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The Beat

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THE DISPLACED

A crisis of confidence in rural India

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PIC BY SHARATH N MURTHY

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear reader,

The crisis in rural India has become the most important challenge to policy makers and politicians alike. Falling returns from farming, growing indebtedness and the collapse of public services has made life in our villages near impossible. The government, in the latest Union Budget, has tried to address some of these issues by promising unprecedented debt relief to the country's farmers as well as more funds for building rural infrastructure and generating employment. In this issue of *The Beat*, we describe the problems of rural Karnataka from the ground to give our readers a true sense of the disaster unfolding.

Our cover story on Pavagada reveals that 47% of the population in the taluk is seasonally unemployed. Even a family that owns 25 acres of land is unable to make ends meet as crop yields drop and water becomes ever more scarce. The lack of alternative employment opportunities in the area is forcing at least one member of every household to migrate to the cities to work as casual labour, reports Amiteshwar Singh.

The Dalits of Shambukanagere have endured a history of bondage, their lives signed over by their parents even before they were born. But almost two decades after they escaped the landlords of Nagasandra to create their own community, persistent drought has forced them to return to work for their former 'owners' in another form of servitude. Gayathri Vaidyanathan recounts their tragedy.

But where individuals and community organisations have made an effort to tackle these problems, the results have been dramatic and inspiring. I visited Kabbigere, where villagers produce their own electricity using local biomass, sell the excess power to the State electricity board and have created a sustainable model of social forestry to substantially add to their incomes.

Local social activist Sujatha De Magry of Kolar district has figured out how to make a fine, dry wine from tomatoes. She is all set to turn it into an enterprise and provide a ready market for the area's tomato farmers if only she can persuade the government to give her a licence, says Pooja Gautam. We hope you find this issue of *The Beat* as revealing and rewarding as we did reporting for it. Do let us know what you think.

Snigdha Poonam

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PIC BY AUTHOR

Tulsi Nayak's love of reading and his personal collection of 2,500 books helped him create Kunigal's first public library

The Passionate Bookworm

BY SUPRIYA KHANDEKAR

A SHORT, TANNED, SKINNY MAN with a wrinkled face, dressed a grey safari suit and looking older than he is, makes his way through the kids playing all around to usher me into the Principal's room cum staff room. He is Tulsi Nayak, 65, principal of Shir Vinayaka Model School.

The principal's room is actually the one and only public library in Kunigal, a small taluk of Tumkur district in Karnataka. I sit in one corner of the room staring at the walls with prints of Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Shivaji Maharaj on them. Kunigal town is known for its beautiful lakes and its famous stud farms. The place is dotted with education institutions but strangely it lacks anything remotely resembling a public library.

The school where Mr Nayak has his library was built by his daughter and son in law, who work in Tumkur as government teachers. Mr. Nayak used to visit Kunigal often after his retirement and it was then that he noticed the need of a library in the place. This public library is tiny, one can cross its length in seven steps in length and its width in six. On one side of the room is a rack full of books, some orderly kept and some just piled over each other.

"When I came a decade ago I was shocked to see that people here are not interested in reading. I wanted them to read, read more than just textbooks;

I wanted the housewives to read. I talked to many people about this and everyone gave just one excuse of no public reading space and no access to reading material. This moved me and I decided to do something," he explains.

He discussed the issue with his friends in Bangalore and got together all his books and put them on shelves in the principal's room of the school. "The Vishveshwayara Tower in Bangalore has a library of all the details about Karnataka, I

used to be a regular visitor there and always used to think of making a library of my own. I got that chance here," he gets nostalgic. But the happiness of a dream come true could be seen in his eyes.

The public library of Kunigal has a total of 2,700 books, out of which 2,500 are his own collection and some others are contributions from his friends. It offers memberships for Rs. 50 per annum and books are given for a week

to take home. The library also has reading timings from 8am to 10am and 4.30pm to 6.30pm. As I sat with Madhushala in my hands some school kids came and asked if I was a new reader with "Sir".

"It was difficult convincing people to come and read. I went door to door and told them about the library and asked them to come and read books. I even printed pamphlets to be distributed in places I could not go," he recalls. His book collection includes books in Hindi, English and Kannada.

The shelves have everything from Harivansh Rai Bachchan to Shakespeare. "I have not studied much English literature thus even if I have lots of English books they are not as many as Hindi and Kannada," he explains as he goes through the books on the shelf wiping some of them with his hands. He says people in Kunigal are not keen on reading English. Mr. Nayak has now 15 members in his library.

Along with the Library he has taken up the full time responsibility as the headmaster of the school where this library operates. "Since my wife passed away there was no motivation left for me to go back home," he says. "I thought of helping my daughter in managing this school and took up this post. When I'm with these kids I totally forget about my problems," he adds. Since childhood Mr. Nayak was interested in studies, reading and learning more,

"When I came a decade ago I was shocked to see that people here are not interested in reading. I wanted them to read, read more than just textbooks; I wanted the housewives to read."

"I thought of helping my daughter in managing this school and took up this post. When I'm with these kids I totally forget about my problems."

unlike his siblings who did not do more than basic schooling and then went into agriculture.

Mr. Nayak is not a Kanadiga by birth but was born and brought up in Karnataka. "My parents came down here from Rajasthan even before I was born. I have never been to our house there," he explained. It was utter poverty that brought my parents to this

subjects. "We were never wealthy, but my mother and I used to save on a lot of things to pay the fees."

After that he started working as a government middle school teacher in Siddaramanahundi for two years. It was here when some of his friends persuaded him to leave the job and join a Co-operative Society training course for two years in Mandya. "H.B

married and had children while I was there," he says. Mr. Nayak does not get any pension and his struggle started again after his retirement a decade ago.

"Sir has persuaded me to read and learn more", says Jyothi who is a teacher in the school. She came to Kunigal a year ago after she got married. She always wanted to study more than graduation but her family never supported. At the same time her inclination towards reading was never appreciated. She is the head of all the teachers and loves working as she can read in her free time. "Sir is very nice and never scolds the kids and because of him all the teachers are also getting exposure to books which we could have never got in this small place," adds another teacher.

The neighbours who also are members of the library are glad to have him here and love reading books so that they can discuss them with him. Sunita, a commerce student at the First Grade College in Kunigal said that she was glad to see books other than her textbooks. "Our college library does not have such nice collection of books. Most of them are reference books. I came to know about this library in my school. I love reading books but never got a chance to read as there was no library," she explains. She further adds, "Sir is very nice and I will be happy is he adds more books in his library."

Mr. Nayak also wants to spread the library and once he has funds he wants to make special room exclusively for the library. Along with that he plans to build a small ashram for the dalits and other neglected groups, which they can use as a kalyan mantapam for their marriage ceremonies. "All the mantapams are so costly that these poor cannot afford to book them. My plans are all laid down and the work will soon start in a year or so," he says with great enthusiasm. He points towards the land in front while describing his dream.

Despite his achievements, Mr. Nayak remains a very humble man. There were tears in his eyes when he expressed his gratitude that one should take so much interest in his life and said that he himself never knew that he was doing something big. Just how big, only the next generation of students in Kunigal will tell.



The public library of Kunigal has a total of 2,700 books, out of which 2,500 are his own collection.

unknown place. My father started farming ragi here, he adds.

His father died when Mr. Nayak was just two years old. He was the youngest among the four children his parents had. "As our father left us long back my elder brother had to start working at an early age and my mother wanted me to study. She wanted at least one of us to study," he says. He was always motivated by his mother to study hard and get into a good job.

He talks in broken Hindi about Kanakpura, near Bangalore where he grew up. His eyes glisten while he describes his childhood in what he calls 'humari basti'. He did his schooling there in the rural high school and then went off to Mysore for his PUC in Yuvaraja College. "It was a very known college then and only hi-fi people went to that college in those days," he adds. He then graduated from the Maharaja College with History, Economics and Political Science as his

Veeregowda, a known man then had got me that seat. It was very costly for me as the fee was Rs 50 per year. But I still joined it and I regret it till today", he clarifies.

"Sir has persuaded me to read and learn more", says Jyothi, a teacher in the school.

Mr. Nayak soon lost interest in that course and left it after one year. He then was very attracted towards the coffee estates as one of his friends was earning a lot of money by working on the Chikamagalur estates. He worked on one of the estates till retirement.

"Life in the coffee estate was the best part of my life considering the facilities and luxury in which I lived. It was special also because I got



The Lives of Others

A dirt-poor Dalit woman in rural Karnataka teaches us how to deal with adversity, manage household finances through discipline and hard work – and how she managed to send her kids to college

DIELLE D'SOUZA

IT WAS GETTING hot as the sun trailed across the sky. The acrid smell of burning cow dung, stink of sheep and cattle and stench from the open drains rose in a toxic vapour to greet us as we stepped through the narrow lanes of the little village of Kandavara in Chikballapur district, just 55 kilometres away from Bangalore, Karnataka's bustling capital. It's a two-rupee bus ride from Chikballapur city and the auto drivers are quite willing to drive you there for 10-15 rupees if you wish the luxury. Buffaloes, sheep, dogs and chickens jostle for space with bare-footed children running among the stones and dirt.

