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# Sandesh

**“The Message”**

**A Newsletter from IndUS of Fox Valley**

## **From Editors' Desk**

Dear Readers,

It is naive to think that in any country, the people in power have answers to all the problems faced by the common people for their survival. The political affiliations and vested interests come in the way. In many cases the NGOs try to fill the void. Then there are those rare individuals who devote their lives to making a difference in the lives of their fellow citizens. In this issue we bring to you some stories of such unsung heroes, who have made significant contributions to enrich the lives of hundreds and thousands of men, women, and children in India.

Of course, there are many more motivating stories like these and in future we will share some of those with you.

*Sandesh*

**An IndUS of Fox Valley**

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*The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Editors or IndUS of Fox Valley*

*Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

- Margaret Mead

## **Kailas Satyarthi, Bachpan Bachao Andolan & South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude**

Whatever debate there might be about the good, bad and ugly sides of NAFTA and GATT, there is one undeniably positive outcome. The multinational corporations, anticipating daunting competition from India and China, brought the age-old problem of child labor in these countries to the forefront. According to a recent study published by the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, Govt. of India, one-fifth of the world's children live in India. Forty-two per cent of India's population is under 18, that is 440 million people, a number greater than the population of the United States. Of these children, 110 million are child laborers, that's almost five times the total population of Texas. The findings of this study, which was conducted over thirteen states were that of all child laborers, 56 per cent were employed illegally or in hazardous industries—construction work, 'beedi'-rolling, lock-making, embroidery & 'zari' weaving, and roadside restaurants. Of all working children, 23 per cent were domestic workers, of whom 81 per cent were girls. Of these domestic child workers, 14 percent said their employers abused them. These are very grim statistics indeed. The Indian constitution guarantees mandatory universal elementary education as well as labor protection for children. The Child Labor Act of 1986 bans employment of children below the age of fourteen years in factories, mines and other hazardous

employment. Although these laws are in place, they cannot withstand the harsh economic realities faced by millions of families who send their children to work everyday. However, there is hope in man and a name that has become synonymous with the crusade against child slavery – Kailas Satyarthi.



In 1980, at the age of 26 Kailas Satyarthi gave up his promising career as an electrical engineer and took on the challenge of saving children who are forced into slavery by powerful and corrupt business and

land-owners. It was a daring and dangerous task as armed guards man the factories where these children work — the children are held captive as bonded workers. With the help of local authorities and police he mounted raids and freed and rehabilitated thousands of children. His campaign *Bachpan Bachao Andolan* (Save the Childhood movement) became a household name and soon included neighboring countries, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Thus, a new movement South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) was born in 1989. Since then SACCS and its partners have liberated more than 75,000 child slaves, working in various industries, including

rug manufacturing. Satyarthi knew that freeing these children wasn't enough, he also had to offer them new opportunities. Bachpan Bachao Andolan runs three "transit" rehabilitation centers for rescued boys and girls to help them enter the mainstream and lead constructive lives. Younger children are enrolled in school and adolescents are given informal literacy and vocational training. Once they acquire confidence and skills, these former child laborers are reintegrated into society. Legal aid is also provided for the victims. Since these centers can only serve 100 children at a time, Kailash has begun a program called Bal Mitra Gram (Children Friendly Villages) to encourage Indian villages to abolish child labor. In order to be a part of the program, an entire community has to make the commitment that no child will be put to work and every child will be sent to school.

Satyarthi realized that changing India village-by-village could take forever and hence he decided to address the problem by challenging the power of market forces. Many rugs from South Asia are manufactured using child labor. Kailash realized that if consumers knew how these rugs were made, they would not find them so attractive. He started "Rugmark," a voluntary social labeling in the carpet industry, in which rugs are labeled and certified to be child-labor-free by factories that agree to be regularly inspected. He plans to extend the labeling program to other products such as soccer balls, another popular product that is commonly made by children.

Today, Satyarthi is leading the two most important and effective movements for social change, 'Global March Against Child Labor' and 'Global Campaign for Education'. The Global March movement is striving for the enforcement of international laws against child labor. The most recent law, ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, has been the result of an unprecedented mass mobilization spearheaded through an 80,000-km march in over 100 countries in 1998. Presently well over 150 countries have ratified this Convention.

Satyarthi is the Chairperson of the 'International Center on Child Labor and Education' (ICCLE), Washington, D.C. His work has got recognition from all over the world and he is a recipient of several prestigious international awards, which include: Heroes Acting to End Modern-Day Slavery Award (US State Department-2007), Raoul Wallenberg Human Rights Award (2002-USA), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Award (1999-Germany), La Hospitalet Award (1999-Spain), De Gouden Wimpel Award (1998-Netherlands), Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award (1995-USA), The Trumpeter Award (1995-USA), and The Aachener International Peace Award (1994-Germany).

To learn more about Kailas Satyarthi and his movements visit: [www.bbasacccs.org](http://www.bbasacccs.org) or [www.rugmark.org](http://www.rugmark.org).

