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# Newsletter

## June 2016

### Editor's desk

Dear friends,

Articles in this second edition are woven around empathy, positive attitude and social responsibility. My interactions with two remarkable persons with enriching human qualities inspired me to share it with you all. The efforts by the volunteers of Nizhal in promoting the urban tree movement are worth emulating. Likewise the positive attitude towards life by Satish is commendable. These experiences tell us how individuals make a mark in the society.

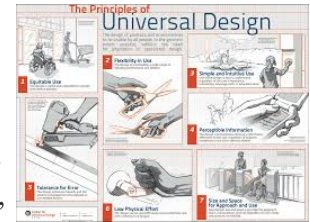
To bring awareness on need to have inclusive designs for buildings, we are initiating a #selfieonrampcontest on Facebook and I hope we have people from different walks of life will join us and participate in this inclusive movement.

Bhavna Botta  
botta.bhavna@gmail.com



### Practice inclusion

Universal design (often inclusive design) refers to broad-spectrum ideas meant to produce buildings, products and environments that are inherently accessible to older people, people without disabilities, and people with disability. Design (UD) is an approach to design that increases the potential for developing a better quality of life for a wide range of individuals. It is a design process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation. Other terms for Universal Design used around the world include Design for All, Inclusive Design, and Barrier-Free Design.



UD is not a fad or a trend but an enduring design approach grounded in the belief that the broad range of human ability is ordinary, not special. UD reduces stigma and provides benefits for all users. UD can increase usability of an environment without considerably increasing its cost by reducing the need for design modifications later when abilities or circumstances change.

Source : [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_design](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_design)

## The plunge into altruism

On a hot Sunday afternoon I met this wonderful lady, Mrs. Shobha, a volunteer with Nizhal and probably it would be right to say a co-creator of The Kotturpuram Tree Park. With an infectious enthusiasm, she walks around naming the trees, brimming with pride like a mother, explaining every detail with intensity. Nizhal (shade), is an organization which speaks for trees, it is a trust that promotes concern for trees in the city. With no employees, only volunteers from different professions care for nature. Work with Kotturpuram Tree Park began in 2006, when the Public works department contacted Nizhal to green the 5 acre former dump yard on the banks of river Adyar. With scarce funds and resources it was a daunting challenge. The park is in its 9th year and there are 650 trees of over 150 species. Thousands of young people and corporate volunteers Of Nizhal have been involved at different points of time and the Tree Park has touched their lives!



★ Your experience as a long standing volunteer - Being a volunteer is a beautiful experience. And if you give without expecting, you will receive much! Sometimes, it can be disheartening to deal with a mostly apathetic society, but meeting a few sincere individuals in the midst of the chaos is the high point of our lives!

★ What was the most difficult part as a volunteer? - Many difficult challenges, most people cannot understand where you are coming from. But when your goal is clear, all will be well.

★ True moment of greatest personal satisfaction - Volunteering is more work for our own inner self and our future. I wish more individuals understand this...working together for our own future!

★ How was the transition to be leader of a large pool of volunteers - The journey has been a remarkable one. My early experience as a volunteer was a great challenge and very lonely. A wonderful mentor in my life was Mr. G Dattatri, our chief advisor, who kept my spirits up when the going was tough.

And by and by, a few remarkable individuals have come into Nizhal, who give of themselves so generously for this movement. Each one is a remarkable leader Nizhal is like a truly special family! It is important to be aware of the power of individual responsibility. And if each individual is committed, we can achieve anything we dream of!



## Life is about opportunities and choices

I remember the day I joined a school for the first time in my life, way back in 1992. Till then it was only grueling physio therapy sessions at the K.K.Nagar Hospital and a single focus on mobility and walking. It was by chance that in the very same premises I met this dynamic lady, Mrs .Poonam Natarajan, (founder of Vidya Sagar ,formerly ,spastics society of India), who impressed on me that life is not just standing and walking but much more than that. And that was my first opportunity and choice made! I joined Vidya Sagar , studied there till 1999.

It was my next choice to choose the opportunity to pursue education in a mainstream school (Shanthinikethan Mat Hr Sec School) at Sembakkam and later went on to finish B.com & MBA at Sivet College at Gowrivakkam.

After 6 months of my MBA, in Dec 2011 I got a chance to work at Callidai Motor Works (Wheelchair Manufacturing Company). There I worked as a Marketing Head for 2 years. I was both thrilled and apprehensive as the office was in the first floor. But then the co workers willingly helped me by lifting me to the first floor daily. This was not an easy task to do day in and day out. Kudos to them!! The company provided me Automatic Wheelchair to use inside the office for my daily activities. Later in July 2013 my next opportunity came by, I grabbed it and worked towards it .Now, I am working in Corporation Bank as a SWO-A Clerk. Access was an issue here too, the entrance had 2 steps and I choose to make a small foldable aluminium ramp. Other than this, my branch is fully accessible including the bathroom flooring. A small extra wooden Board to keep the keyboard made the work place accessible. My colleagues are very helpful & adjust with me in all the work related matters. I have great friends at office and otherwise too. I enjoy every day and welcome it with a smile.

The most important thing is to enjoy your life - to be happy - it's all that matters.  
Audrey Hepburn.



Satish Kumar

Connect Special also has a print magazine, a platform to promote awareness and create an inclusive society.

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