We interrupted her in the middle of her morning chores. Muniamma was washing utensils over a drain outside her house. She sat and scrubbed for a while, using brick powder for soap and water from the nearby public tap. The routine had been a part of her life in Kandavara since her wedding day about 25 years ago. Three daughters and one son later, the eldest already 23, Muniamma still toils long and hard as a daily-wage earner. She's a member of the 200-household Dalit community in the village and finds it hard to find work as a coolie. Coolie work comprises pretty much anything employers demand, from farming to breaking stones to gathering the crops

during the harvest. Her husband Venkatramappa and most of their neighbours share similar job profiles: They are either coolies or shepherds whose employment status depends on the demand. With an average income varying between 30-50 rupees a day for women and 70-100 rupees a day for men, it is hard to imagine how they manage to make ends meet each month. "Almost everything we earn is spent," says Muniamma, smiling forlornly.

She pours the waste water into the drain with a dirty splash. Muniamma breaks into a contagious grin as she tells me her story. Born in Maasti, a small village in Maalur

approximately 150 kms away from what is now home, the woman in the cheap blue sari ticks off the days in her mental calendar to her daughter's wedding. Her eldest, Kusumma, got married a couple of years ago without a glitch. Next month and Muniamma will spend Rs 1 lakh on another such 'happy' occasion. They've had to borrow money from relatives to bear the expenses.

She bore her first two children at the Primary Health Center in Kandavara. Then the doctor retired and no one replaced him. So she traveled back to her parents' home in Maasti to give birth to the others. This was 16 years ago. The voice of the community reverberates through Muniamma as she grumbles about the apathy of the government in providing basic health care services. Without a doctor for the past 17 years, they have had to make do with a 'compounder' (pharmacist) who comes once a week to distribute medicines. Rumours are rife that he sells the pills meant to be given free. One of the older village women attends to minor cases of wounds and burns but an emergency would mean a bumpy ride all the way to the ill-equipped General Hospital in Chikballapur town.

Despite their meager earnings, Muniamma has insisted that their children benefit from the government educational opportunities open to them. Her youngest daughter Savita studies History, Economics and Political Science at Maharani College, Bangalore. "As a child, I would have been happy to go to school," she says, the regret visible in the creases between her eyes. "There was a school where I lived. But we had sheep, so I had to take care of them."

She still has sheep, as do a lot of other families in Kandavara. Nine white heads bob up and down, crowded in a narrow space between hers and the

next house, the dirt lane and the drain. Her insurance for those bleak days when no work seeks them out lies under the dirt-ridden fleece of her sheep. Only the better off can buy buffaloes to provide for milk as they cost up to 30,000 rupees each. Fodder for buffaloes lightens the family treasury by 500 rupees every day. Muniamma stops to chat with one of her neighbours as she bustles to the public tap. It's a long line, but they all wait patiently for their turns. "Why don't you tell them about the drinkers?" asks Rajeshwari. Muniamma's giggles ripple through



Despite meager earnings, Muniamma has insisted that her children benefit from the government educational opportunities

the bevy of village women crowded around the tap. So Rajeshwari pitches in: "So many people drink here," she says. "My own husband is one of them. A major chunk of our salaries go on alcohol. There are even some women who drink," winks Rajeshwari conspiratorially, and disappears behind a hut carrying her pot.

Subodh Yadav, the Deputy Commissioner of Chikballapur district intervened, the entire community had to draw water from a nearby well. But, as Muniamma points out, the water flow is erratic. As the situation now stands, it's still a matter of fetch and carry in all respects. So for Muniamma, the day begins before sunrise. She points in the general direction of the field they visit every

day to perform their daily ablutions. Children, boys and girls, are luckier: They simply sit over the edge of open drains as their mothers keep a wary eye on them from inside their huts. The only public toilet for the community is pad-locked, mute testimony to the absolute lack of public services to India's poor as much as a simple choice of the great wide open over the stinky confines of a clogged loo.

Even the corporator of the village heads to the fields every morning. Despite being a government servant, Rama Devi's house has no toilet. Answers to any question put to her come from her husband. "She was elected because the post from this village was reserved for a woman," say the villagers with a dismissive air. People crowd around to add to bits of information regarding their sanitary conditions and Rama Devi has little to say for herself.

Muniamma's village is physically divided along caste lines. Dalits and other "backward communities" (as even the government defines them) live separate from the rest of the community. Balajigas and Vokkaligas, the higher castes, have

their exclusive lanes and, in any case, most of the land in the village belongs to them. But Muniamma says that there hasn't really been a problem as far as caste divides are concerned and says the villagers prefer to avoid the risks of inter-caste marriage. Muniamma's voice drops to a stage whisper: "We do not want to cause any trouble." Bring dowry into the picture and she shrugs. Her daughters' in-laws had asked for a price, but as Muniamma is too poor, she had refused to pay up. They are going ahead with the wedding regardless. We have taken so much of her time and have so many more questions for her that we feel vaguely guilty. *Nannege kelasa ide*, she simply says, I have work to do.



Saibaba, 60 years, has worked as a bonded labourer for three ragi balls and one rupee

A Life of SERVITUDE

BY GAYATHRI VAIDYANATHAN

This is a tale of two villages, both of which cannot survive without the other. Their past has been bloody and tainted with a long history of bonded labour. But now the rains have linked their futures together

THE YEAR WAS 1984, a time when rains still fell on the fields of Gauribidanur taluk. It was pouring then, and in the rain, the landlords of Nagasandra brutalised the men who had tilled their fields for generations. That day in 1984, the bonded labourers of Nagasandra fled the cruel landlords and established themselves in the neighbouring village of

Shambukanagere.

But in 2008, when the rain failed, the lands of these Dalits lie parched and many families have returned to their former landlords for work. They are not bonded labour any longer but casual labourers who are paid Rs. 50 per day or even less. Their living quarters in Nagasandra are dismal compared to the cement and brick houses the gov-

ernment has built them in Shambukanagere.

A dusty and potholed road now leads to Shambukanagere, which rises suddenly from dry fields that once held maize and ragi. Murals of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar dot the settlement, a symbol of fervent pride the people attach to their Dalit heritage.

Our arrival at the village triggered

a minor flurry of activity. Narasappa, the 40-year-old head of the Dalit Sangharsha Samiti (DSS) of the village took charge quickly. As the entire population of the village present then gathered around his knees, he began his monologue.

His father and elder brother had been employed for Rs. 1 per year at Nagasandra, he said.

For Shambukanagere is a Dalit village born out of Nagasandra's past dependence on bonded labour. The people of Shambukanagere had been born into servitude, their lives signed over by their parents even before their conception. Their fathers and forefathers, bonded labourers all, had worked in Nagasandra for generations.

Bonded labour was abolished in India with the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1976, which states "Rehabilitation of the freed bonded labourer is even more important than the release. If such labourer is to lose his employment, he would lose his source of livelihood, and the remedy would be worse than the disease."

In Karnataka, there is documented evidence of bonded labour as recently as the year 2000 when *The Hindu* reported the release of Dalits from captivity. They had been found chained in the granite quarries of the Kadathanala village in Karnataka's Mandya district.

In Gauribidanur, the bondage was of a less literal form. As Shivashankar Reddy, the ex-MLA and a landowner from Nagasandra described it, "we used to give [labourers] some money, maybe Rs. 500 or Rs. 1000; a deed would be executed where they were supposed to work for three to four years with no daily wages. They should work whenever called even if it is at night. Now, the work time is fixed by government."

In 1975, Narasappa would have to wake up at 4 am and feed the cattle. At 6 o'clock, he would tend the fields and rake the manure. By 7 o'clock, he would be covered in manure, his body stinking from the stench of dung. As he talked, Narasappa flung his arms about dramatically, and waving a stick, he said that if they did not do their work properly, the landlords would cry 'Oy! Do it properly'. He used to be afraid for just that one rupee, he said with a grimace.

The men who worked in the fields were fed just three ragi balls for lunch. In keeping with rigid boundaries of the caste system, the landlords considered the Dalits too unclean to have plates. As Narasappa demonstrated, the ragi balls would be placed on the Dalits' outstretched arm up to their elbow. The cook would pour *sambhar* into their cupped palms and so the labourers would eat. We lunched on this simple fare at one of the Dalit hotels in the neighbouring village of Hossur but it seemed rather absurd that grown men who worked hard at the fields should be fed so little.

Freedom came in the guise of Kalyani, a pro-Dalit group from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, which educated the Dalits of Nagasandra about their rights. Saibaba, a 60-year-old man reeled off a list of names of those who had helped free them: Ramachandrappa, Kommanna, Chintamani Shivanna, Maniappa from Kolar, Venkatesh, N. Munuswami."

People from all over Karnataka converged on Gauribidanur to help in the effort. The repercussions were immediate as the landlords filed false

cases of robbery and even rape against the workers. The police inspector of Gauribidanur, B. Ramakrishna however denied this saying, "no cases were filed against [the Dalits], and there was no police harassment."

