1956, Ela married to Ramesh Bhatt who is a faculty at Gujarat Vidyapath National University in Ahmedabad. After 6 years of service at TLA, She took a position in the Labour Ministry of Gujarat as an Employment Officer in the year 1961. In this position her first work was submitting suitable candidates to employers.

Later she was given independent charge of the University Employment and Information Bureau of Gujarat University in Ahmedabad where she was responsible for providing vocational guidance and training of candidates in addition to job placement. She next was sent to the Pusa Institute of Employment and Training in New Delhi and upon her return was appointed In charge of Occupation Information. In this technical job from 1966 to 1968 she explored new employment opportunities, reviewed existing definitions of various occupations in the National Code of Occupation and framed definitions for new occupations. When, in 1968, she was asked by the TLA to become head of its Women’s Wing she rejoined the union, taking with her an intense interest in the women for whom she had worked in the ministry.

Soon after becoming chief BHATT began to explore ways of expanding the work done by the unit. In this connection she went to Israel where she studied at the Afro-Asian Institute of Labor and Cooperatives in Tel Aviv for three months, receiving the International Diploma of Labor and Cooperatives in 1971. This was her first formal training in organizing and managing unions and cooperatives. Impressed to see that every sector of Israeli labor was organized—even the wives of workers were union members—she began to think of how to put such concepts into operation in Ahmedabad.

She was very much influenced by the fact that thousands of women related to textile workers worked elsewhere to supplement the family income, but there were state laws



protecting only the industrial workers and not these self-employed women. Hence, with the cooperation of Arvind Buch, the then president of TLA, Ela Bhatt undertook to organize these self-employed women into a union under the auspices of the Women’s Wing of the TLA. Then in 1972 the Self – Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) was established with Buch as president and she herself as the general – secretary. Since the members of SEWA were self-employed, the organization did not fall into that legal category. Bhatt, however, convinced the government that a union could exist for the economic development of its members as

well as for protection against exploitation by employers. The government reluctantly agreed and the union was registered in 1972 under the Trade Union Act of 1926.

The union has had unprecedented success from the very beginning in attracting membership. By the end of 1975, only three years after its inception, there were 5,258 members, and one year later the membership had reached 9,000 in Ahmedabad, with 2,000+ members in a newly opened center in the handloom community of Bhavnagar. Today there are 10,667 members in the city and 7 lakh + members all over.

In addition to bringing together women from a variety of occupations SEWA has been successful in joining women from different tribes—Waghri, Rabari and Marwari for example—who were previously divided by religious and cultural differences. Apart from various union activities SEWA set up a women’s cooperative bank for its members to reduce their dependency on money lenders.

In addition to her work with TLA and the SEWA union, Ela Bhatt is MD of SEWA bank and Vice President of the Gujarat Agriculture Workers’ Union, the Self-Employed Workers’ Organization and the Construction Workers’ Union, and has found time to serve on the advisory boards of the Gujarat State Adult Education Committee and the International SOS Village (located in Vienna where orphaned children and destitute women live together). Ela Bhatt was one of the founders of Women’s World Banking in 1979. She is the founder-chair of Sa-dhan, a national association of community development financial institutions. She is also a trustee of Rockefeller foundation.

For her outstanding work, she received many awards - Padmasri (1985), Padma Bhushan (1986), Ramon Magassasy Award for community leadership (1977) and the Right Livelihoods Award, 1984.

At 75, she is still working actively towards the cause of poor unorganized women and is proving to the world that these poor women, if organized, can change the destinies of their families with their collective strength. ■

Food Security Through Millet Cultivation

Working towards food security assumes greater significance now than ever before. Dwindling agricultural productivity, increasing desertification, erratic monsoon due to climate changes, increasing shift towards cash crops, increased migration to non-farm occupations all pose lurking danger to food security. While the world's food needs are increasing, access to nutritious and affordable food is decreasing. This needs to be corrected.

In the context of food security, Center for World Solidarity (CWS), Andhra Pradesh based NGO, is working towards supporting and promoting sustainable agriculture and rural livelihood promotion activities in 5 states. The objective is to make the farmer self-reliant in the entire agricultural cycle, ensure food security and promote environment friendly farming and non-GM agriculture. Towards this end CWS adopted various approaches including non-pesticidal management, organic farming methods, methods to enhance water productivity and water conservation.

In Tamil Nadu, CWS is partnering with 4 NGOs to promote food security through millets cultivation. With the financial



support from CWS and technical support from KUDUMBAM, small and marginal farmers of 4 villages have brought 160 acres of fallow land in Pudukkottai and Trichy districts under cultivation. Crops cultivated in these lands include small

and minor millets like sorghum, black sorghum, maize, foxtail millet, little millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and finger millet and pulses like red gram, cow pea, black gram and groundnut are also grown.

Most of the farmers are women. They received orientation and motivation trainings from the NGOs in the initial stages. Each beneficiary of the project received about Rs.800 to Rs.1000 for land reclamation and inputs. Farmers having only upland rainfed lands, resource poor farmers, single women were given preference in providing the project support. Farmers were also given training on nursery raising, training on Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA) methods and on food processing technology.

Majority of farmers under the programme have cultivated multiple cropping of millets in their fields. The yields were encouraging and the double share of seeds which we have been given to farmers have been collected and stored in the community seed banks established in all the four villages. Farmers were able to access the seed bank for cultivation of millets in the next season. Farmers from neighboring villages are also motivated now to bring the fallow lands under cultivation.

As a next logical step in the value chain, the farmers received support for making value-addition to the produce before selling in the market. Training in food processing was given to 40 farmers. Farmers were taught variety of recipes

using finger millet, foxtail millet, little millet and other pulses and farmers also shared their knowledge of recipes using millets and pulses. Farmers were given small loans for processing and marketing the food grains. While some farmers used the loans to start mobile cart for selling pearl millet porridge, some farmers utilized the loan for cleaning and packing red gram. Some farmers used the loan for making 'Ragi Muruku' a local snack made from ragi millet. One of the partner NGOs is selling energy food made from millets and pulses. A recipe booklet of millets and pulses has been published in Tamil.



As a part of scaling up the efforts to promote food security, CWS and its partners NGOs plan to campaign advocating millet cultivation. Programs including village and district level campaigns, debates in a village schools, signature campaign in all the biodiversity network villages through the staff, school children and teachers will be conducted. The whole process and responses will be submitted to the state and central government along with a specific recommendation to provide locally-grown millets and pulse varieties in the PDS at subsidized prices. These efforts will encourage farmers to cultivate more millets and pulses and also encourage consumers to consume more millets and pulses thus contributing to food and nutrition security.

The program demonstrated low-cost integrated approach to promoting food security using environmentally sound practices.

With an investment of just Rs.1000 per acre, 160 acres of fallow land was brought under cultivation.

This intervention not only enhanced food security but helped farmers improved access to seeds, revive the nutritional significance of native millets and promotion of environment friendly cultivation practices. With needed customization to suit different villages, this initiative can be scaled up with appropriate support systems and subsidies from government. According to London School of Economics estimates, India will need about 290 MMT of food grains by 2050 and CWS method can be one way forward. ■



Leaders of Legacy of Change - Can We Build?

We were in difficult times in 2008. 2009 offers hope. Elections are round the corner. Youth are coming forward with promise. Let us wish ourselves 'excitement, change, peace, love and happiness' in 2009 and thereafter.

The month that went by saw our continued engagement with young professionals in appreciating poverty reduction, development and livelihoods management effort. Our 'dialogues' on eldercare, youth empowerment and poverty reduction have occupied most of the time. Balance of the time went into reflecting the voices of the poor and not-so-poor through the lens of livelihoods and poverty reduction in People's manifesto for the next five years and taking this into appropriate forums towards inclusion in the common minimum program of the next government (s).

India continued under the influence of Mumbai terror attack. Pakistan is still seeking evidence and India handed over a dossier of evidence to them and USA, hoping that some serious action on the sources of terror soon.

The verdict of J&K voters is telling us that majority of them are interested in the democratic process and local development issues too are bothering them. It is clear now that the elections will be, more or less, in April/May.

RBI went ahead with its some more marginal corrections of repo rates and reverse repo rates, expecting the banks to cut interest rates. Still, the jobs continued to be lost in the world and In India. Already a million jobs are lost and we are heading towards losing more than a ten-million jobs in India itself. The economic recession has moved from the stage of pricking to the stage of hurting.

My move towards fasting is slow and I may take another 2 months to reach the full 36 hour fasting per week. With my 50% grade, I feel better and my physiological, emotional and spiritual systems are functioning better. You may also like to try fasting, if you have not tried or if you are not already practicing fasting. If you taste it, you will get addicted to it.

As I go through the trials, tribulations, conflicts, chaos, struggles, and intensified churning, the process is taking me through cleansing and testing. This is intensifying further and becoming explosive deep within and around day-by-day. I have tasted love and joy and I am sure (am I overconfident?) I am on the path towards lingering taste of love and joy forever.

Our recent efforts to find professionals for development and/or livelihoods for the sector are repeatedly revealing that we do not have enough numbers available to be recruited/inducted. The quality is mediocre and not appropriate. The situation is slightly better at the community level. But they

lack adequate skills and pay is not commensurate. When the staff of a unit are involved in fighting with each other rather than fighting on how we can better the lives of the clients you are working for, how do we get forward? When a professional wants to have 100 times or 1000 times the average income of the people whose lives they are affecting, what is the way forward? The moment a community level professional gets employed, then s/he loses the 'empathy' for the community, what is the way forward? When the governance and management systems in which these professionals have to work are not willing to recognize and not 'able' to manage them, what is the way forward? As a senior development practitioner has put it – "extra-ordinary inflation in the salaries of the professionals", particularly outside the development/livelihoods domain, makes it difficult for the domain to attract and retain professional talent. **What are the ways forward?**

Perspectives

G. Muralidhar

As part of our attempt to understand the current reality of youth, particularly in the age group of 18-25 years, a good 60-70% of them have been in school for 10 years. 3R Skills - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic – are weak for considerable proportion of them.

They are not interested to get into traditional livelihoods and they don't seem have the aptitude and competencies for the upcoming livelihoods. They do not have vocational skills. They like entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities but the capabilities need to be honed. Except for the doctors, the employability of the graduates is low and is less than 10%.

Further, some 20 million youth are joining this flow at the left-end with this background. At the right-end, the elders are taking more time to leave the flow. And at least half the people living on farming, artisanal livelihoods and related labor need to be 'rehabilitated' in off-farm services and non-farm services. All this makes a huge number – say 400 million – as of now and growing. Even if we take 5 years for this, we are talking 80 million per year. Added to this, now we see people losing jobs because of recession! Then the moot question is – do we know the domains, activities, skills etc., into which they can be taken to accommodate so many people? When liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) processes are indicating to us that we are not having competitive edge in items that we need like food etc. Our production per unit is not high. As LPG processes progress, we may realize more and more of our products and services are not competitive and many of our farmers, artisans, etc., may not be able to get remunerative wages for their effort and have to find alternative vocations. **What are they?**

Many a youth will do a service to himself or herself, if they invest in 3R skills. As the first skill of 3R is Reading. Some quick steps in improving reading and for speed reading:

- * Stop reading loudly. Stop the lip movement. Stop the epiglottis movement. Stop the eye movement. Of course, this is a gradual progression over a period of time, say one year.
- * Relax. If you're in the stressed mode, it would be much more difficult to concentrate.
- * Focus on the areas that you really need to learn.
- * Try not to focus too much attention on structure words like a, the, or etc.
- * Practice, practice, practice with setting a goal and upping it gradually.