The ex-MLA Shivashankar Reddy of Nagasandra remembered that certain police cases had been filed against the workers in those turbulent times. "There was a big movement, a clash between farmers and labourers, cases were also lodged," he said. Mr. Reddy epitomizes the paradox of Nagasandra's history, for he is a politician with a Bachelor of Arts education and cultured roots.

Every legislator for the Gauribidanur taluk since Independence has come from Nagasandra. Naga Reddy and his brother Thimma Reddy led a pre-independence struggle. "My father (Hanumantha Reddy) was a freedom fighter," says Shivshanker Reddy. Their families had organized freedom marches in Gauribidanur in the pre-independence struggle.

In 1938, the leaders of Nagasandra led a freedom march to the village of Vidurashwatha, about five kilometers



PIC BY AUTHOR

The Dalit colony in Nagasandra is in a pitiable condition. The houses are small and extremely dirty. Many of the residents have homes in Shambukanagere, but are forced to live in Nagasandra since their fields back home do not yield crops.



PIC BY AUTHOR

Shivshankar's (extreme right) father employed Ramanajappa (extreme left) as a bonded labourer in Nagasandra. Despite being free, he has returned to work because of the drought in his village.

from Nagasandra. "It was a *dwaja satyagraha*," said Mr. Reddy. Pointing to a grizzled old man walking towards us, he said that Mr. Narsimhaiah of Nagasandra was one of the few who had survived the South's Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

On April 25, 1938, hundreds of villagers converged at Viduraswatha to protest British rule by hoisting the Indian flag. It was nothing more than a symbolic event, for how could a handful of villagers in an anonymous village ever change the policies of an imperial power oceans away? The police opened fire indiscriminately, and 10 villagers: Bhumayya, Nama Ashwathanarayana Shetty, Narasappa, G.T. Hanumantappa, Venkatagiriappa, Narasappa Chowluru, Gachanagiri Narasappa, and Nagamallayya, were killed.

That Nagasandra, which martyred its own for Indian Independence, should have denied that freedom to its working people is a paradox. Mr. Reddy says "It was a societal practice," and hastened to add, "we don't have any problem with [bonded labour] any longer, but maybe isolated cases," he said. "They may be paid comparatively less, Rs. 1,000 per month or Rs. 25-30 a day." He raises an important point. Bonded labour has morphed into daily labour these days, but with minimal pay and dismal living quarters, the labourers of Shambukanagere are back to the past for all purposes.

The huts in the labour camp at

Nagasandra are tiny and dark and the labourers live in general squalor. The stuffy quarters are in direct contrast with the spacious government building housing of Shambukanagere. When the government established the 450-acre Shambukanagere village in 1984, it allotted about 1.75 acres to every Dalit family, as well as houses, a collective bore well, schools, and money

Shambukanagere was named after the Sage Shambuka, a Sudra who recited the Vedas in the epic Ramayana. After Lord Rama assumes the throne of Ayodhya, a Brahmin accuses him of causing the death of his son by tolerating Shambuka in his court. To redress the situation, Rama slays the sage and the son of the Brahmin comes back to life.

for milch cows. But the weather gods didn't cooperate. Rain in Gauribidanur has progressively decreased over the years.

With fondness villagers remember the times when water could be found at 50 feet, in the days when the land readily yielded sugar cane, tobacco and chillies. These days, the ground water

level has dropped to 1,000 feet at certain places and the bore wells of Shambukanagere are dry. They grow dry land crops such as to ragi, maize and sunflower and in the dry months, the farmers go without employment.

Despite this, Saibaba said with grim determination that he will never leave the land he had fought for, even if he had nothing except water to drink. Others in the settlement emphatically agreed with him. But Ramanajappa, a labourer who has returned to Nagasandra's fields, disagreed. People who have a little water in their bore wells can talk, he said, but what about others? How can he sustain himself, he asks.

The impact has been felt in Nagasandra as well. Shivashankar Reddy said that his family owns 150 acres, but only 20 acres are actually being farmed because of a lack of water. Nagasandra also faces an enormous labour shortage because most people from Gauribidanur migrate out of the taluk for work. They have no choice but to rely on the former bonded labourers for tending their fields.

Narasappa held us spellbound by his narration, but our camera captivated the children of the Shambukanagere. They were poorly groomed and covered in mud, but their lot is certainly better than it was once. Shambukanagere has a primary school that teaches up to grade five, and many children go outside for the rest of their education.

The children in Nagasandra go to school as well, and it is likely that they will become part of the mass exodus of youth from taluk as people abandon agriculture.

For the adults of the villages who have actually been bonded labour, it is a different story. The two villages have shared a bloody past, but a lack of rains has shackled their futures together. The Assistant Director at Gauribidanur's Department of Agriculture M. Anurupa said that it all comes down to water. If the government could somehow bring water to the taluk, the plight of these labourers may be better, she said.

What rehabilitation can be achieved without the livelihoods that irrigation alone can support?

Driven Off the Land

GUNDANAİK SIPS A glass of tea sitting outside a small stall watching the sparse traffic pass. A friend joins him, and they talk about life. His would certainly seem incongruous to most. Gundanaik has a Bachelor of Arts degree. His family owns 25 acres of land on which they grow groundnut. Yet today, after his tea break, he will return to the construction site in Bangalore where he works as a casual labourer.

Gundanaik is just one of tens of thousands of migrants who have come from Pavagada taluk to Bangalore city. Pavagada lies about 130 kilometres from Bangalore and the trip to the city isn't cheap. But such is the scale of poverty in Pavagada that almost one member of every household in the area has migrated to a city. And if anything, many more are set to follow.

Just like Gundanaik's family, most of Pavagada's residents are farmers; agriculture employs more than 90% of the population. The staple crop in the area is groundnut, which is a *kharif* crop sown in July and reaped around December. But due to the scarcity of water that plagues the region, not only does the groundnut crop suffer but the land too remains barren for the rest of the year. This translates into seasonal unemployment for the farmers and agriculture labourers.

Gundanaik's four brothers and three sisters work on their fields in *kharif* season. Off-season, the brothers

migrate to cities looking for work, "for the stomach," as he puts it. It's the same story with most of the seasonally unemployed, who head to the cities looking for work—any kind of work—because there is absolutely no alternative occupation in the taluk. Says Swami Japananda, a local activist and head of Ramakrishna Mission, Pavagada, "The farmers in the off-season have to migrate." They cannot be sure of getting work when so many people are unemployed here, he adds.

And the scale of unemployment is staggering. Government statistics show that out of a population of 246,255 in the taluk, 115,811 are unemployed. That is almost 47% of the total. Traditionally, the people have been dependent on agriculture. But with crop yields steadily decreasing and the water table dropping below 1,200 feet, there is little hope that farming can sustain the growing population. So people are looking at other vocations, but there is little opportunity for self-employment in the taluk as few people have the resources to start a business. There are no government schemes to help the people become self-employed.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) will be launched in Pavagada taluk later this

year. The scheme aims at providing people 'below the poverty line' (BPL) who don't have work, the opportunity to work 100 days in a year as labourers at Rs. 75 per day. That is an improvement from the approximately Rs. 50 they make working for private contractors. Yet, the fact remains that any labourer who goes to Bangalore to work gets almost Rs. 150 per day. Nagaraj V., a Junior Civil Engineer with the Zilla Panchayat, says that the scheme is doomed to fail. "There is a lack of foresight in planning in the higher levels. They do not realise the ground reality," he says.

It is not that Pavagada lacks for talent. In the field of education, it matches the national literacy rate. There are 267 primary schools (including higher primary), 12 pre-university colleges, two degree colleges, a nursing college and two Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in Pavagada. Courses offered in the colleges include Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Computer Applications and Bachelor of Business Management. But there are no jobs



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SpraguePhoto.com



COURTESY THE TRIBUNE

Pavagada is emblematic of India's villages, where dire poverty and the singular lack of opportunity are forcing people to migrate to cities

BY AMITESHWAR SINGH

workers in factories, and there are some teacher training courses available, along with the nursing college's courses. G. V. Kumar, Junior Training Officer, Govt. ITI, says that the students there are basically trained to go to cities and work in factories as

of industry. With the exception of groundnuts, the taluk barely produces any commodity that can be used as an industrial raw material. Given the scale of poverty, there is barely any local market to speak of.

As Mr. Kumar puts it, "It is a logistics problem that stops industry from coming here. If they set up here, they have to import raw material, and then take the finished goods back to sell." And then there is the hurdle of the reputation of the taluk. Pavagada is considered to be one of the many Naxalite-affected areas in Karnataka. Although the Naxalites were said to have been wiped out years ago, they are still a deterrent. The only resource that can attract industry to the taluk is its human resource, but that doesn't work when people are ready to shift to other locations.

As Gundanaik walks back to his work, he cannot help but blame the Government for failing to provide a solution to Pavagada's woes. But still he has not abandoned hope. Every night he studies for the Karnataka State Public Service exam, if he passes which he could secure the post of Second Division Clerk. He says he will remove all government officers from the taluk the day he gets the authority, because they never took interest in Pavagada.

openings in the taluk for those who complete any of these courses. And the degree Gundanaik secured—a Bachelor of Arts—has no demand most anywhere. After doing their BA, most of the students shift to Tumkur or Bangalore to pursue a post graduation qualification, and then settle down there. Gundanaik, who is the only degree-holder in his family, could not afford to do even that.