Similarly, get going on writing and on arithmetic as you can not go far without 3Rs.

As we celebrate Christmas, New Year, Moharram and Pongal, the celebrations contribute to the livelihoods of the people in terms of employment and incomes through the festivities, foods, greeting cards, diaries, calendars, travel, vacations, etc. A little question then – is it ok even if it hurts other, even if it hurts you later?



Christmas reminds us of Jesus, the master leader with legacy-focus. What a legacy he has left on this planet that lasted more than twenty centuries and likely to last many more! When you think of youth, National Youth Day and another legacy-centered leader, Swami Vivekananda flashes before us. For him work was dearer than his life. For him,

youth were the future. For him both spirituality and reduced human suffering mattered. Therefore, Ramakrishna Order! And Ramakrishna Mission!

Amidst all these, we have allowed international migrants day, international day for south-south cooperation and international human solidarity day, to pass by. We know migrants need identity cards, ration in the place of migration, access to social infrastructure for their well-being, and safe remittance mechanisms. Aajeevika Bureaus and Livelihoods Missions, **can they meet all these needs?** While the women in India in general and in Andhra Pradesh in particular are demonstrating the fruits of solidarity to some extent, we still remain a divided house. How do we come together and be together for our solidarity and our well-being?

This would also mean the solidarity of the development/livelihoods workers can not be relegated to margins. This need gets accentuated when we do not look at

While the women in India in general and in Andhra Pradesh in particular are demonstrating the fruits of solidarity to some extent, we still remain a divided house. How do we come together and be together for our solidarity and our well-being?

'development' work as a mere career but as a vocation, a work for life.

The economic crisis in USA is explained well by Bruce Judson of Yale School of Management. In essence, he is saying it is a domino effect – housing prices → housing bubble → housing crisis → credit crisis → sub-prime borrower defaults → stock market decline → lower consumer spending → decreased company profits → lay offs and job cuts → spiraling vicious cycle. This may take anything between 3-10 years for reversing the cycle. Since we are globally connected, many of us are affected depending on the degree of connectedness. As Bruce says, crisis is a chance to rebuild our society in a better way. It is the time now to focus on solutions.

The crisis at Satyam is an example of, probably, this compulsion. The mortgaged shares of the promoters required to be released. Slowly, the equity of the promoters has come down below 3.6%. It may slide further. Four directors have quit. Registrar of Companies is digging deeper to know what went wrong. Lots of companies are waiting to take over. Confessing the fraud in economic transactions the Chairman Ramalingaraju resigned to his post. We have to watch how the story unfolds this month. Mean while, the role of independent directors is coming under scrutiny, here and everywhere!

As usual, as ever, we need the best brains cracking these issues of churning. Can our governments see the people's issues from the lenses of the people, their livelihoods and poverty? Can we see any body really responding to 'People's manifesto' evolved through this lens? And take the elements into the party manifestos now and later into the common minimum program(s) of the government(s) they form? Then, will they deliver? Will they allocate budgets? Will they spend the allocated budgets? Will they ensure that a 80-90% of the spending actually reaches the targeted activity/institution/individual? So many questions.

Therefore, to my mind, it appears critical that **we concentrate on building the first generation leaders who are concerned about the world and about ourselves.** All of us are aware - it is a lot of hard work, over long periods of time. But we know these leaders can talk and bring the legacy of change we are yearning for. ■

Street Vending

Street vendors make 'invisible' but indispensable contribution to all categories of people in India and to the national economy. However the returns they get are trivial both in terms of income or appreciation. Being part of the informal sector they are deprived of several benefits that their counterparts enjoy in the organized sector. At least one out of five families is having a livelihood of street vending. There are some street vendors who move from house-to-house or street-to-street; there are some who bring home the products and the tools at the end-of-the-day after sales at a certain points or set of points of sale on the street/s; some are using foot paths and some others are using temporary shops and the diversity goes on into their other aspects of trade. 'livelihoods' attempts to explore some of this largely diverse sector that seems to have something for all and all for some.....



'street vending' brings to mind two activities - that of the trader who walks around the city offering goods and services without a fixed place from which to operate, and that of the trader who sells merchandise or provides services from a fixed point on the public thoroughfare. So we are essentially talking about itinerant or mobile vending and stationary vending. The National Policy for Urban Street Vendors recognises another dimension: that of the traders who carry out vending but not on a regular basis and without a specific location, for example, vendors who sell goods in weekly bazaars during holidays and festivals and so on.

The main characteristic feature distinguishing street vendors from others, as per the National Policy, appears to be the 'permanent built up structure' in a street. On the contrary, the street vendors with whom 'livelihoods' interacted, conceptualized someone as a street vendor if the person (a) had to pack and shift his/her normal merchandise every night from the place of sale to a safe location like his home, (b) approaches the customers (or is approached by the customers) while being on the streets, and the cue is the person calling out in the street, and (c) the negotiation of sale is almost complete on the street itself. While they opined that the casual labour getting together at various places (labour addas) are also included in street vendors, people carrying loads to serve specific households only (like those selling sarees) would not qualify as street vendors. They felt that the latter were more like delivering gas cylinder refills to the households. Further, people who own small wooden structures (like paan/tea shops) are also not included, as they do not have to shift their merchandise back to their homes every night. In a similar light, the road shows conducted as a sales strategy to penetrate newer areas and generate inquiries would not qualify as street vending as the negotiation of sale is no where complete at these stalls (road shows).

As one of its priority tasks, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) set about estimating the number of street vendors. The estimates were based on the data available in the 55th round of National Sample Survey conducted during 1999-2000. Workers engaged in retail trade according to their location of work were identified, and their number was 43.64 lakh. On the other hand, workers who describe themselves as street vendors and boot polishers working in different locations including urban/ rural streets or without any fixed location were 30.50 lakh. The difference between the lower and the higher estimate might be due to the fact that a number of 'workers engaged in retail trade and working in streets or without any fixed place of work' do not describe themselves as street vendors.

According to a study conducted during 1999-2000, by the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), Mumbai has the largest number of street vendors numbering around 250,000. Kolkata has more than 150,000 street vendors. Ahmadabad and Patna have around 80,000 each and Indore, Bangalore and Bhubaneswar have around 30,000 street vendors.

Food vendors constitute a large part of the street vendors.

There are various dimensions in which street vending can be analysed. Each dimension results in a separate way of categorisation and each category has different requirements



in terms of resources and capacities to take up street vending and imposes different kinds of constraints. One should be aware of these different types before taking up/ supporting street vending.

Stationary vendors sell the wares (or preparations) by being at one place on all the days. The place can be a small semi-permanent shop like paan wallahs, or it might not have any structure at all. This calls for investing in taking licenses, building relationships with local people and staking claim over the place on the footpath. The recurring expenses involve payment of fees and other charges (legal or otherwise). The benefits are in terms of cultivating clientele (where possible) and some ease in estimating the quantities to purchase, and highly reduced rents compared to a regular shop in the locality. The mobile vendors can be moving within a short distance or moving across larger distances or moving from one market to another, but most sales happening when they put up shop in the market. These three different categories require different investments and different supportive environments at home. Those moving within short distances need to stake claim to a territory for the purpose of sale and cultivate clients in the locality so that they do not purchase from other persons coming to sell in the territory. In most cases, those moving over larger



distances move in groups. These people will have to invest in cultivating relationships with a few households in the distant locations so that they can store their stock and get some shelter during night. This quid pro quo is different for different trades and needs to be understood.

Another dimension for analysis is the extent of time for which the goods can be held. Some are involved in vending perishable goods like fruits and milk and some sell freshly prepared food items. Some are engaged in vending non-perishable goods like plastic goods and clothes, and some in seasonal goods like winter clothing. Vending fruits or freshly prepared snack foods calls for a better judgement of stock to purchase/ prepare but has a quick turnover of the working capital. This also imposes limitations on the extent of movement by the peddlers. Sometimes, this is on a daily basis and people depend on daily loans to be taken in the morning and repaid in the evening with interest. In the case of the first category, whether they would take up vending the next day depends a lot on the prices that prevail on the day. Several mobile fruit vendors do not take up the work on occasions when the prices are high, like festivals. On the other hand, those vending non-perishable and non-seasonal items like plastic goods, garlands made out of cheaper beads (baubles), etc., usually have to make investments that they feel are beyond their capacity. As these items weather out a lot, there is also wastage in the merchandise which they will have to deal with. In contrast, those engaged in vending seasonal items are somewhere in between. They need to estimate the stock to purchase in a conservative manner, while getting in all the variety required. Since they deal with some items only and in a seasonal manner, they have difficulty in getting trade credit. They have some free time during the season in which they do not sell, and using this time effectively offers scope for improving their livelihood.

The rules governing street vending are determined by four major stakeholders:

- 1.the street vendors themselves
- 2.the government and various persons claiming authority through the government
- 3.the residents where the mobile vendors go to sell their wares.
- 4.The creditors, the wholesale shops supplying items for sale and commuters associations.

The street vendors themselves have some informal agreements about who sells what and where and at what time and when a new person can compete for a share in the trade. Generally these rights are by first entrant into a locality, but thereafter are subject to intense negotiations and protection mechanisms. Since the right to exclusively sell in a locality is not a legal right (and licenses can be given to many vendors to sell the same kind of items in the same locality), protecting rights requires the street vendors to develop support mechanisms, including good relationships with leaders of the locality of sale as also the leaders of their own trade.

The government regulates the street vending by zoning and licensing. The objectives of the regulation are de-congesting streets, maintaining law and order, ensuring that no one



illegally occupies government land, ensuring quality (particularly with respect to food items) and ensuring revenue to the local bodies. However, the main economic advantage of street vending (in being a supply channel vending the cheaper varieties of goods) has often been ignored. National Policy on Urban Street Vendors has been adopted, under which the State Governments have been asked to regulate street vending without destroying the livelihoods of the street vendors and without causing inconvenience to the public. While most busy streets offer good business for the street vendors, these form parts of the restricted zones under the policies adopted by the State Governments. However, no policy till now exists in regard to those not vending in the urban areas. Government could impose special restrictions in the sale of hazardous items like fire crackers, liquor, etc.

The residents in the areas where the vendors go also try to regulate the vending. Gated communities in the urban areas generally have restrictions on who can come in for vending and at what times. Some communities are known to have vigorously objected overcrowding of the streets with hawkers; and sometimes have objected to new hawkers coming on to the street.

The structure of the trade also imposes certain limitations on who can take up the trade. For example, the vegetables are available in the wholesale markets as early as 4.30 am and the mobile sales happen mostly in the early hours of the day





from 7 am to 10.30 am. Hence, the person engaged in this occupation is out of the home by 3 am till 11 am. Due to these timings, women having responsibility of small children or have to cook for the family cannot get into this occupation. While such

additional burden on the street vendors.

The mobile street vendors moving within short distances generally move alone, and have to manage small change. They regularly lose in managing this change, as they have to get the change by paying commission.

Entire basket or trolley is destroyed in the case of bandhs/ hartals, etc. However, this loss is rare as the vendors get into small lanes and take shelter.



restrictions also appear in the case of those involved in preparation of breakfast items, this is not the case with mobile sales of fruits. The creditors influence the street vending by deciding the amount of credit that they supply the vendors, while the constant struggle for space between commuters' associations and the street vendors makes the commuters' associations relevant.

Street vending as an occupation is highly heterogeneous in nature. Different types of products and services are sold and the number of ways in which business is carried is large. Also while some have street vending as their primary occupation for significant number it serves as an alternative livelihood. Listing some of the challenges/travaills facing street vendors will help give better insights into their lives and livelihoods. Majority of the street vendors work in areas devoid of civic amenities for a major part of the day. This is particularly difficult for women and the stationary vendors who put up shops in the busy streets in residential areas.

Street vending occupation entails regular long working hours and work at odd hours much in contrary to the organized sector where the hours of work are regulated and when working at odd hours, some shift system is in place. This places additional burden on women engaged in street vending. Most of them depend on crucial support at home, for which they need to compromise a lot of their own dignity.

For those who go around, the main restriction on the scale of business is the area they can serve during the hour of purchase. Hence, the success depends on identification of two different but contiguous markets, which have different purchase times. But in most cases, the items purchased (or quality of items purchased) in these two markets are different and managing this variety becomes difficult. Advantages of scale cannot be realized. Carrying heavier loads or making arrangements for stocking at an intermediate point needs to be resorted to. As persons who can move by cycle can cover larger area, they are at an advantage. But women vendors feel that the consumers would discriminate against them if they use cycle.

The contractor (who pays the local body at the beginning of the year) collects a higher rate than the rates fixed by the government for vending. As the contractor collects the fee at specific locations at specific times, the street vendors have to allocate some of their time to be at the location and pay the fee. As the fee is collected on a daily basis, this imposes

There is a limit to the licenses given by the civic bodies, but many more are engaged in this occupation. Such persons, who do not have licenses suffer on two counts: (a) They have to pay the daily fee to the contractor like others who have licenses. (b) They face the threat of loss due to confiscation of their goods, often on account of drives of the civic administration to clear the streets of the vendors who do not have licenses.

There are weight losses while breaking the bulk. This loss is to the tune of 10% in the case of vegetables and fruits. (However, such losses are not there in the case of street vendors engaged in food preparations.) Further, there are losses due to selection. After all the good ones are picked, the vendors have to sell the remaining stock (like cloth/ sarees, fruits, etc.) at a very low price. The vendors cannot increase the price of good ones beyond a certain level (say 20% of the main market) as doing so could decrease their sales. To balance these losses and earn some profit, these vendors take recourse to weighing stones with approximate weights. But when caught by the legal metrology department, they have to pay a high price for this. The frequency of this happening is about once in two years.

Turnover handled per day depends on when the day starts and the trade cycle. For those who have to start the day



early (i.e., before 5 am.), the daily finance is generally not available. They have to depend exclusively on trade credit. On the other hand, daily finance is available for those who start their activities later in the day, say by about 8 am. This difference is at the root of the differences in turnover per day.

Savings that can be withdrawn are not trusted as family members may not have self control; a visiting son-in-law can wipe off the entire savings. Since, increased investments in the trade from the surplus generated from the trade is a form of saving, the street vendors do not prefer to plough back their earnings into the trade. This is particularly so in the case of street vendors whose trade cycle is a day and the entire stock gets converted back into cash by the end of the day. Hence, the trade is almost always using a loan. They take additional loan to meet emergencies, if any, and repay it in daily or weekly instalments. Even when available, the loans from formal sources like SHGs are not invested in the trade as it gets converted into cash at the end of the day and the extra cash is not trusted. In most cases, such credit assistance is used to meet some other need and is not invested in trade (though the use of the assistance is recorded as street vending/ business).

Most goods undergo spoilage. This is the case even with non-perishables like plastic items, utensils, and cloth. This loss is put at 5 - 10% of the turnover. This needs to be factored into, and the spoiled goods are not taken back by the suppliers.

To succeed, persons engaged in street vending need to understand the positioning of goods sold by way of street vending. The positioning as articulated by a group of street vendors with whom 'livelihoods' interacted is: "low cost - low quality items that are replaced in less than a year". In line with this positioning, no warranty/ guarantee is offered. Further, the main business value offered in most cases is the satisfaction of "a good bargain". Therefore, concepts like 'repeat customers' and 'cultivating a loyal customer base' become irrelevant. On the contrary, knowledge of and access to spurious goods and brand imitations appear to be the key for success as street vendors. Therefore, some familiarity with the supply channels is a must to make profits in this business. But as not many organized 'business development service providers' are comfortable with the idea of encouraging and sourcing counterfeits, the persons who come forward to start street vending must be asked to work as apprentices to another street vendor. (However, this is not so in the case of vegetables and fruits. Some street vendors like those dealing with sarees cultivate a loyal customer base. While purchasing, they select the sarees keeping in the mind the past purchase history of individual clients and thus offer customized service.)

For hawkers who sell on the streets at stationary points, parking of vehicles is a bigger problem. When a lot of vehicles are parked in front of the shop, the hawker becomes less accessible for several persons driving/walking on the street. This leads to some conflict between the owners of the vehicles and the hawkers. As most of the zones in the urban areas where street vending is allowed are also 'parking zones', these conflicts are ever present.

Access to public transport at the cheaper rates appears to be a problem for the street vendors. As the time of the travel

(along with their goods) for many street vendors coincides with that of the busy times on city buses or rural routes, the street vendors have to depend more on the mini-transport sector which is slightly costlier.

Therefore, while the sector is considered as the first stepping stone by several poor people, the development actors who support such efforts need to sensitize the new entrants towards several of these issues/ dimensions which are not applicable to regular trading activities. Moreover, the development actors also need to be sensitive to the needs of the street vendors and customize their services accordingly. For example, micro-finance products may have to be reoriented to reflect their preference for daily finance. Such sensitization and sensitivity could increase the likelihood of success of the people entering street vending.

Efforts are underway by different players to improve the working conditions of street vendors. For instance, under JNURM, Rs.25 crore have been sanctioned for rehabilitation of the street vendors. SEWA, one of the largest non-government platform for street vendors promoted National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI). This association also publishes 'Footpath Ki Awaz' to regularly bring out the issues facing the street vendors. An transnational alliance of street vendors StreetNet International was launched in Durban, South Africa, in November 2002. For more see: Streetnet.org.za.

Given the highly diverse nature of the work of the street vendors, it is quite challenging to organize all of them around many common issues. Even within a single trade, the way business is conducted is highly diverse. Ways of procuring raw material, ways of processing the raw material into finished products, ways of selling the finished products, the vendor-creditor relations, the vendor-customer relations all can differ. The vendor may or may not be the producer. Therefore it is critical to appreciate that interventions in this sector have to be made at appropriate levels. For instance while advocacy for identity cards for street vendors or creating solidarity platforms can be done at a higher level for several heterogeneous groups, interventions like improving the supply-chain, facilitating credit etc require some degree of homogeneity. Similarly while building consumer collectives can benefit sizeable diverse section of the population, product or service collectives need groups with fairly common trade characteristics.

Street vendors make 'invisible' but indispensable contribution to all categories of people in India and to the national economy. However the returns they get are trivial both in terms of income or appreciation. Being part of the informal sector they are deprived of several benefits that their counterparts enjoy in the organized sector. The force of LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) is steadily blowing a death knell to many of the street vending occupations. Street vendors need help, support and appreciation. They need skills and credit. They need institutions/programs to suit their diversity. They need opportunities to improve their existing trade or to take up other trade/employment. They need more platforms at various levels to voice their concerns. They need mechanisms to come together to improve their bargaining power, to come under the radar of social security and rightfully enjoy all the benefits that rest of India does. ■

If we are good to people ...

Busamma belongs to a coastal village called Swarnandhra which is in Kothapatnam mandal of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. She lost her husband ten years back. She has four sons. All of them are married and living separately from their mother. She is surviving by vending dry fish in the surrounding villages. Busamma speaks to 'livelihoods' giving more insights into her street vending livelihood.

Question: What is your name and profession?

Answer: My name is Avula Busamma. I live by selling dry fish in the neighboring villages by loading them on my head.

Q: What was your husband doing? How did he expire?

A: He used to do fishing in the sea. Now a days fish catch has come down but at those times it was good. We used to get good income from selling the fish. My husband used to consume alcohol a lot. I tried to change him but all that was vine. He died with lungs infection which is a result of his alcoholism.

Q: Tell us about your children?

A: I have four sons. All are married. They all are living separately from each other. All my sons are living by catching fish in the sea. They are just surviving with the little income they are getting. I don't want to be a burden on them. Hence I am living my life. As long as I have strength and energy to work, I work. I don't depend on anybody. I pray to god to give me strength to work till I die.

Q: Can you tell about your business?

A: Weekly once I buy dry fish from Chandole market which is in the neighboring Guntur district and sell the fish by moving around the villages by carrying the fish on head. The fish market is held only once in a week. To buy the fish we have to reach the market place one day ahead and sleep at the market place itself even it is raining or extremely cold. We have to wake up early and purchase the fish. If we start to the market place on that day itself we won't get good quality fish. After purchasing the fish some 10 people together hire a vehicle and bring the fish to our village.

Q: Where do you sell the fish? What problems are you facing in your business?

A: Problems are so many. Even we have sea just beside our village we have to purchase dry fish from a distant place. We want to purchase fresh fish from the village itself, dry them and sell. But the fisher men don't sell the fish to us. They sell the fish only to large exporters. What else can they do? They used to take loans from these big people. So they have no other option except selling fish to them at what ever price the exporters decide. The traders at the market place deceive us by selling bad quality fish to us. They sell only packed fish and won't allow us to check the quality of fish. On the top of the packs they put some good quality fish and at the bottom they put bad quality fish. We know that we are at loss. But



we have no other option because no one hears our voice. We have to take what ever they give. After bringing the fish I carry them in aluminum vessels and move around villages to sell the fish. Some times I used to go to distant places, stay there for 2 or 3 days to sell the fish.

Q: Where do you stay if you go to distant places? Do you have any relatives?

A: No. I have nobody. But I know that if we are good to people, people will be good with us. I request any woman to allow me to keep my fish in their house for night and I sleep at somewhere near to that house. In

the morning I bring back my fish and go for selling them.