Swami Vivekananda College of Management Studies is one of the degree colleges. The college actively helps its students in getting placed. The principal, Shivashankara Reddy, says that they invite IT and biotech companies from Tumkur and Bangalore to conduct campus interviews. "There are no jobs in the taluk. The students have to go to the cities," he says. Agrees Manjunath M., a lecturer in the same college, "You have a degree, you must quit Pavagada. Even the less educated people are going to Bangalore for a job."

But there is paucity of vocational courses. The only vocational training available is what the ITIs provide, technical education to become skilled

skilled workers. "There are no industries here, else they would be working here," he says. The principal of Shri Venkateshwara Institute of Nursing, Sheena P. A., says that students go because there are more opportunities in bigger cities. They are also drawn to Bangalore's more exciting lifestyle.

Opportunities are obviously more numerous in Bangalore than in any taluk. But Pavagada is totally devoid of them. There is not even one factory in the whole taluk. The only small-scale industries worth mentioning are the groundnut oil extraction industry and the textile industry. The former employs around 1,600 workers, while the latter has around 1,900 workers.

In such a situation, one would think Pavagada would be ripe for investment. No competition, a talent pool ready to be tapped and cheap prices. Yet, some very basic hurdles like an absolute lack of infrastructure, shortage of water and pathetic connectivity to the nearest industrial hub—Bangalore—act as major deterrents. There is not even a rail link in the taluk. Another factor is the lack of raw material for any kind

Pictures (clockwise): fires on street corners are a fixture in towns with migrant workers; labourers at a stone quarry in Kolar district, Karnataka; construction sites employ many out of town workers in Bangalore; workers huddle around a fire on a chilly morning in New Delhi; a migrant worker in Karnataka.

Stolen

Children in rural Karnataka are dropping out of school at an alarming rate under the compulsion to start working to help feed their families

Childhoods



PIC BY AUTHOR

BY KAREN SOLOMON

CLUNKING MY WAY on the bumpy ride into the villages of Koratagere taluk, on dusty, worn out tar roads with green fields on either side, I see familiar, bright colored school rooms, standing out in stark contrast to the

brown thatched mud houses. The taluk has 258 schools, most which are in poor condition, in terms of infrastructure, teachers and supplies. They each have 4 teachers who teach all four subjects Kannada,

Mathematics, Environmental Science and English, everyday. Urdu schools are the poorest of the lot.

Haseen Taj, 20, who failed her high school six years ago, is now married and rolls beedis for a living. Her sister

Tanzeem Zahara, has passed high school but will share the same fate as Haseen, if she is to add to the income of the family. Their mother studied till the 9th standard, got married and is still rolling beedis. This is an everyday scene in the Muslim-dominated village of Horavanahalli, some 30 kilometers from Koratagere town. The streets are filled with young boys with little to do but hang about the shops, while girls hide in the dark corners of their homes, refusing to come out.

Their dreams and ambitions are cut short. In fact, they do not dare to dream because most boys and girls do not study after their high school. There is no world outside their villages and no life outside that taluk. Their schools days are spent under surveillance and their after-school hours are spent working to earn for their families. They have no idea of what they might do if they were let free and given wings to fly.

The mothers are fearful that if the girls were educated or secured higher qualifications, they would not be able to find a suitable husband for them, and so they stop them as early as possible. When they drop out they put them to work in the family business of rolling beedis or get married and raise a family. Another reason for not educating the girl is that she would bring income to her husband's home and not to her parental home, so they feel it is a loss on their part educating them. The free mid-day meal scheme designed to provide poor parents incentive to send their kids to school, which Mr. Moulana from the Azad Rural Development Project (ARDP) says is working satisfactorily, is simply not enough to ensure the children's attendance in school.

ARDP focuses on the issue of Muslims children dropping out of school. With the help of the Block Education Office in Koratagere, Mr. Moulana conducted a study of around 12 Urdu schools in the taluk and found that 40% of dropouts were Muslim girls. Often parents justify their decision on the grounds of being unable to

ensure safety of the girls who have to go to high schools in the taluk headquarters from their villages. Some parents are uneducated and they don't care to ensure that their children complete at least high school and prevent them from dropping out.

Says Neherta, a mother of two young women, "This is what we do in our Muslim community." Speaking to her on her way home, she said that it was no use educating them over their 10th standard. Her daughters, of around 18-20 years of age were standing at the threshold their home looking at their father cutting the leaves and rolling beedis. Compared to the other girls in school, they are very shy introverts, not willing to mingle with any one even casually or even chat with their

own neighbours.

One Urdu school in the taluk called the Urdu Lower Primary School (LPS) is a one-room school and is very small with 25 students for the primary school. This school has a number of dropouts and there are hardly any teachers to teach and the children are not provided with books or

uniforms. The children who attend the classes are also very few in number in the school. The other Urdu schools also follow this pattern and very little is done about it. The Principal of a school in Kabbigere said that they could not do anything if the parents do not send their children to school. Programmes like the China Ranga Programme that was introduced to bring back the dropouts into the schools also hasn't helped because

students move out or get married, and even if they do, their parents do not let them continue.

While the public schools in the area have a big dropout problem and more irregularities, the private-aided schools seem to fare better at attendance and maintenance of discipline and create a school-like atmosphere. The Urdu schools have the highest dropout rates. The government and the NGO's seem to be trying to change this but they are up against the prejudices of community, religion and strong beliefs that do not value a modern education for their children.



Bound by Biogas

An ambitious project to generate power using biogas has brought together an entire community and created opportunities to earn and to conserve

BY SNIGDHA POONAM

KABBIGERE, A LUSH village of jasmine fields and eucalyptus trees tucked away in the picturesque hinterlands of south Karnataka has the feel of Brigadoon, the enchanted Scottish village of literary legend. But this is not what took me to the village, a 25 kilometre bus ride from Koratagere town, where I was researching a story that couldn't have been more far removed. I was interviewing people about malnutrition, my Masters thesis proposal, using a mix of Kannada, Hindi and English, when I stumbled on the Biomass Energy For Rural India (BERI) project in Kabbigere.

Here villagers produce their own electricity using local biomass to generate electricity, sell the excess power to the public grid, make money and also make a significant contribution to controlling global warming. This was enough to fuel my curiosity and I soon set out to explore how these small miracles happen.

Rural India comprising of nearly 70% of India's population consumes only about one-third of the total power generated in the country. Although 85% of the villages are technically

connected to the electricity grid, less than a third of rural households are electrified. Erratic supply and fluctuating voltage, overexploitation of local biomass, low efficiency of devices and high human drudgery associated with cooking characterize the rural energy scenario in India.

But all that is history for people in this cluster of five villages in Kabbigere where they have begun an energy revolution. Here the villagers are the producers as well as the consumers of electricity. As a part of BERI project, they have constructed a 500 kilowatt electricity generation plant and sell power to the Bangalore Electric Supply Company at Rs 2.85 per unit under an agreement signed by Bescom and BERI in May 2007.

The \$8-million BERI project is financed by the World Bank's green arm, Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Besides GEF, which is canalizing funds through the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), the Indo-Canadian Environment Fund, the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources and Karnataka's Department of Rural Development are also involved. The technology for it came out of the Aerospace Department's Combustion, Gasification & Propulsion Lab as a



PIC BY SNIGDHA POONAM



PIC BY SNIGDHA POONAM

low cost, sustainable alternative to diesel. Currently, the implementing

programmes of the central and state governments. The predominant local objective is to raise the standard of living of the rural population by catering to all their energy requirements,” says R S Anuradha, Senior Block Programming Officer, BAIF.

As a corollary of the agreement, BESCOM also provides continuous power to these five villages. The electricity is used locally for irrigation, drinking water, domestic lighting and village industries to enhance income and opportunities.

The project is taken up in a cluster of 5 villages in Koratagere taluk called Kabbigere cluster (Kabbigere, Chikkarasanahalli, Chikkannahalli, Ajjenahalli and Obenahalli), all of which serve as the base for the

experiment. The cluster system is adopted to enable setting up of appropriate maintenance, servicing and training infrastructure and a suitable cost recovery mechanism. With the participation of the Forest Dept, the wastelands are planted with acacia, cassia, casuarina and eucalyptus trees to create ‘energy forests’ to feed the gasifiers. The villagers prune the branches every year and sell the wood to BAIF, which buys it at the rate of Rs 1,100 per kg. The wood is burnt in controlled

conditions to produce a combustible gas called producer gas, which is then cooled and cleaned prior to combustion in internal combustion engines for power generation.

To ensure sustainable biomass production on forest, community and private land, the village community has been organized into Village Forest Committees (VFCs). In each of the four villages, 0.5 acre land was leased by VFCs. At each site, around 65,000 seedlings were planted, with 50% of them raised by the forest department and the rest by the Women Self Help groups (SHG) members. Over 136 farmers in an area of 56.5 hectares in four villages are involved. The year-round activity has multiplied their income tenfold. Suresh, a farmer who could be the poster boy for the

project’s success says that he has made Rs 16, 000 selling wood last year and is looking forward to earning more this year because of the proliferation of branches.

The community projects include biogas production, community bore wells, agro-forestry and rainwater harvesting. These projects are managed entirely by village committees and they maintain separate bank accounts for each scheme, utilizing the savings for repair and maintenance. Every 5 houses manage a biogas plant that they run with dung collected from their cows and they share the energy among themselves for cooking in improved *chulhas* that run on biogas.

Similarly the community irrigation project is a huge success with 36 bore wells drilled in 3 villages. Each bore point is managed and used by 5-10 farmers. The scheme covers 150 acres and 300 families. And farmers who had given up on farming because of lack of water are now actively engaged in floriculture, their jasmine fields spreading as far as the eye can see. “I earn Rs 10,000 a year from selling jasmine. I also make money from growing eucalyptus in 5 guntas,” says Chandrayya, a farmer from Ajjenahalli.

The villages have rainwater-harvesting tanks erected on the roofs as well as underground structures in the premises of schools. The water is used for watering the medicinal plants nursery and the kitchen garden that are looked after by the students. In Shri Maruthi High School, they were set to inaugurate a hand pump that would run on the rainwater stored in the underground tank. “We collect 11,000 litres of water in the underground structure. Our drinking water requirement is met with the water through rain water harvesting,” says Nagraj Rao, a senior teacher.

The project also satisfies the global environmental objective of reduction of carbon dioxide emissions to the atmosphere through the following pioneering ideas: setting up 2.9 MW gasifier plant to generate electricity, using biomass helps avoid 7,000 tonnes carbon per year; 1,200 tonnes of carbon dioxide is avoided by use of biogas for cooking; and, Plantations of 3,000 hectares of fast



Pictures (clockwise):
Electricity generation plant;
Water recycling system and a
worker cutting wood for feeding
into the plant.

agency, Karnataka Council for Science & Technology Limited, (KPTCL) and Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF), an NGO, are working to balance the energy, irrigation and biomass needs of the region.

“The idea is to build a synergy between stakeholders are the village communities, local NGOs, local entrepreneurs and administration thorough convergence of the incentives and the developmental



PIC BY SNIGDHA POONAM

growing species trees would ensure that about 10,000 tons of carbon is sequestered.

The whole process is environmentally safe. “The used water is purified and recycled through water recycling apparatus where the carbon and ash is removed using an electrolyte chemical. The sludge settles in three hours and the pure water is sent to the running sump for use again. It is done every 20 days,” says Innasi Mariya, the gasifier plant operator, demonstrating how the process takes place. Charcoal from the burning of biomass is used for making fuel cells bricks instead of being thrown away.

In Golarhatti, a hamlet of Kabbigere taluk, two enterprising women, Shivamma and Gangamma took up the challenge of raising seedlings under the Decentralized Nursery Scheme, one of the side projects under BERI. Undeterred by the skepticism of their fellow villagers, they raised 10,000 seedlings on their own under the auspices of Village Forest Committee. They worked day and night, preparing soil, filling bags, planting seeds and watering the plants.

The move paid off with the women receiving Rs 2,000 between them and their little success story soon became a legend in surrounding villages. Four more groups followed. The programme in a year has resulted in an additional income of Rs 3,000 to each participant. And so what would have been yet another year of

Pictures : A mechanical wood chopper used by village workers; storage room

hardscrabble existence for these farmers turned into one of unexpected bounty.

“Are you going to publish it?” asks Ms. Anuradha, before telling me about the goings on behind the scenes in this

The move paid off with the women receiving Rs 2,000 between them and their little success story soon became a legend in surrounding villages.

seemingly immaculate organization. She tells me that two years ago, the authorities at BAIF decided to hand over things to the panchayat. There is a Gram Panchayat sub committee that supervises the affairs of BERI with the president of the Panchayat as the head of the committee. Ms. Anuradha says there is a general feeling of resentment among the BAIF employees because they don't receive their salaries on time ever since the Panchayat has been made responsible for the management of funds.

K. Ramesh, Gram Panchayat Assistant Secretary who has his office in the BERI premises, reclines in his chair, folds his arms behind his head and remarks smugly, “This is a Tuvinkere

Gram Panchayat undertaking. We release the funds for expenses like biomass purchase or labour charges. The maintenance of the project is supervised by the Gram Panchayat.” Though the project has passed the litmus test for being practicable in field conditions, people are still waiting to see if it is sustainable over the long term. On the execution front, they still have a long way to go.

With the biogas project, there have been incidents of discord among the farmers over the quantity of cow dung each one contributes. The farmers say that since everyone is not contributing equally, the distribution of biogas cannot be equal. This is just one of their nettlesome field problems.

When I first met Narsimha Swamy, a farmer, he seemed reluctant to talk to me. But he soon warmed to the topic and said that the farmers have problems with the panchayat members as there is corruption and also with the BAIF staff, who he says don't pay them well for their wood. But he also conceded that there is nothing that couldn't be sorted out. He told me that his life has improved and that he earns twice as much he did before the project happened and if not for these schemes, the farmers would have resorted to suicide as in some drought hit villages in Karnataka. The project he said not just bailed them out of poverty but also gave them permanent means of employment. “*Illivaregu paravagilla*,” (so far so good), he concludes.

Summer Wine

Who would have thought wine could be made from tomatoes? Well it can and it tastes great, says **POOJA GAUTAM**

TWO FRENCHMEN, on a visit to Kolar town in Karnataka, stayed with a friend living and working as a social activist in a nearby village called Devasamudra. One evening they were lounging around the house enjoying the silence and the breeze blowing over the nearby tomato fields when a colleague of their host dropped by. The host asked her guests what they would like to drink and the colleague suggested they try her special wine. The Frenchmen were astonished by its aroma, body and flavour. They thought it splendid and one of them insisted it was made from a particular variety of black grape.

The colleague asked him whether he was sure, to which one of the Frenchmen replied, "Of course." His father, after all, was in the wine business and he could recognize a wine by just looking at it, he claimed. The colleague smiled faintly and said, "My friend you are wrong. This wine is made from tomatoes." The Frenchman was taken aback. In fact he was so amazed, he took two litres of tomato wine back with him, promising to buy more if they ever decided to produce it commercially.

The colleague was M.V.N Rao and the host, Sujata De Magry. Mr. Rao is the head of the Gram Vikas, an NGO working for the betterment of the villages in Kolar district. Mrs. De Magry is an activist of Gram Vikas and has roamed the world, having worked with numerous NGOs and in several villages in India.

Wine making is something of a hobby with Mrs. De Magry. Before

inventing 'tomato wine,' she made wine from grapes and rice. One day Mr. Rao and she were chatting when he suggested she try making wine from tomatoes. After all, tomatoes are widely grown in Kolar district and she would have a ready source of raw material, he said. She replied it would be impossible. Mr. Rao, however,



persuaded her to try. And within a year she got lucky: She'd figured out how to make a fine, dry wine from tomatoes!

Mr. Rao and she then decided to make it a business venture and entered into a partnership. They are yet to decide on a name and a price, but they are considering naming it *De Magry* and pricing it around Rs.750 a bottle. But, regardless of how impressed her French guests were, there's no assurance that the product will succeed in the market.

For starters, the government is skeptical. When the proposal was sent for approval to the government,

officials refused to give them a license to make tomato wine saying the tomato is classified as a vegetable and not a fruit, and wine by definition is made from fruit, so a license could not be issued. Mr. Rao then got the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore to give him a letter certifying that the tomato is a fruit and not a vegetable.

But the government remains unconvinced, and is yet to issue a license.

Nor is there any market research to suggest wine drinkers would accept the product. Interviews with consumers confirmed the common belief that wine is only made from grapes and that other fruits and spices are used only as flavouring agents. Sake, or Japanese rice wine, was virtually unheard of.

In Kolar district, tomatoes are grown extensively. Unfortunately for local farmers, in recent years tomato cultivation has spread to other parts of the state and prices as well as their market share have sharply fallen.

Kolar's tomato growers have been protesting the government's apathy to their plight, most dramatically when they laid out their crop on the highway and let the traffic turn it into ketchup. Tomato wine could be a solution to their woes.

But oddly a government that claims to be committed to the farmers' welfare chooses to ignore the opportunity it presents to farmers, winemakers and possibly consumers.

Listings



I. March 3-9, 2008: Bangalore Open 2008

Venue: Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association Tennis Stadium, Cubbon Park

Time: Morning session 10am. Evening session 5pm
Semifinals: 5pm Finals: 9am

Tickets: Rs 165-520 (1st 5 days), Rs 220-825 (last 2 days)

The tier 2 event organized by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association will feature crowd pullers like Serena and Venus Williams, Jelena Jankovic, Patty Schnyder, Maria Kirilenko, Vera Zvonareva, Aiko Nakamura and others.