Q: Is the money you are earning through this business enough for your survival?

A: if we do not adjust, even the sea will not enough. I get very meager income through selling fish. Hence I often sell vegetables along with fish to get some additional income. I am getting 4 kgs of rice every month through PDS. Some of my customers give me rice instead of money which is sufficient for me to eat for the entire month. I am also getting Rs 200 from government as widow pension. Life is passing on somehow.

Q: Are you saving any thing for future?

A: I am regularly saving some amount through self help group. I also got loan from the SHG for my business. Our SHG women fought against alcohol and gambling and we were able to control them in the village. Previously women were treated by their husbands badly. But now after seeing the benefits that are coming through women groups men are giving more respect to the women. This is a positive trend I observed in the village after we started SHGs. But We are at the edge of sea. What ever we do our life is always at risk.

Q: You are very much adjacent to sea. Why don't you move a little away from the sea?

A: We already moved a little after tsunami. If we move further how can we live? Sea is our livelihood. Where can we go by leaving our livelihood?

Governments are not considering the aspirations of local people when displacing them from coastal areas and forests. Busamma's question above needs to be answered. These people cannot go anywhere by leaving their livelihood. It is not enough if the government just gives some land to live. Government should remember that it is not just displacing them from their land but also from their livelihoods. ■

Paan

Paan is traditionally chewed in India. It is an age-old tradition and played an important role in social and cultural life for hundreds of years. Paan was offered as part of hospitality, friendship and love.

Paan is a Hindi and Urdu word. Paan culture is predominant in South and South East Asia involving chewing of betel leaf with areca nut. Paan makers, popularly known as paanwallahs use mukhwass (aromatic ingredients) or tobacco as an ingredient in their paan filling. Most types of paan contain areca nuts as filling but some contain only sugar, candied fruit, coconut, spices and fennel seeds.

There are many regional variations of paan. Some of them include sada, meetha, sada meetha, 120, 160, 300, 600, Bhola Tambaku, paan supari, paan masala, olarno paan and



special paans like kimam, ganga jamuna, nauratan kimam etc. The main ingredient is the betel leaf. There are a variety of betel leaves grown in different parts of India and Bangladesh. Broadly these include Kolkatta paan leaves, Banarasi leaves and Maggai. While Kolkatta leaves are dark in colour, Banarasi is lighter green and Maggai is available in both shades. Maggai is much smaller in size than the other two. Out of the all the three paans made from Kolkata leaves sell the most. The delicately flavoured paan from Bengal is known as Desi Mahoba. Maggai and Jagannath are the main paans of Benaras. Paan prepared from small and fragile leaves from south India is known as Chigrlayele. The thicker black paan leaves, the ambadi and Kariyele, are more popular and are chewed with tobacco.

Inputs	Pre-Making	Making Pan	Types of Pan	Value-Addition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop, Beetle leaf, Baba (Tobacco), Ratna (Tobacco), Golden (Tobacco), Patta (Tobacco), Azgarhali (Tobacco), Sivaji (Tobacco), Navaratna (Jarda), Kashmir (Jarda), Rajaratna Kiman (Jarda), Koso (Jarda), Hira (Sweet powder), Salli (Beetel nut powder), Gulman (Sweet paste), Chocolate powder, Rose powder, Cherri, Coconut, Beetel nut, Elachi, Lavanga, Sompu, Lime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beetel leaf and lime are procured from near by vegetable markets once in a week Remaining all items are procured from wholesale markets once in 15 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making of pan depends on customer preferences As per the customer demand the items will be mixed to make different varieties of pan To make plain pan vendors use white beetle leaf which have a sour taste and to make sweet pan they use black Calcutta leaves which have a sweet taste 	Baba chita Kashmir, Baba Rashman Kashmir, Baba Prabhat, Golden Kashmir, Golden Sivaji, Kashmir, Navaratna, meenakshi, sadapan (zarda), ranjeri (sweets), sweet pan, Navaratna-160, Azgarhali pan, Cheeta Kashmir, R.K. Baba Calcutta, Calcutta baaba, Kashmir, fruits pan, Calcutta sweet, Calcutta plain, Sivaji patta Kashmir, 1010baba, Sagar, Kali RK, Somp kobra, Gulkan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When ever the customer comes to the shop and asks for pan these vendors make it and sell. They did not prepare the pans in advance. These people also make pans on order from the customers to supply for the marriage and other occasions.



Paan is consumed by more than 20 million people in the country. India cultivates betel leaf in more than 55,000 ha with an annual production worth about Rs.9000 million. On an average about 66% of such production is contributed by the state of West Bengal. Apart from India paan culture is popular in Myanmar, Cambodia, the Solomon Islands, Thailand, Philippines, Laos, and Vietnam.

Issues for Paan Makers:

One of the problems generally faced by Paan makers is the non availability of qualitative pan leaves.

Stuffing materials of paans like betelnut and some powders are available in different qualities. Some times wholesale shop holders cheat these small paan makers by supplying low quality stuff . The consumer who eats the paan made by the low quality stuff , obviously doesn't like the paan and will not come to the shop again. Thus they are losing their



Expenditure for making pans	Rs. 1300 for 15 days. 2600 per month.
Income	100-150 pans per day at an average of Rs. 2/-
	Rs. 200/- -300/- a day
	6000/- -9000/- a month
profit	Rs. 3400-6400 a month

customer base. So at the time of buying paan stuff the paanwallahs should be conscious of the quality.

Dried paan leaves are not useful. So efforts should be made to take care of leaves and keep them away from sunlight. Otherwise it will result in loss.

Paanwallah should keep in mind the tastes of his customer base and make efforts to constantly meet those demands.

Solutions:

Care should be taken while selecting the wholesaler who can supply good quality items.

Quality of Paan should not be compromised at any cost, otherwise they will lose their customer base.

Beetle leaf and other inputs should be preserved well so that their quality will not be lost.

It is important to observe the changing customer preferences and the new varieties that are coming to compete in the market. ■

Value chain analysis is an examination of different stages in a good or service till it reaches the customer. In this analysis, backward and forward linkages are studied to identify gaps and possible interventions.

MYRADA

MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement And Development Agency) is a Non Governmental Organization managing rural development programmes in 3 States of South India and providing on-going support in 6 other States. It also promotes the Self Help Affinity strategy in Cambodia, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

MYRADA was started in the year 1968. From that year to 1978-79, it was involved entirely in the resettlement of Tibetan Refugees. It started with resettling several thousand Tibetan refugees and moved into similar programs with Sri Lanka Repatriates. Recognizing MYRADA's vast experience in this area, the Government of Karnataka approached it to prepare an action plan to resettle 20,000 families to be displaced by the Upper



Krishna project and to implement a pilot project in 1987. Since then several small resettlement projects mainly of landless families have been implemented within the framework of larger development programs. Since 1978-79 MYRADA started involving with rural poor and from then it is doing commendable work in enhancing the quality of life of the poor.

MYRADA is working with a mission to foster a process of ongoing change in favour the rural poor in a way in which this process can be sustained by them through building and managing appropriate and innovative local institutions rooted in values of justice, equity and mutual support and also to promote strategies and skills through which the livelihoods of poor families and the rights of women and children are secured. 'Building the Poor People's Institutions' is the guiding force of MYRADA that decides its role.

Formation of Self- Help Affinity groups (SAG) is the core focus of MYRADA. Since 1984-85 it has fostered SAGs of the rural poor. They form the power base of the poor which helps them to overcome obstacles in their path of practicing their livelihoods. They are credit-plus institutions since they do not manage finance only but provide space for the poor to grow in skills and in confidence to make decisions regarding their lives leading to initiatives for social change in the home and in the society. In September 2005, there were 9,396 SAGs in MYRADA's projects, managing a total common fund of Rs. 1,079 million of which Rs.480 million is savings and Rs.240 million interest earned on lending. They have disbursed over 1,026,601 loans. Several thousand more SAGs have been fostered with MYRADA's support in Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Timor Leste and several countries in Africa, as well as in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and in the Northeast states of Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya.

MYRADA adopts the SAG strategy for the empowerment of

women and the girl child and invests in formal and non-formal education for school going children and dropouts. Poor women have taken thousands of loans from SAGs for their children's education which is a good indicator that they have placed value on educating their child.

Around 1985, realizing that a major investment in dry lands was required to ensure food security of the poor, MYRADA began exploring the strategy of micro watershed management.

MYRADA's focus was to foster appropriate people's institutions which would take on the responsibility of planning, budgeting and implementing appropriate treatment measures to increase productivity in a watershed and then managing the investment for sustained impact. MYRADA has two simple slogans: "Make the water walk" and "Bring the soil back to life". 784 watershed management institutions have been formed so far.

MYRADA adopted participatory strategies in regeneration of arid lands and forestry management. It promotes two strategies. One in arid lands lying degraded and fallow and the second in forests under stress in moderate to high rainfall areas. The first strategy in arid areas include regeneration of private lands lying fallow, revenue wastes and other non – agricultural lands lying degraded in the watershed. The overall strategy is based on micro watershed management. The second strategy adopted in the Western Ghats programme is based on training of forestry staff in participatory management practices, micro planning in each village, formation and training of Village Forestry Committees, identification of affinity groups and forming them into SAGs etc.

MYRADA's experience indicates that it is not enough and often not strategically appropriate to try to influence policy change directly. To be as effective as possible, it is necessary to focus on a compact area where other existing institutions required to support innovations in favour of the poor need to be mobilized and networked so that the institutional base is adequate to lobby for policy change and a degree of institutional reform required to support and sustain these changes. During 1998, the District was identified as an appropriate operational area for effective networking. MYRADA's district strategy rests on three pillars. One is the provision of credit to the poor for which

there is appropriate infrastructure at the district level, the second is Micro Watershed Management and the third is the promotion of off-farm enterprises.

MYRADA is not a micro finance institution; hence it consistently refuses to accept loans/grants for on-ward lending to SAGs. A survey conducted by MYRADA in three districts in the mid-eighties showed that hardly 20% of rural credit for the poor is provided by official financial institutions. The SAGs respond to credit needs of the poor, but they need capital to cope with demand. MYRADA had worked with NABARD and the RBI to change policy that allowed the Banks to lend directly to SAGs; but the response of Banks has been inadequate in many areas; further it is expected that as Banks policies are liberalized, they will move towards larger loans which will quickly place the poor out of their sphere of concern. MYRADA therefore decided to promote a Non-Banking Financial Institution (non-profit) called SANGHAMITHRA, which operates independently of MYRADA and lends to SAGs formed by MYRADA and other NGOs. Sanghamithra plans to remain small - with an outstanding loan portfolio of about Rs 25-30 crores - and to promote several Sanghamithra's in other parts of the State and country. A Fund Management Company which plays the role of a holding company and which will promote and supervise the Sanghamithras is on the anvil.

In the recent years MYRADA has gradually increased its support to programmes including microfinance, individual and public sanitation, solid waste management and management of drinking water etc. in urban areas and towns.

MYRADA is also working in the area of education. It invests in upgrading the existing education system at village level, in preparing children to cope with its requirements as well as in setting up alternate systems to cope with those who can not do so. MYRADA's health program focuses on providing infrastructure support to existing Government facilities in remote areas which are ill equipped, arranging health camps

MYRADA, with its vast experience in participatory processes, has developed a series of working papers and some films to share its experiences to other organizations and people working in this sector.

Working Papers series available with MYRADA are in the areas of :

- 1) Participatory Interventions
- 2) Rural Management Systems
- 3) Participatory Rural Appraisal/ Participatory Learning Methods

Films available with MYRADA are in the areas of:

- 1) Watershed Management
- 2) Appreciative Inquiry
- 3) IGP
- 4) HIV/AIDS
- 5) Integrated Farm Development

All the above working papers and films can be freely downloaded from MYRADA website using the following URL

<http://www.myrada.org/papers-films-download.html>



and early detection and referral of chronic diseases and disabilities, capacity building of local level health volunteers, and school health education and check-up for children etc.

MYRADA is working with population fund of India on an extensive Reproductive Child and Community Health Programme and is recognized as a Resource and Training Agency in this field. Though MYRADA has not actively promoted itself as a training organization, it is increasingly looked at as a training resource by agencies in development both at national and international levels. MYRADA approaches training as a means to share its experience and best practices only in sectors where it is evident that its interventions have had sufficient field level impact namely SAG formation, micro watershed management, participatory methodologies, arid zone development and organizational and financial management systems for NGOs and CBOs.

MYRADA realized that providing credit, reducing the investment risk in dry land agriculture through watershed strategy and providing supporting services to on-farm activities was not enough; off-farm enterprises also had to be promoted. It therefore linked up with industries, which provide design and marketing support, while it builds up the capacity of the poor to cope with organizational demands and quality control. It did not set up off-farm enterprises on its own, but let the SAGs decide. Over 25,000 loans for off-farm enterprises have been provided by SAGs. MYRADA helps the SAGs to establish links with the private sector to ensure that value is added to the enterprises that SAG members borrow for.

During the past few years, 71 Community Managed Resource Centers (CMRC) have emerged in areas from which MYRADA is withdrawing. Each CMRC is staffed by a senior MYRADA staff and managed by a committee comprising representatives from the community groups. Each CMRC supports around 120 Community groups, including SAGs and Watershed Management Associations; these community groups pay for the services provided by the CMRCs which include providing information on prices of farm produce, mobilizing resources and establishing linkages, offering insurance and counseling services and lobbying for the interests and rights of the poor.

Thus MYRADA,, pioneer in women self-help groups in the country, is trying to make a difference in the lives and livelihoods of poor people in 3 states directly and is influencing many people and organizations across the country to work towards this cause by creating replicable models. ■

People's Manifesto 2009-14

This is a part of the manifesto/Common Minimum Program for the coming 5 years for any party/coalition government that will come into power at the Union/State level. This part below is voicing the agenda of the people through the lens of livelihoods and poverty.

In sixty years, the number of people dependent on agriculture and allied sectors has become four times, without any significant or with marginal increases in land, water and plant resources. The productivity of these resources is not the best in the world. The productivity per person is extremely low. Considerable part is rain-fed and dry-land agriculture with low and uncertain yields. This situation is accentuated with the globalisation, with free flow of commodities and products, where others have competitive advantage. All this would mean a lot of us, may be half of us, to migrate out of agriculture and allied sector-based livelihoods. But we do not know where to go. We are not able to identify the potential sectors which can offer us sustainable livelihoods to these people. This is in addition to the new livelihoods seekers growing at more than 2.5% per year. **This calls for an elaborate, in-depth research to identify the skills and services in which India can make a difference (that is to identify sectors with country's competitive edge and absorb so many of us) and accordingly invest to build people for livelihoods including offering skills, providing tools, infrastructure and handholding support, in these identified sectors.**

At present, the Government budgets on issues like education, health and other social sectors is less vis-à-vis requirement and the governments are reporting much less spending in this inadequate budget. Under the circumstances, **the Social sector allocations have to go up to 40% (a norm set up by UN) of the total budget, both at the state level and union level. Of course, this budget has to be spent fully and judiciously with reduced channel cost and leakages.**

Rationalization of various departments and their reorganisation including mergers need to be undertaken forthwith so as to increase cost-effectiveness and provide multiple benefits through a single window to the citizen as far as possible.

Further, we seek specific interventions in the following areas:

Identity

- * There is a lot confusion and harassment to us with multiple identity cards, affecting our lives and livelihoods significantly. We also acknowledge that there is a need for a universal identity and a comprehensive national database for all people in India. **A single, unique and secure multipurpose identity card has to be issued** by the Union Government. No other card should be required for any individual. This card can serve the purpose of PAN Card, Voter Card, Passport etc.
- * The state governments may issue another card, linked with the unique code of the Union Government's identity card, for accessing various social security and government welfare schemes. Whenever, a person migrates, the person should be allowed to access the social security schemes, on presenting the unique Union Card and State Card.

- * A national database of all families in the country including nomadic and semi nomadic communities, hitherto not in the records, should be up-to-date and linked with unique Union Identity Cards.

Poverty

- * Who is poor and How many are poor remain tricky in the country. There appear many measures and differing statistics. For example, Below Poverty Line Cards in a state exceed the number of poor the government says. There is a lot of confusion and a lot of misuse. Further, the poverty line talked in the country is not in line with the globally accepted definition. Thus, **there is a need to create a mechanism to identify the criteria of poverty and identify the poor and ultra poor, rank them with the poorest as the first and revised frequently. The targeting the poor and ultra poor should be based on this ranking for all development activities.**

- * Missions have been largely successful in India. It is, therefore, time now to establish a National Poverty Reduction Mission, with adequate funds, with a mandate to work for reducing poverty on a mission mode.

- * It needs to be confirmed that National Rural Employment Guarantee will not starve for funds. Plans relating to work should be done in consultation with the local Community Organisations. Scope of NREGA works need to be extended to improve not only physical infrastructure but also social infrastructure and providing goods and services to meet the needs of social security and welfare schemes. The wages for the producers/service providers, producing goods and providing services as per the plans for the community, should also be included. Further, the number of days of employment to vulnerable people, willing and able to work, can be increased to 120-150 per person/year.

Education and Health:

- * We need to move from 10-years to 15 years of quality compulsory free education to each and every child, who is in the age-group of going to school/college. Adequate infrastructure, facilities and teachers, in the ratio of at least 1 teacher per 12 students, have to be in place for ensuring this. At least 20% of the students may require residential (ashram) schools, away from their homes so that they can pursue education. Another 5% of the students with merit may require Gurukulams so that their talent and merit gets honed. The facilities with adequate resources need to be made available for these. However, we need to explore various alternatives to ensure quality education to everybody including education coupons, education endowment funds and/or out of the classroom support
- * Further, **there should be mechanisms for counselling all the students at the age of 12 or 13 and assessing**

their aptitude, competencies etc. They should be provided appropriate education and training after this counselling and assessment. The number of vocations in which training has to be offered has to increase significantly, say to 5000.

- * We need to remember that all youth are not seeking jobs. Some are seeking self-employment, some want to be entrepreneurs, some can be collective service providers/producers and some are seeking to serve the community. Job seekers should be attached to the livelihoods skill providers, as per their interest, and placed in the jobs. Self-employment seekers need to be provided skill training and linked to government, foundations and banks for grants and loans for self-employment. The enterprise centred youth should be picked up for entrepreneurial mentoring and support in building micro-enterprises. The community centred youth should be picked up for leadership mentoring and support. **In these four ways, at least half of the youth of the country should be 'placed' satisfactorily.**
- * It needs to be recognised and endorsed that Health Care (Primary, Minimum Secondary and Tertiary) and Emergency Services as a right of every citizen. These need to be available to each and every citizen at no cost or payable from the insurance. The insurance packages with no or low-premium should be made available to the poor. The infrastructure and human resources have to be increased to ensure this - Hospital bed - to- people ratio to 3.2 per 1000 (Recommended by WHO) from the current 0.7 per 1000; Doctor to population ratio to 1 per 1000 (Recommended by WHO) from the current near 0.6 per 1000 etc.

Social security:

- * Minimum compulsory public insurance to life, health and accident should be available to every citizen of India.
- * In the absence of a means for decent living, for the persons above 60 years of age, pension should be given from public sources. The current pension of Rs.200 to Rs.400 per month is not enough to have a decent living. This needs to be increased to cover the costs of a decent living. All the pensions for the Old, Disabled, Widow etc., should be disbursed through the Community Organisations.

Organizing:

- * The Self-help Groups in the country are playing vital role in reducing poverty and empowering women. Therefore, all the poor and not-so-poor in the country need to be organized into self-help groups in a mission mode. No vulnerable person (Disabled, SC, Tribal, Woman, Senior citizen, Child etc.,) in the country should be left out of the groups. Most of them may need to be in multiple groups. All these groups should be federated at village, mandal/block, district, state and national levels. We are talking about **organising individuals from at least 15 Crore families into more than 1.5 Crore SHGs and their federations in the coming five years.**
- * **Comprehensive participatory plans for each group and federation should be evolved and the resources, including financial resources, need to be facilitated for implementing these plans.** The mechanisms to

avail the loans in the form of cash/ kind and to make repayment also in the form of cash/ kind need to be developed. **The interest payable by any ultimate individual member, irrespective of the source, should not exceed 18% per annum.** Insurance and mutual support should flow through these groups/federations.

Enhancing the livelihoods of poor:

- * Apart from the general purpose solidarity, savings and credit groups, collectives around livelihood activities, that include activities increasing income, reducing expenditure, increasing employment days and reducing/diversifying risks, need to be promoted. These include local seed-based organic farming collectives, collective procurement of inputs, collective marketing of produce, processing centres and storage facilities at each block/mandal level, mutual support for assets/livelihood risks, etc. We are talking about **collectivising at least 10 Crore families in the coming five years, with a quarter of them being in formal collectives - self-reliant cooperatives, producer companies etc.**
- * Each collective need to have its specific plan with steps taken to build the capacities of the leaders and staff of the collective with required knowledge and skills to implement and realise the plan.
- * Further, investments, in training at least 10-lakh Professionals, and 50-lakh Para professionals and making them available to the collectives and their facilitating organizations, have to be made. Separate high quality training institutes need to be set up for this purpose. Premier Institutes that work specifically on Appropriate and Rural Technologies need to be set up.
- * **Traditional rights of the people on the natural resources**, like rights of tribals on forests, rights of fisher folk on the sea, rights of local people on tanks etc., **need to be respected and restored**, where required. The management of these resources need to be handed over to the local community institutions forthwith.
- * **Margin free shops** where people can buy the goods of daily consumption and also sell their produce if any need to be set up in each village/a cluster of 2-3 villages in a year from now.
- * **Migration exchanges** need to be set up and provide minimum facilities to the migrants at the places of migration and facilitate information and remittances.
- * All revivable existing infrastructure needs to be revived on a priority and new community-owned infrastructure such as godowns, cold storages, bulk coolers, processing centres etc., at village, cluster or mandal/block level, connecting roads, communication facilities, market intelligence systems, transport facilities etc., have to be planned and delivered as soon as possible.