Contact: www.ticketpro.in

II. March 4 – September 30, 2008: River Rafting in Sitanandi

Venue: Sitanandi White Water, Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary

With top class safety gear provided, enjoy the rush of adrenaline as you raft on the swirling white waters of the river Sita. Rafting campsites are located amidst thick forest of the sanctuary and trekking options are also thrown open to you. The rafting duration is up to you – 12 kms or 22 kms. Packages include the camping along riverbanks, hot food, mountain biking on a Shimano geared bicycle, trekking to the waterfalls and so on.

Organised by Jungle Lodges and Resorts, promoted by Venture Adventure Club

Contact: Mr. Lalith, director 9945544891 / 080 55385538 9243602124

Email: ventureadventureclub@yahoo.com / ask@teamadventure.info

III. March 8, 2008: 'A Celebration of Womanhood'

Venue: Century Club, Cubbon Park, Bangalore

Time: 9:30am

eMerg- Engineering Manufacturer Entrepreneurs Resource Group in association with WBT – Women in Business & Technology and WE Mentor, Enterprising Women in European Research, ITSMA will host a special celebration of womanhood, for wmen, by women. The chief guest is Rani Satish, ex minister. The celebration will include discussions on workplace etiquette, funding opportunities from EU for women entrepreneurs, workplace safety, sharing experiences, the balancing act, stress management, followed by lunch

Contribution: Rs 300 per person, limited to the first 100 participants and Rs 2000 for a table space to exhibit

Contact: Sandhy AN Ph. 9845944245

Email: emerg7@gmail.com

IV. March 8 - 9, 2008: ART at Ranga Shankara: The Invisible River by Gautam Raja

Venue: Ranga Shankara, 36/2, 8th Cross, JP Nagar, 2nd Phase (Next to Post Office), Bangalore

Time: 7:30pm – 7:30pm

What if science proves the miraculous self-cleansing and purifying properties of the Ganga? What if pharmaceutical companies recognise the healing potential of tiny, invisible bacteria-eating viruses in these swirling, murky waters and are willing to fund research on them? Would science and religion join hands for the first time ever?

Directed by Ruchika Chanana

Tickets: Rs 110 (available at the venue)

Contact: 9740657191

Email: info@jagrititheatre.com

www.jagrititheatre.com

V. March 14, 2008: Rock in India

Venue: Palace Grounds, Gayathri Vihar Entrance

Time: Gates open 2pm onwards

Headbang all the way to the mosh pit with big international names like Megadeth, Machinehead, and Indian bands like Pentagram, Motherjane, Junkyard Groove, Thermal and a Quarter, Prestroika, Casino Blues, Millenium and others. Well and truly, rock the night away....

This event is organized by DNA networks

Tickets: Rs 1000

Available on www.ticketpro.com, all Planet M outlets and select Baskin Robbins outlets

VI. March 14-20, 2008: Videonale 11: Festival for Contemporary Video Art Exhibition

Venue: Max Mueller Bhavan

Time: 2:00pm to 7:30 pm

Inaugural lecture on evolution of Videonale 11 by Georg Elben at 6:30pm

For the first time, Videonale 11, the biennial international video art festival comes to India, brought to you by Max Mueller Bhavan. It will have on display narrative and documentary pieces, clips, animated films and cartoons, political videos, works of purely formal character, performance-videos... all this and more.

Georg Elben, Curator of the Videonale 11 will accompany the exhibition to Bangalore and will also conduct a two-day workshop at Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology.

A catalogue of the Videonale 11 with essays, visuals and write-ups on the artists, as well as selected works on a DVD will be available at a nominal price.



Who am I?

Partial men

Old West Action

O, he buggers!

What do I mean?

I. Buggin's turn

A. Assignment to a position based on seniority or rotation, instead of merit; B. One of the turns on a karting race-track; C. Turn of the black in a game of checkers.

II. Job's comforter

A. The sofa in an office lounge, coll.; B. A person who tries to console or help someone who not only fails but ends up making the person feel worse; C. A nurse at a psychiatric nursing home.

III. Pandora's Box

A. VIP seating in a theatre hall; B. An old jewellery box; C. A source of many unforeseen troubles.

IV. lea

A. A tiny estuary; B. A grassland; C. The young of a Thompson gazelle

V. echt

A. To carve out in stone; B. a German exclamation akin to 'yuck' in English; C. Authentic; typical.

VI. weald

A. A woodland; B. a farm tool used during harvesting to help bundle hay/stalks together; C. a farm tool used during harvesting to help bundle hay/stalks together.

VII. idiopathy

P
U
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L
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S



A. The study of mental retardation during the early 1800s upto the 1900s; B. Apparent sensitivity to stupidity; C. A disease of unknown origin or one having no apparent cause.

VIII. nosology

A. A systematic classification or list of diseases; B. The medical study of the olfactory glands; C. The process of using dogs to sniff out banned products.

IX. lychnobite

A. The bite of a leech that has turned septic; B. A tiny protozoan existing during the Pleistocene Era, related to the trillobite, but much smaller in size; C. One who works at night and sleeps during the day.

X. blue streak

A phase when women are going through depressive mood swings during pregnancy; B. Something moving very fast; C. A callous attitude shown by a subordinate at work.

Unjumble me

I X T S N E E O N

C H O O W A L K R I

A U U C L T R R G I E

N I A T E D S I N T O

O A I E O N T T P X L I

ANAGRAM GENIUS

WORDSMITH

ANSWERS TO JANUARY 2008

Who am I?:

William Shakespeare

What do I mean?:

I.a; II.b; III.a; IV.a; V.b; VI.b

Unjumble me:

Fractured, Proprieter,

Fissiparous

The Fabric of Life

Khadi is symbolic of the simplicity of life that India's founders dreamed of, but it could fall victim to their naivete

BY ANUYA ULPE

KHADI IS SUCH A versatile fabric that it has outlasted every other traditionally made Indian textile. The very antithesis of factory-made cloth, this loosely woven, simple cotton material has held its own and has constantly reinvented itself. Hardly any effort worth the name goes into marketing it yet, in an age of hard sell and branding, celebrities from The Beatles to Madonna have made khaki-based garments internationally famous.

Nostalgic yet contemporary, "political" yet simplicity-personified for its association in the popular mind with Gandhi, comfortable as no other clothing but trendy too for its environmental credentials, khadi means something slightly different to everyone who wears it. In its very warp and weft, khadi allows one to physically feel the work and passion of countless lives, of those who grew the crop and picked it, carried and ginned it, spun and wove it on simple hand and foot-propelled machines. And that simply is why khadi has, over centuries, held its ground.

Khadi draws customers, today increasingly "youngsters who want to go back to nature," says R. Rameshappa, chief executive officer of Karnataka State Khadi and Village Industries Board in Bangalore. Mr. Rameshappa, a Gandhian, sports a pure khadi shirt and displays a wooden charkha in his neat little office. Aakanksha Tavag, a customer, agrees. "It's comfortable and I like it," she says. "All my kurtas are khadi and they look good too. They've come out with much better stuff of late." She says that the style of khadi till now was never in keeping with the "fashion world" but now we get to see better colours and cuts. Says another young buyer, Anupama Bharadwaj, "It looks very rustic and I basically like the way it looks. And I think it blends with my personality."

Mr. Rameshappa concedes khadi cannot compete with other types of fabric, as it is still a tiny, unorganised industry. "Those who have an inclination towards the Gandhian movement make up most of our customers," he says. The only concession the industry has made to modern times and changing consumer tastes is the 'Poly-vastra' line that is a blend of 10% synthetic fibre and 90% cotton fibre.

Otherwise, khadi has followed the age-old process of production on charkhas. In an effort to improve

fe

spinning technology, the research department of the Khadi and Village Industries Corporation in Mumbai has invented the eight-spindled charkha and is in the process of developing a 10-spindled charkha. The board also introduced readymade garments that are 100% percent mill-made. For this 100 students at National Institute of Fashion Technology were trained in 2002 to give khadi a new look.

The focus of this agro-based industry is increasing employment opportunities rather than improving quality or marketing. But even so the industry is expanding sales at 100% a year and already cannot meet demand. "There is no dearth of customers," says Mr. Rameshappa. He cites the example of Kerala where the government made it compulsory for school children to wear a khadi uniform at least twice a week and the khadi board could not even meet 20% of demand. He quotes Gandhi: "We are not looking at generating more products but more manpower."

But he explains that they are not planning on opening more exclusive retail outlets, the Gramudyog Sangha, in Karnataka due to both the shortage of trained salespeople and disinterest of government in raising standards. Talking of their sales staff, Mr. Rameshappa laughs, "They do not want to get up and smile at the customers even. They are happy if no customer comes in, as long as they are getting their salary at the end of the month."

As for the marketing strategy, the Karnataka Gramudyog Sangha and Karnataka State Khadi and Village Industries Board conduct exhibitions in Bangalore twice a year and

district level exhibitions once in two years. This government-financed exhibition attracts increasing numbers of customers every year and the one held in January 2008 in Bangalore racked up sales of Rs. 8 crore.

Gandhi believed in self-sufficiency and encouraged setting up village-based industries in order to attain that goal. It has been a symbol of independence and a source of employment for many.