Rehabilitation packages:

- * The principle of 'equity' needs to be followed in announcing rehabilitation packages. That means the rehabilitation packages have to be designed in such a way that those who get displaced by a development project should get more and better benefit than what the

beneficiaries of such project get.

- * The rehabilitation/compensation packages need to be available all those who lose their livelihoods, in addition to all those who lose their lands, and other physical assets.
- * Industries may help the country and the people. Government(s) may provide the industry/corporate with all subsidies, tax breaks, and single-window permissions etc., without jeopardizing the interest of the people at large and the poor in particular. The Government need not procure people's lands for the sake of giving them to the corporate/industry. The industry/corporate may negotiate and acquire land and other resources from the people, in return for a suitable compensation package (s). Government may intervene only if the corporate/industry is not being fair.

Governance:

- * Governance has to be close to the people. We need smaller Panchayats, smaller blocks/mandals, smaller districts and smaller states for this purpose. We have to rationalise and increase their numbers. We may have to at least double all of them in these five years.
- * We need E-Governance at all levels.
- * The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments suggested

transfer of 29 items to the local bodies to make administration closer to people and also to increase accountability in administration. But even after 15 years, this transfer is not complete. This needs to be corrected forthwith and all the 29 items need to be transferred to Panchayat Raj Institutions across the country. See table for details.

- * As mentioned in these amendments, all reservations for the seats in PRIs have to be ensured.
- * Steps to build the capacities of local bodies so that each local body prepares its five year plan/ **Perspective plan and annual plans in consultation with the local Community Based Organizations (CBOs)**. The Union and State governments need to make good the deficit in the budget required for taking the plans forward.
- * We need to make investments in training and making people available to local bodies in providing services in all the items that need to be handled by local bodies.
- * Confederations/coalitions of various CBOs at village, block/mandal, district, state and national levels need to be facilitated and evolved immediately so that the local bodies can seek their help in decision making and seek the help of CBOs in implementing the plans. All the works need to be taken up and contracted to the CBOs only.

Transfer of Issues to Urban Local Bodies (Urban Areas)

Sl.No	Items relating to urban areas	Responsibility
1	Urban planning including town planning	Municipality
2	Regulation of land –use and construction of buildings	Municipality
3	Planning for economic and social development	Ward
4	Roads and bridges	District
5	Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes	Municipality
6	Public health, sanitation conservancy and solid waste management	Municipality
7	Fire services	Municipality
8	Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects	Municipality
9	Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of the society, including handi-capped and mentally retarded	Ward
10	Slum improvement and up gradation	Ward
11	Urban poverty alleviation	Ward
12	Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and play-grounds	Municipality
13	Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects	Municipality
14	Burials and burial grounds; cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums	Municipality
15	Cattle pounds; Prevention of cruelty to animals	Municipality
16	Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths	Ward
17	Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveyance	Ward and Municipality
18	Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries	Municipality

Transfer of Issues to PRIs (Rural Areas)

S.No	Items Relating to Rural Areas	Responsibility
1	Agriculture, including agriculture extension	Gram Panchayat
2	Land improvement, Implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
3	Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development	Gram Panchayat
4	Animal husbandry, dairy and poultry	Gram Panchayat
5	Fisheries	Gram Panchayat
6	Social forestry and farm forestry	Zilla Panchayat
7	Minor forest produce	Zilla Panchayat
8	Small scale industries including food processing industries	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
9	Khadi, village and cottage industries	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
10	Rural Housing	Gram Panchayat
11	Drinking water	Gram Panchayat
12	Fuel and fodder	Gram Panchayat
13	Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways, and other means of communication	Zilla Panchayat
14	Rural Electrification, including distribution of electricity	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
15	Non-conventional energy sources	Gram Panchayat
16	Poverty alleviation programs	Gram Panchayat
17	Education including primary and secondary schools	Gram Panchayat
18	Technical training and vocational education	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
19	Adult and non-formal education	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
20	Libraries	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
21	Cultural activities	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
22	Markets and fairs	Block/ Mandal Panchayat
23	Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centers and dispensaries	Block and Gram Panchayat
24	Family welfare	Gram Panchayat
25	Women and child development	Gram Panchayat
26	Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded	Gram Panchayat
27	Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the SCs and STs	Gram Panchayat
28	Public distribution system	Gram Panchayat
29	Maintenance of community assets	Gram Panchayat

As all political parties are gearing up to release their manifestos and while some have already released, People's Manifesto 2009-2014 understood through the lens of poverty and livelihoods can attempt to help bring governance closer to people and take poverty away from them. ■

National Policy on Voluntary Sector, 2007

Voluntary sector has contributed significantly to finding innovative solutions to poverty, deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion, through means such as awareness raising, social mobilization, service delivery, training, research and advocacy. Hence to encourage, enable and empower an independent, creative and effective voluntary sector, with diversity in form and function a National Policy on Voluntary Sector has been formulated in 2007 by the GOI.

National Policy on Voluntary sector defined Voluntary Organizations (VOs) as the organizations engaged in public service, based on ethical, cultural, social, economic, political, religious, spiritual, philanthropic, or scientific and technological considerations. It also mentioned that VOs include formal as well as informal groups, such as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non- Government Development Organizations (NGDOs), charitable organizations, Support organizations, networks or federations of such organizations; as well as professional membership associations.

This policy has been formulated with specific objectives of creating an enabling environment for VOs that stimulate their enterprise and effectiveness while safeguarding their autonomy, enabling VOs to legitimately mobilize necessary financial resources from India and abroad, identifying systems by which the Government may work together with VOs and encouraging VOs to adopt transparent and accountable systems of governance and management.

National Policy on Voluntary sector opined that it is crucial that all laws, policies, rules and regulations, relating to VOs categorically safeguard their autonomy, while simultaneously ensuring their accountability. The policy stated that the Planning Commission, as the nodal agency between the Government and the Voluntary sector, will encourage state Governments to review prevailing laws and rules relating to licensing and registration of VOs and simplify them as far as possible. It also mentioned that the Government will examine the feasibility of enacting a simple and liberal central law that will serve as an alternative all- India statute for registering the VOs, particularly those that wish to operate in different parts of the country and even abroad.

The policy opined that the Voluntary sector has to address the issues of governance, accountability and transparency through sustainable self- regulation. Hence it stated that the Government will encourage the evolution of, and subsequently accord recognition to, an independent, national level, self-regulatory agency for the voluntary sector. It also stated that the Government will encourage Central and state level agencies to introduce norms for filing basic documents in respect of VOs, which have been receiving funding by Government agencies and placing them in the public domain in order to inculcate a spirit of public oversight.

As public donation is the important source of funds for the voluntary sector, the policy mentioned that, the government will simplify and streamline the system for granting income tax exemption status for charitable projects under the Income Tax Act and it also encourage transfer of shares and stock options to VOs. To encourage International funding to VOs the Government will review the Foreign Contribution

(Regulation) Act (FCRA) and simplify its provisions that apply to VOs, from time to time, in consultation with the joint consultative group to be set up by the concerned Ministry.

The Policy recognized the importance of the Government and Voluntary sector working together. Hence it envisages a partnership in all development activities between these two entities. The partnership may include, wherever feasible, other entities such as Panchayat Raj Institutions, Municipalities, academic institutions etc. This policy recognized three instruments of partnership, viz, consultation through a formal process of interaction at different levels, strategic collaborations to tackle complex interventions and project funding through standard schemes. It stated that the Government will encourage setting up of Joint Consultative Groups/ Forums or Joint Machineries of Government and Voluntary sector representatives at Central, state, district and local levels. It also mentioned that the expertise of Voluntary sector will be utilized, by including experts from the VOs in the committees, task forces and advisory panels constituted by Government.

The Policy stated that the Government will support and encourage existing, as well, new, independent philanthropic institutions and private foundations to provide financial assistance to deserving VOs. As training is a crucial requirement for people working in the voluntary sector, it mentioned that, the government will support and encourage organizations that train aspirants to enter the voluntary sector, as well as those already working in the sector.

Databases of VOs working in different fields and at different levels are useful for communication within the voluntary sector, as well as between the voluntary sector and the public and private sector. Hence the policy stated that the government will commission suitable agencies to prepare and update such databases.

Many VOs are facing difficulties in accessing information about government programs and policies. The National Policy identified this difficulty and to address this it suggested that the websites of various government agencies to be redesigned to provide links to key documents and databases including those related to project funding schemes.

This National Policy on Voluntary Sector is a positive move and it has the potential to boost up the voluntary sector. The Government has recognized the need for working with the voluntary sector to address the issues of poverty and development. However one should observe caution to make sure that the government does not scuttle the non-bureaucratic freedom of the voluntary sector. In true spirit of the policy the voluntary sector can also gear up to work with the government . ■

From 'Control' to 'Support' in Managing Volunteers

Literature in management talks about management control of operations. However, one can control only those people for whom carrot and stick approach is a possibility. In the case of volunteers, the only carrot available with the management of non-profit is the personal satisfaction and the social status that comes with being associated with a noble cause. And the stick is the reverse - denial of an opportunity to get that personal satisfaction and social recognition. This is particularly true in the case of the volunteers involved in professional work. However, unless the non-profit is highly unique/very well known and hence highly appealing to the volunteers, even this stick is not available. The volunteers can find other organizations willing to give them a similar opportunity to work for a noble cause.

Despite the difficulty in the application of management control methods, some non-profits use these methods. Therefore, these methods are reviewed. The common methods of management control talked about in the literature are: the budget (time, material, expenditure, cash and product/program budgets) along with its attendant cost/financial accounting and variance analyses, trends in various statistical data with analysis showing some attribution to the cause of trends, statistical control charts, operational audit, personal observation, and network analysis like tracking Gantt chart, milestone budgeting, PERT. The recent literature also includes based on 'balanced score card' methodology - like employee satisfaction, organizational learning, and customer satisfaction.

Pilar Soldevila and Ester Oliveras reviewed the management control processes in non-profits in Spain. They report the following use of management control tools by the non-profits:

Management Control and Information Systems Tools used in Non-profit Organizations (by percentage of organizations surveyed) in Spain			
MCIS Tool	% non-profits	MCIS Tool	% non-profits
Financial accounting	96.7	Deviations calculated	
Cost accounting	46.7	Monthly	7.7
Direct costing	50	Four times a year	15.4
ABC	0	Twice a year	15.4
Costs by programs of projects	0	Annually	61.5
Costs by nature	50	Approved strategic plan	0
Budgeting process (incremental)	100	Long-term budgeting	13.3
Balanced score card	10	Satisfaction surveys	16.7
Qualitative indicators	30	Annual report	70
Officially approved mission statement	0	Objectives annually reviewed	40
Use of annual objectives in the budgeting process	80	Use of deviations for management purposes	86.7

It is acknowledged that in many cases the members of non-profits (both volunteers and paid-workers) have little role to play in the case of budget preparations. Moreover, the budgetary process is directed by the costing and other influences of the donors. Further, the budgets are made as per the broad cost heads (like personnel, equipment, etc.) or as per the donor agency, and not as per the broader program area like education, livelihoods support, etc. In addition, the budgeting process appears to be more of incremental in nature and not linked to the objectives by reappraising the cost. Hence, the budget making exercise loses its relevance in the context of NPOs.

To implement several tools of management control, the management has to promote strategic planning, bring clarity to the objectives, build agreement about the indicators that are strategically important, and build shared vision towards the strategy, objectives and the expected balance between effectiveness and efficiency. This appears to be an area of concern. Many organizations sway in the ways of availability of funds, and do not consider developing a long term strategic plan and working towards it.

Given that the carrot and stick approach is not feasible in the case of volunteers, the option to be thought about is not management control but management support. Broad based research is required in this domain. ■

'Embroidering' Dreams

Shining Livelihoods



Fading 'Dhobis'

Declining Livelihoods



Development Guru - Dr PDK Rao

Dr. P. Durga Kameshwara Rao is a Nuclear Physicist turned into a development worker. He has inspired many development workers across Andhra Pradesh and called by many as "Guruji". He has founded an organization called "Sodhana" to work in the areas of education and dalit and tribal development. 'livelihoods' introduces this simple and humble man who at 70 still continues to contribute to the development sector by nurturing many people for development sector.



Dr P. Durga Kameshwara Rao after being trained as a Nuclear Physicist went to United States to start his career. He taught nuclear physics in the States and stayed there for 11 long years. In the 80's he returned to India. Dr Rao, popularly called PDK Rao was influenced largely by Vinobha Bhave and his Bhoodan (Land donation) movement. With this inspiration, he decided to stay back in India and work for the poor and downtrodden people.

From the savings he made in the States, Dr Rao purchased a house in Hyderabad and rented it out. His plan was to use the money from rent to meet and manage his needs. He decided not to marry. After leasing out his house he started walking around entire state of Andhra Pradesh to figure out where to start his development work and also to understand the real situation of poor and marginalized people in the villages. His search has stopped at Chipurupalli village of Vijayanagaram district of Andhra Pradesh. He decided to stay there for the remaining part of his life.

Since the beginning Dr Rao focused his work on education, dalits, tribals and stone cutters. He spent time with these people, engaged in conversations with them to find out their problems. He realized that organizing them into groups can possibly provide a solution to many of their problems. Therefore Dr Rao, focused on organizing people around their livelihood activities. He formed a cooperative of stone cutters and linked the cooperative with Indian railways. With this move many of the stone workers were able to get work and also receive reasonable wages.

Dr PDK Rao also worked for the welfare of the people from Kurakula community who are predominantly vegetable cultivators. He organized them into collective and worked towards increasing their productivity. He linked the organization of the vegetable cultivators to the hotels and hostels and ensured a consistent and fair-price market for their produce. He also worked with Ponduru weavers in association with 'Dastakar', an organization working with

weavers in Andhra Pradesh.

Another area that Dr PDK Rao is fascinated is education and empowerment of dalits. Towards this end, he worked closely with the education department and Scheduled Castes Corporation to find out solutions to many problems in these areas. He is instrumental in pioneering Community Development Processes in the areas of education and dalit empowerment.

Apart from being a development worker Dr Rao is also a guide and mentor to many development workers. Many people from different facets of life continue to be

inspired by his simple life and selfless devotion to the cause of developing the poor people. His house at Chipurupalli is like a Gurukul. Many young people from different places come and stay with him for some period of time to learn from his experiences. Dr Rao nurtures them in his own way. Though all the people nurtured by him did not take up development as their primary career they continue to contribute their bit to the cause of development.

With requests from many people Dr Rao founded a trust named "Sodhana" (which means Search) in Chipurupalli. But he did not allow any money to flow through Sodhana. He and his organization remains a facilitator. He links the community organizations to the government departments, donors and funding organizations. Dr Rao serves as a bridge between the people in need and the people who can fulfill or deliver these needs.

Apart from being a founder trustee of Sodhana, Dr Rao served as a managing trustee of Kovel Foundation, an organization working for tribals in the agency areas of Visakhapatnam. He continued his association with them from the year 1996 to 2001. Currently, he is one of the nominated trustees of Kovel foundation. He is also a trustee for 'Jattu Trust' which is working in the areas of education and tribal development in Vijayanagaram district. Dr Rao also co-founded the Community Coordination Network (CCN).

At the age of 70, Dr PDK Rao, is still actively involved in the community development activities of various organizations he associated with. Many development workers in Andhra Pradesh take pride in recognizing themselves as mentees of PDK Rao. In spite of all the feathers in his cap, Dr Rao remains so humble and leads a very simple life and continues his selfless service for the poor and the downtrodden people in the society. ■

Books

Book Summary

Name: **We Are Poor But So Many**

Author: **Ela R. Bhatt**

Publisher: **OXFORD University Press**



"We Are Poor But So Many", opens up a critical passage into the lives and livelihoods of self-employed poor women in India. The author Ela R Bhatt, also a visionary, activist and founder of Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), an organization with more than 7 lakh members, provides an intimate account of the lives of the poor, self-employed women, the forces that overpower them, the conditions that keep them in poverty, the battles they fight, the prejudices/attitudes they face and their working and living conditions.

The author gives a first hand account of how lives have changed for thousands of workers that were rendered jobless with the closure of major textile mills in Ahmedabad. While men were busy agitating against the closure, the women had to run the homes and engaged in multiple livelihoods. Children stopped going to schools to help their mothers. But all these self-employed women though contributed to the national economy remained outside the protection of any laws and regulations.

Ela's learned that the diversity of occupations taken up by women and their adaptability to changing times signified their strength and they needed the support of the society and

government. SEWA thus came into being in 1972.

The author narrates the different learnings she got from and with SEWA sisters (members of SEWA). Ela learnt about the strength of collective bargaining, that the women were producers, vendors and consumers and that they do not have any working capital and do not own any tools of production and pay horrendous interest on borrowings. All these realizations fuelled the birth of SEWA Bank.

To SEWA is housed with more than 7 lakh members. The union mobilizes and organizes people around work issues. There are more than 90 cooperatives built around products and services. Trade cooperatives improved women's bargaining power, their access to credit and market etc. The author write about her challenges in registering some cooperatives like rag pickers cooperative, midwives cooperative etc. because they do not manufacture any products.

The author acknowledges that there are as many trades among the self-employed as there are opportunities. Poor women are engaged in multiple livelihoods at any point in time and therefore it is a challenge to place them under any particular category of work. This means in the eyes of officials, bureaucrats, experts they are not workers and therefore denied work recognition, representation in union, financial services or trainings. Also without an employer one cannot be classified as a worker. Ela says it is very important to remove these conceptual blocks. These blocks continue to obstruct the recognition of SEWA national trade union.

In the concluding chapter the author reflects on how globalization is posing a threat to the livelihoods of the poor. The only way poor can be part of the global movement is to come together, build organizations, promote asset formation. Towards this end SEWA is establishing workers networks across countries. More than 92% of the workforce is in the informal economy and they contribute to 63% of the country's GDP, 50% of savings and 40% of exports but the infrastructure to support them is minimal to nonexistent. This has to change. ■

New Books

Name: **Communication and Development: A Study in Two Indian Villages**

Author: **Y.V. Lakshmana Rao**

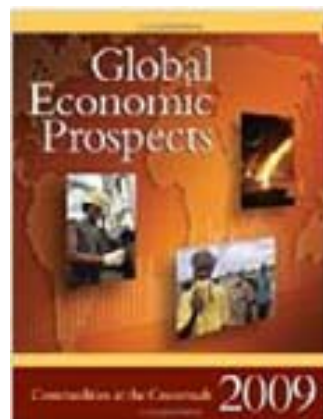
Publisher: **University of Minnesota Press**



Name: **Global Economic Prospects 2009: Commodities at the Cross Roads**

Author: **World Bank**

Publisher: **World Bank**



Career Courses in India

The world is passing through economic crisis. Its effect is everywhere including India. Many people are losing jobs and joining the bandwagon of unemployed youth who are already on roads in search of job. This global melt down is further worsening the situation of unemployed youth in India. Indian youth are now almost in a situation that they have to take up a career by chance but not by choice.

But the doors of job markets are not completely closed. Job opportunities may get smaller but not the dreams. Indian youth are still dreaming big and want to pursue the career of their choice. However many of our youth are not completely aware of the various career options available to them. There are some courses which can offer a good future to the youth. 'livelihoods' looked at those careers and is presenting here the list of career courses available to the youth in India.

- ◆ Acting Courses
- ◆ Actuaries courses
- ◆ Air ticketing course
- ◆ Alternative medicine course
- ◆ Anthropology course
- ◆ Archaeological course
- ◆ Architecture courses
- ◆ Audio Visual Media Course
- ◆ Beautician course
- ◆ Biomedical Engineering Course
- ◆ Brand Management course
- ◆ Commercial Fine Arts course
- ◆ Commercial Pilot course
- ◆ Company Secretary Course
- ◆ Creative Writing Course
- ◆ Criminology course
- ◆ Dance Course
- ◆ Dairy Technology Course
- ◆ Environmental Science and Engineering Career Course
- ◆ Event Management course
- ◆ Film Making and Film Production Course
- ◆ Financial Management
- ◆ Fishery Science Course
- ◆ Food Technology Course
- ◆ Foreign Language Course
- ◆ Forensic Science Course
- ◆ Forestry and Wild life course
- ◆ Graphology Course
- ◆ Hairstyling Course
- ◆ Industrial Design Course
- ◆ Industrial Safety Management Course
- ◆ Insurance Course
- ◆ Linguistic career course
- ◆ Marine Engineering Course
- ◆ Medical Transcription Course
- ◆ Merchant Navy Course
- ◆ Nano Technology Course
- ◆ NGO Management course
- ◆ Nursing Course
- ◆ Photography Course
- ◆ Private Detective Course
- ◆ Course on Psychiatry
- ◆ Public Relation Course
- ◆ Radio Jockey Course
- ◆ Retail Management Course
- ◆ Robotics
- ◆ Rubber Technology Course
- ◆ Social Work Course
- ◆ Speech Therapy Course
- ◆ Sports Management Course
- ◆ Stock Broker Course
- ◆ Tea Management Course
- ◆ Telecommunication Course
- ◆ Career courses in Travel and Tourism Industry
- ◆ TV Production Course
- ◆ Visual Merchandising Course
- ◆ Yoga Course
- ◆ Courses in Book Publishing

The details of the above courses and the institutions that are offering these courses can be obtained through the following URL.

<http://www.indiaedu.com/career-courses/> ■

Think Out of the Box

Old is gold does not seem to work all the time. Thinking out of the box, outside the traditional thought processes will help. Decisions overshadowed with emotions will many a time be devoid of logic. The story seems to say that a balance between the right and the left brain helps.