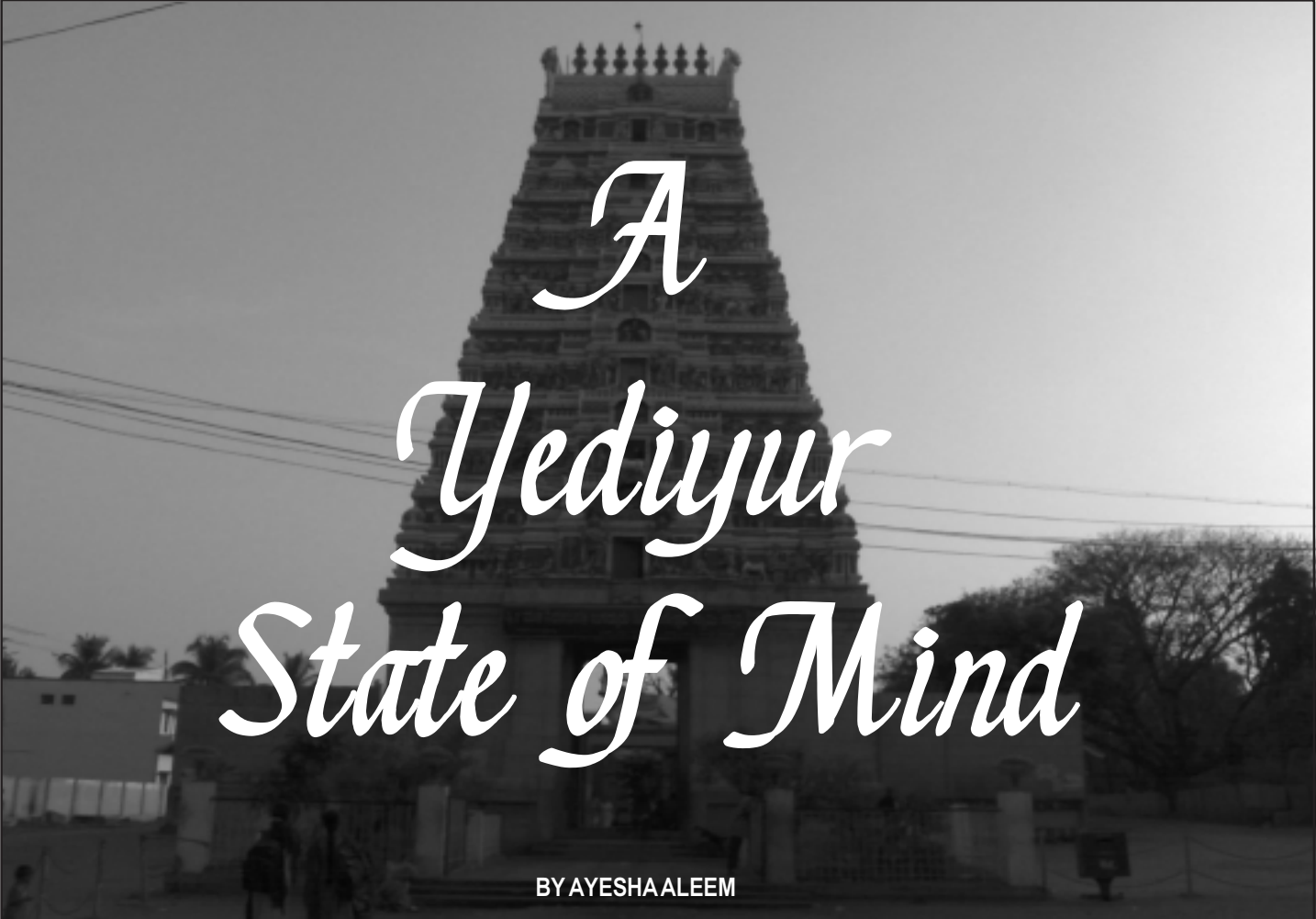


From top: shop keepers at Khadi Vastralaya, Bangalore; Mahatma Gandhi at a spinning wheel. Shopkeepers say that most khadi wearers are involved in the Gandhian movement.

But the industry faces a basic weakness in the very resource it sought to enhance, labour. Khadi weavers work part-time and on a daily-wage basis. Now due to the advancement in technology, "one man can spin eight times [what he could previously] so we do not need many workers," adds Mr. Rameshappa. "Besides due to the low wage it is not a very attractive field." There's also complacency on the sales side. Retailers are quite satisfied with current sales levels. Shantanu Garg of Khadi Bhandar at Dispensary Road says, "It is in good demand as it is suitable for every season. And we keep simple designs, nothing fancy." He gets 100 customers a day on an average and doesn't think the popularity of khadi is declining.

Says Sraman Majumdar, of Ogilvy & Mather, an advertising firm, "khadi is comfortable, eco-friendly and relatively inexpensive. I would imagine khadi has an inherent cool factor associated with it in young India."

But the fact remains that khadi's market share is steadily shrinking. Gandhi believed in self-sufficiency and encouraged setting up village-based industries in order to attain that goal. It has been a symbol of independence and a source of employment for many. But as with every good idea, the khadi industry has to be constantly renewed and made contemporary to become both a source of livelihoods and great fashion.



A Yedyur State of Mind

BY AYESHA ALEEM

Get away from the madding crowd. Leave the city behind. Treat your lungs, your mind, your being to something new

SEVENTY KILOMETRES from Bangalore in Karnataka lies the small temple town of Yedyur. Walking through its tiny streets, peering into the kiosk shops that line its muddy sidewalks, you meet the people and get transported by the story, the engaging experience called Yedyur.

Yedyur is a short and surprisingly comfortable bus ride away. The easiest way of getting there is by taking a KSRTC bus from the Majestic Bus Stand in Bangalore. Buses leave every half hour, most don't make incessant stops along the way. So you can hop onto one of them and reach the destination in a little over two hours.

One of the first sights that greets you at Yedyur is the large arch that seems to surmount the whole town. It bears the name of the Hindu god Siddalingeshwara, after whom the main attraction of Yedyur is built – the Yedyur temple. This arch opens into a shop and tree lined boulevard that ends where the

Yedyur temple begins.

The Yedyur Temple is situated in what can be called the town square since it is the principal part of the town. Stepping into it feels like going back in time. The setting is of a period gone by – the kind perhaps only seen in storybooks or older movies. The center of the space has a mini concrete structure with a flagpole. In the background stands the impressive temple, dominating the space.

Approximately three stories high, the temple is crowned by an ornate *gopuram*, depicting a multitude of gods and goddesses. The main doors of the temple open into a quaint courtyard, which leads to the sanctum sanctorum. Plenty of devotees are seen with their eyes closed, hands joined and heads bowed in prayer, their lips incessantly whispering *mantras*. They move swiftly around the space, paying their respects to the several idols that are strategically placed around the temple.

“The Yedyur Temple is quite

popular, attracting almost two to three thousand visitors a day with the numbers swelling considerably on Sundays, national holidays and festival periods,” says the head Swamiji of the temple, Sri Renuka Shivacharya. “On these days, figures can reach five thousand and above. Visitors are mostly from outside Yedyur, both from around Karnataka as well as other parts of the country”.

Yedyur is steeped in an interesting history. Legend has it that Lord Siddalingeshwara travelled widely, delivering religious sermons. He then landed in Yedyur where an old woman would give him food everyday, never charging him for it. Etymologically, Yedyur in Kannada, the local language, means ‘the land of giving food’. The Yedyur temple is Lord Siddalingeshwara’s *jeevansamadhi* or tomb. People believe that he is still alive and performs pooja at the premises everyday.

In line with the faith, pooja takes

place at the temple at regular intervals – 4-8 am, 10am-1pm and a final offering at 6 pm. The temple bells regularly toll high above the town, resounding above the treetops. Just outside the temple are a cluster of tiny shops – enterprises that sell an unimaginable array of wares. Take your pick from audio CDs and mineral water to toys and glittery baubles. From within these little establishments, you can often here devotional songs blaring, which quite aptly set the spiritual atmosphere in the bucolic town square.

In line with the name of the land, all devotees who visit the Yedyur temple are given free food, three times a day! So it makes for a great place to grab a meal – and won't cost you a cent. The menu is very basic – rice, buttermilk, *rasam*, *sambar* and *jowar rotis* (corn flour) with *baingan sabzi* – but extremely nutritious and satisfying. Personnel in charge of the food section of the temple said, "These provisions are donated by devotees. We travel once a year with a vehicle, picking up food from all over the state. The ration we receive is more than sufficient to last us the year, with it often being in excess."

The food at the temple is handled in a very organized manner. Large kitchens with huge vessels employ several staff to churn out the regular meals. A large storehouse houses the stock. Devotees are fed in large halls. The largest of them can seat 800 people at a time. Squatting on the floor and eating from steel plates provided by the temple, people tuck into the food, even as soiled stretches of the dining area are promptly cleaned. I was pleasantly surprised by the degree of hygiene practiced here. A person with a large bucket of water

goes from person to person offering them a drink during the meal. Glasses must not touch the floor. If someone forgets and sets them down, they aren't reused until being washed.

But the temple isn't the only place you can eat. Just three kilometers away from the town square is a *dhaba* on the

kilometres away. Though the distance to Kunigal may seem daunting, it is, in reality, just a quick Rs. 12 bus ride away. Local Kannadiga food is available around almost every corner.

Kumar, an auto driver who has lives in Yedyur since birth says "I love the place. I'm very comfortable here."

And it's not hard to see why. Clean and affordable accommodation is available in Yedyur, but subject to availability. The government aided, temple maintained Yatri Nivas, or traveller's guest house, is the most popular and convenient place to stay. Centrally located, it provides basic, clean rooms with attached bathrooms for Rs. 200 a night. For places to sightsee, you can visit the two major manmade dams in the area –

Marconhalli and Mangala. Kunigal being the next closest town, you can pay a visit to Doddakere or 'the big lake' there.

Finally, try as far as possible to enjoy Yedyur for what it is – a space away from the city where you can catch up on some sleep,

p r a y, rediscover nature, and savour silence. Just lather a healthy layer of sunscreen, do yourself a favour by putting on a pair of good walking shoes, keep yourself hydrated and set out with a sense of curiosity. Recline in a settlement that the gods are constantly watching over – literally. The rejuvenation you feel at the end of the sojourn will give you only one clear message. The gods are happy. The temple bells toll high above the treetops and the inspirational music grows louder.



PICS BY AUTHOR



The Temple town of Yedyur - a bull 's statue that surmounts the temple and the dining hall for the devotees inside the temple.

highway. You can easily find autos that will take you there. Some will even wait until you finish your meal and bring you back, for an extra charge of course. While there, try out the soft, fluffy *rotis* that are instantly prepared in a hot *tandoor*, which go well with a side order gravy dish of paneer butter masala or chana masala. Also on the menu is a host of other vegetable and non vegetarian complements for you to choose from. For other dietary options, you would have to travel another few kilometers to the highway rest stop or continue to Kunigal, 18



PICS BY GAYATHRI VAIDYANATHAN

A Winter Lullaby

Concert

THE 4TH ANNUAL FIREFLIES FESTIVAL of Sacred Music on February 23, held at the sylvan Fireflies ashram in Dinnepalya village outside Bangalore, held an audience of some 500 in thrall for the promised 12 hours. Despite delays between acts, a dozen artistes led a disparate group of music lovers through a blend of Indo-Western, Western and Indian folk, classical and fusion.

Some of the acts may be forgettable but most will stay on in memory for years to come. It kicked off with a Nadaswaram (akin to the Shenai) performance – the world’s loudest non-brass acoustic wind instrument gave the evening a rousing start. Kaman Singh and group followed with an interesting repertoire of Portuguese and Brazilian music using the guitar, recorders, flute and voice to transport the audience across continents. What they lacked in technical virtuosity they made up by their spirit, their songs satirizing government economic and social policies for the India’s poorest. Theirs was the most political performance of an evening dedicated to celebrating tribal rights and traditions.

People of all ages filtered in through the night, making themselves comfortable on the granite steps with mattresses, pillows, and bolsters. The organisers’ advice to “stay in your seats; you’ll regret it if you move” held throughout the event with the amphitheatre crowded to capacity and more, giving people just enough space to tap out the ragas and talas.

Although the Qawwali performance by Salim Bhai and Group was by far the most popular, the Veena recital by Sri R K Padmanabha and the folk songs of Kabir from Malwa by Shabnam Virmani and Dipta Bhog were the truly soul-stirring performances of the night. Virmani gave a small background to each song and then blew the audience away with her powerful vocals. She clearly enjoyed herself and gladly threw in an encore much to everyone’s delight. R K Padmanabha’s solos were breathtaking. Moments when the veena’s bass rhythms were interspersed with Indian melodies sounded like a fusion between Western and Indian music, and the jugalbandi between the accompanying ghatam and mridangam had even Padmanabha tapping away. Salim Bhai held the crowd in a wild chorus of singing and dancing, screaming for more.

Oikyotaan, the Baul (Bengali folk) musicians, celebrated the spiritual and proved to be a well-known and well-loved group. Representing Western classical and jazz was Glen Rogers with mesmerizing finger work, and Karnatak Folk by the Puje Kunita group provided immense entertainment. Despite over-priced food and coffee of dubious provenance, the delightful night passed with a camaraderie between strangers that only a shared love of music could create.

DIELLE D’SOUZA

Thrilling Grilling!

PUT AWAY THE FINE CHINA and bring out your steak bibs. Assorted sauces, open grills and charbroiled goodness...things are about to get really interesting.

Barbeque Nation, a concept restaurant, is now in Bangalore and offering the city's foodies a unique dining experience. After its success in Mumbai, the restaurant now burns onto the culinary scene in Bangalore.

When you walk in to this restaurant, you are shown to your table. The low tables and angled seats are quite comfortable. The setting is quite basic. This move seems deliberate in an effort to place more emphasis on the food than on anything else. The maitre'd soon arrives at your table, and gives a brief explanation about the dining experience at this restaurant. You may have come across an open kitchen or open hearth cooking before. But this is the first time you can get a live grill going on your table! The unlimited starters, five vegetarian

and five non vegetarian, and the real highlight of the evening, will be brought to the table, where a customer can grill them according to personal taste. A waiter follows afterwards, replacing the space in the centre of the table with a live barbeque, glowing charcoal and steel grill et al. The set even comes with an assortment of sauces to liven up the contents on the grill, complete with a basting brush. A small flag needs to be turned downwards when you don't wish any more starters to be brought to the table.

The starters comprise of skewers of succulent meats, prawns, plump mushrooms and seasoned chunks of paneer. About three servings of starters later, you're already quite stuffed. But the meal has just about begun. Move over to the buffet where you can further gourmandize on chicken biryani, sumptuous gravy dishes, au gratin and a range of dals, all kept steaming hot in large glass and metal dishes.

And if you've still got some room to accommodate some more food after this, and you really should because you shouldn't miss out on this part of the meal, you must indulge in the exotic desserts. Choose from mousse, flawless gulab jamuns, vanilla ice cream and fresh cut fruit.

Service is efficient and very courteous, its done with a smile. It can get a little noisy in here – the sound of what I can only assume as content customers – taken a few notches higher by the loud music. So you find yourself shouting just to be heard over the table. Apart from this tiny factor, Barbeque Nation is a great place to visit. It lends a whole new dimension to dining out in Bangalore. With great prices and greater food, Barbeque Nation is a must visit. Just make sure you take a good appetite along.

AYESHA ALEEM

Cinema Verité

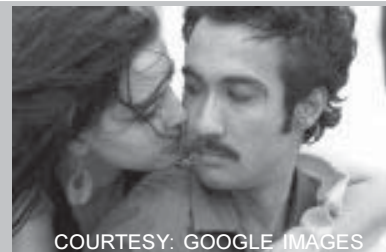
THIS MOVIE carried a lot of excitement and anticipation for me, as it is a combination of two of my favorite actors (and a director) Rajat Kapoor and Ranvir Shourey. The poster of this movie suggests that it is a comedy flick, on the lines of Bheja Fry. It is however a movie with a grim plot and humor is used for a sardonic effect.

Rajat Kapoor has entered a new genre in Bollywood, story telling, which not many but a few dare to explore.

Mithya, loosely translated as The Lie, tells of a struggling actor VK, who finds himself in deep trouble when he is forced to impersonate a deadly gangster. The storyline itself is not so great. It's the story of a man, who gets entangled in a web of his own creation. Through clever twists and turns, the story works its way to an intriguing ending. The reason that this movie can be mistaken as a by-product

of a French cinema, as mentioned by one of the reviews I read, is the treatment of the movie. Right from the choice of actors, to the incorporation of witty dialogues, and the real life situations. The most difficult thing for any writer is to blur the line between the reel and real life and here he's succeeded. The character of VK is so convincingly portrayed that the audience makes a real connection with him. And the taut cinematography only heightens the impact.

Ranvir Shourey plays the character of VK with such finesse and conviction that one would find it hard not to empathise with him. Only an actor of his caliber can transform his character, and with it his body language and voice, in an instant and so effortlessly. His performance is so compelling it is almost like watching a one-man show! Neha Dhupia is surely one of the most underrated actors in the industry, but



COURTESY: GOOGLE IMAGES

after her performance here she should get many more opportunities to showcase her amazing talent.

Vinay Pathak takes a back seat this time, unlike in Bheja Fry where the film rested on his shoulders. Nasiruddin Shah, doesn't get a chance to do much either, while Saurabh Shukla is good in his short stint. The main challenge for any director is to persuade the audience to suspend disbelief and get completely immersed in the plot, convinced that the characters and the performers playing them are one. Rajat Kapoor has more than succeeded in doing this and guarantees that the movie stays with viewers long after they've left the hall.

POOJA GAUTAM

Photo Gallery

Taluk Wonders



CHITRA PHALGUNI



DHARMESH JOSHI



CHITRA PHALGUNI



DEBI PRASAD SARANGI



DHARMESH JOSHI



DEBI PRASAD SARANGI