You are driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night, it's raining heavily, when suddenly you pass by a bus stop, and you see three people waiting for a bus:

- ◆ An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
- ◆ An old friend who once saved your life.
- ◆ The perfect partner you have been dreaming about.

Which one would you choose to offer a ride to, knowing very well that there could only be one passenger in your car?



This is a dilemma that was once used as part of a job application.

- ◆ You could pick up the old lady, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first;
- ◆ Or you could take the old friend because he once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back.
- ◆ However, you may never be able to find your perfect mate again.

The candidate who was hired had no trouble coming up with his answer. Guess what was his answer?

He simply answered:

“I would give the car keys to my Old friend and let him take the lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the partner of my dreams.”

Sometimes, we gain more if we are able to give up our calcified thought limitations.

Never forget to “Think Out of the Box.” ■

Low Body Mass Index (BMI) and Anaemia in Women (%)

Low Body Mass Index (BMI) and Anaemia in Women (%)

Anaemia in every married women (15-49)

State/ UTs	NFHS 2 (1998-99)	NFHS 3 (2005-06)	Change
Andhra Pradesh	49.8	62.9	13.1
Kerala	22.7	32.8	10.1
Uttaranchal	45.6	55.2	9.6
Haryana	47	56.1	9.1
Karnataka	42.4	51.5	9.1
Gujarat	46.3	55.3	9
Manipur	28.9	35.7	6.8
Tripura	59	65.1	6.1
Rajasthan	48.5	53.1	4.6
Bihar	63.4	67.4	4
Delhi	40.5	44.3	3.8
Himachal Pradesh	40.5	43.3	2.8
Madhya Pradesh	54.3	56	1.7
Goa	36.4	38	1.6
Uttar Pradesh	48.7	49.9	1.2
West Bengal	62.7	63.2	0.5
Nagaland	38.4	na	0
Maharashtra	48.5	48.4	-0.1
Assam	69.7	69.5	-0.2
Sikkim	61.1	60	-1.1
Orissa	63	61.2	-1.8
Tamil Nadu	56.5	53.2	-3.3
Punjab	41.4	38	-3.4
Jharkhand	72.9	69.5	-3.4
Jammu & Kashmir	58.7	52.1	-6.6
Mizoram	48	38.6	-9.4
Chhattisgarh	68.7	57.5	-11.2
Arunachal Pradesh	62.5	50.6	-11.9
Meghalaya	63.3	47.2	-16.1
India	51.8	55.3	3.5

Source: National Family Health Survey NFHS -2 and NFHS -3

Anaemia increased in 16 states while it decreased in 12 states. Interesting to note that those states which are considered progressive or where women are being actively mobilized into CBOs have seen increase in anaemia of women. ■

Out of Poverty

Swamy Awake To Opportunities

Bhukya Swamy Naik belongs to Ginjupalli Tanda of Achampet Mandal, Guntur district, AP. He has no ancestral property. Since childhood he is a hard worker. When he was very young his parents got him married. After his marriage, he and his wife started living separately. He constructed a small hut with the wood cut from the forest. In the initial days after his marriage he found no work in the village that can feed his family. Hence he migrated to the neighboring district along with his wife. At the migrated village he and his wife worked as agriculture labourers and saved some paddy and money. With that little savings they returned to their village.

Swamy Naik, with the little money he had, took two acres of land on hire and cultivated chillies in that land. Practicing better methods in agriculture he got good yields. Luck was in his favour at that time and hence he got better price in the market for his crop. So he was able to save good amount of money in three years of time.

Later he thought about improving his income. At that time their village had no frequent transport facility to the mandal head quarters. So he bought an auto to make it available to the people who want to go to Madipadu which is at 5 km distance to the north of the village and Achampet which is at a distance of 22 km to the south. Passengers felt very happy with this facility as they need not wait for the buses for long

hours. Swamy Naik got good income for some years. Later the Road Transport Corporation increased the number of buses to their village. Due to this change, demand for Swamy's auto declined.

Swamy thought that if this continues, he should have to incur losses. Hence he thought of another viable option that can give him better income. He observed the opportunities that are available within his village. He noticed that there was no tractor in his village that can serve agricultural purposes. Farmers used to hire a tractor from neighbouring village. Swamy thought of buying a tractor to give it on rent to the farmers in his village. He applied for a loan in ST Corporation. Within 3 months his loan got approved. With that loan amount he bought the tractor and other agricultural implements. His business has picked up very well. He got good income.

With the earnings from the tractor business he bought two acres of land and is cultivating chillies in that land. Now Swamy Naik, with his wife and two children, is leading a happy and peaceful life as the proud owner of land and a tractor. He also constructed a pucca house in his village. Swamy's life sets example that if we observe the opportunities at right time and utilize them in proper manner success definitely sides with us. ■

Broken Lives

Haste Costs Dearly For Ramudu

Vijaya Ramudu belongs to Manchalakatta village of Kollapur mandal in Mahabubnagar district. When Vijaya Ramudu divided from his brothers in 1983, he got 2.5 acres of cultivable land and 2 buffalos as his share. With good practices he was able to increase the number of his animals from 2 buffalos to 9 buffalos and 4 oxen within 20 years of time. His house was always with full of milk. He used to sell milk to most of the families in the village.

Apart from this he used to cultivate his land and get some income on this. His father used to work as village watch and ward. After he expired, Vijaya Ramudu and his three brothers share the responsibility of watch and ward of the village in a way that each one of them has to watch the village for one year. That means Vijaya Ramudu's turn comes once in every four years. Hence he used to have some additional income in these years.

As time went by, suddenly 2 of his buffalos and one ox died at the same time. Vijaya Ramudu had no clue about how this happened. He thought some of his rivals might have killed his animals with some poison. But he didn't have any evidence to prove this.

He feared that the remaining animals also would have been killed by these unknown people. He thought of saving them.

He decided to sell off all his animals. Hence he, along with his wife and children, went to the near by market and sold the remaining 7 buffalos and 3 oxen for a very low price of Rs 3000/-. Vijaya Ramudu thus lost his major income source.

Nature was also not cooperative to him in these years. There were no rains in the village for some years. Hence he was not able to get good yields on his land. The only income source remained for him was the work of watch and ward of the village. But it comes once in four years. Vijaya Ramudu's family is now facing acute poverty by not having a regular income source.

Manchalakatta village is on the banks of Krishna river and many families in the village depend on fishing in the river. Vijaya Ramudu was not able to go for even fishing because of his ill health. He decided to work as a agricultural labour, but the village has less cultivable land and hence there was not much demand for labour.

If Vijaya Ramudu would not sell his animals, he would be getting Rs 5000 – 6000 a month only on selling of milk. But with unnecessary fear and by taking decisions without thinking the consequences, Vijaya Ramudu's family now suffering and leading a miserable life. ■

26/11 - India is still pushing its case with Pakistan to act and Pakistan is 'acting'. In the neighbouring Sri Lanka, LTTE loses its key city. May be it is the beginning of the end! In Gaza, Israel continues its attacks. Casualties are more than 2000 already. In Bagladesh, Sheik Hasina gets a land slide majority.

Majority of Jammu and Kashmir has voted after two decades, indicating 'we want some development too...'. 38 year old Omar Abdullah becomes the youngest Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. It seems Indian politics are becoming youth-centric!

Still the financial crisis is deepening globally. By the latest count, more than a million jobs are lost in the country. We seem to be heading towards a ten million job cuts!!!

Everybody is telling us that we are a young nation with average age put at 25 years. A projection says we will be 29 years average by 2020. This is to say we are a young but graying nation. Most of our children up to 22-23 years are dependent and most of our elders above 65 years become dependent. Thus, we have a working span of 40-45 years. As the nation grows old, the ratio of dependents to earning adults increases. Right now, majority of the country is young and we need to celebrate National Youth Day (12 January).

Some of the important international days during the month have been: 18/12 – International Migrants Day; 19/12 – International Day for South-South Cooperation; 20/12 – International Human Solidarity Day. Of course, we observed Moharram and celebrated Christmas and English New Year. We are getting ready to celebrate Pongal, the harvest festival linked to the beginning of northward movement of the 'sun'.

The month that was spent on seven items broadly – exploring livelihoods ideas for 'desert' and beyond micro-finance; reflecting on people's manifesto for next five years in India; thinking about eldercare; thinking about youth; identifying people for work; discussing livelihoods and charity trends and learning; and realizing that universe is calling us to open up to it and trust its intelligence. When the 'whole' takes charge of you, when you become aware of you being part of the cosmic orchestra, and when you are in tune with the flow and go with it, you become spontaneous, expand to love and realize various possibilities. Then, you are in eternal bliss. Universe responds to your thoughts. And you evolve into more conscious. Your consciousness expands and you merge in the whole. I seem to have 'lost' somewhere there!

My graduation to a 36 hour fasting a week, except some water and low calorie liquids, is still half way! I may take a couple of months to reach there.

When you think youth, you remember 12 January, National Youth Day, and Swami Vivekananda. He said – "My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation; out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem (rebuilding India without poverty etc.), like lions." "The young, the energetic, the string, the well-built, the intellectual, for them is the task". He wanted that they got education so that character was formed, strength of mind was increased, intellect expanded and they could stand on their own feet. Abdul Kalam is leading a vision, adapted from this thought of Vivekananda, through Lead India 2020 to build the youth of India. As a country, we should and in fact we are slowly but surely getting ready to handover the leadership to our young men and women in every sphere of life including political, economic, development and spiritual spheres.

The youth and the elderly, they have a bondage that helps to the youth to care for the needy elderly. The hug, the touch, the tap, the warm smile, an affectionate enquiry ... all these help the elderly in deriving their childlike joy and live happily.

Of course, the care and concern are implicit in these.

We need to teach the youth and the children (future youth) to love life. Practice loving life. Practice loving

universe. Practice loving the whole. For this we need to love; we need to practice love; we need to know nurturing love. Then the peace and joy will be everywhere. And the bliss will be ours. As it did the other night – when nectar rained, eyes soaked, soul 'lost'!

Can we do this? **Yes, if we pursue Atma Yoga and practice twin competences – being gentle yet dynamic.** This would mean leading satvik life style with dynamism intact. This requires practice, discipline and patience. This 'atma' yoga calls for seeking yoga in thoughts, words, actions, and spirit. This requires support of a mentor or a co-practitioner, like Radha supported Krishna or Krishna supported Arjuna.

Krishna advises the atma yoga practitioners/partners – there has to be no social distance between them, no physical distance and no attitudinal distance. He has noted that it is not power but subtle influence based on intense and focused observations in extensive and varied contexts that matters the most between them.

We need to practice atma yoga with our co-practitioners/mentors in all dimensions of our being where gentleness and dynamism co-exist.

Join us in the world of yoga – for gentle dynamism and dynamic gentleness in all dimensions of our being – a union of purpose and practice, and practitioners – nara and narayana. You will not regret it. ■

G Muralidhar