- Badri Varma

(Sources: Ministry of Women and Child Welfare Study on Child Abuse: India 2007; <http://www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/meet/satyarthi.html>)

### Monica Kumar: "If we're unable to talk with the mentally ailing, there's something wrong with our faculties"



The misery caused by the mind can be as acute as a physical illness or disorder. Yet mental health has never received the importance it deserves in India. "There's a tendency to grossly under-represent mental health in health statistics although 20 persons out of every 1,000

suffer from severe mental illness and four times as many from emotional disorders," says clinical psychologist Monica Kumar, one of the founders of Manas, a Delhi-based ngo working in the field of mental health.

Trained at NIMHANS, Bangalore, Monica founded Manas six years ago along with psychiatrist Amiya Banerjee, special educator Joyshree Mukherjee, and psychologists Mridula Apte and Naveen Kumar. Most of them are associated with VIMHANS, Delhi's leading psychiatric hospital.

Besides doing clinical work among those who can't afford treatment, the team now hopes to create greater public awareness about mental health. The thrust is increasingly on community and educational programmers. Last month, Manas organized a mental awareness week that included workshops, discussions, film screenings, theatre and an art exhibition in order to disseminate information about mental health.

The idea, says Monica, is to sensitize the media and influence public policy. On November 29 it is organizing a media awareness workshop in Delhi. It also hopes to screen short spots about mental health on private and public radio and television.

It's been tough going, getting the media to pause and ponder on a serious issue like mental health. But it's a goal worth pursuing in a country where the mentally ill are left to wander the streets or are chained like sub-humans at religious shrines.

The tragedy of the mentally ill is all the more acute since many conditions like depression, schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder arise from dysfunctions and can today be treated with drugs and medication. Yet, as the specialists in Manas point out, lack of awareness and stigmatization stop people from seeking treatment. Monica herself specializes in family therapy and working with mentally challenged or disturbed children. She says, "Children's stresses often go unnoticed, leading to serious consequences." One of the most important steps towards dealing with the mind of the child and then the adult is to first create a reliable information base about mental health in India. Manas is trying to do just that.

## Barefoot Women Power Engineers are Spreading the Light in a Rural Andhra

Till a few years ago, Chennamma and Yelamma were stone-crushers. Kalavati and Zayda were house maids working on the campus of the National Institute for Rural Development (NIRD) at Rajendranagar, Hyderabad. Today, they are barefoot solar engineers who not only make and maintain solar lamps but have traveled out to Paderu Mandal of Vishakapatnam to help 124 households in Pusalapalem and Thamingula villages get solar power and establish a one-kilowatt powerhouse for street lighting.

Brightly dressed in colorful cotton saris and reporting for work at the rural energy workshop between 9.30 and 10 am every day—including Sundays when they have to execute an order for solar lamps and panels—these women represent the face of changing India. In a country steeped with reports of farmer and weaver suicides and large-scale unemployment, they present hope. Chennamma and her team have formed the Women Barefoot Solar Engineers Association (WBSEA) and are the harbingers of change.



Like Norty Bai of the Social Work Research Centre (SWRC) at Tilonia in Rajasthan, who maps on computers the water available in the villages of Ajmer district, Chennamma, Zayda and the others have shown that they can use the latest technologies for improving village life.

In fact, it was Bunker Roy of SWRC who, on a visit to the NIRD, offered to train the women and help them set up the rural energy workshop and a five-kilowatt solar power-generating unit. So Chennamma, Yelamma, Kalavati and Zayda made several trips to Tilonia between '02 and '04 and trained to be solar engineers. They learnt to fabricate, wire and set up solar energy systems. The workshop at the Rural Technology Park at NIRD is a production-cum-training and maintenance facility. Each woman has assembled 1,000 solar lamps, costing Rs 3,500 a piece. It takes two days to assemble one lamp, says Chennamma, the president of WBSEA. They also prepare small solar power circuits.

Of the 586,000-odd villages in the country, 140,000 to 150,000 still need to be electrified. In remote villages, it's difficult and expensive to supply them power from the grid.

Impressed by the barefoot women engineers, the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Power Company Ltd commissioned the WBSEA to provide solar energy to the tribal hamlets of Pusalapalem and Thamingula. Chennamma and the others have trained local women in the maintenance of the systems. The solar power generated is enough to provide two lights, one fan and ensure the functioning of one black and white TV set for five hours every day. Each household that has a solar connection pays Rs 1,000 as installation charges and Rs 100 a month for maintenance. The money is entrusted to the village energy and environment committee.

Can tribal households invest Rs 1,000 on a solar facility? Of the 120 households, 80 have paid the full amount, 18 have paid part of the money and the rest are trying to raise loans from local self-help groups. Chennamma and her team earn anything from Rs 2,400 to Rs 3,000 a month. Life is looking up.

Contact: WBSEA, Rural Technology Park, NIRD, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad.

## More Than a Social Club

Though Gerupalya is only about 22 kilometers from Bangalore, it remains a sleepy village, untouched by the frenetic energy of the booming metropolis.

The streets are narrow, lined with modest homes and small shops. Young children sit on front porches and greet strangers with a bright smile and "Good morning aunty." They are adept in reading and writing, can recite multiplication tables and are learning about photosynthesis and the planetar.

Getting an education in Gerupalya was not easy until the Bangalore-based Jayanagar Sthree Samaja Trust opened a

school in 1994. Parents who wanted their children to learn had to make long treks to neighboring towns by bus or bicycle. Since it first opened its doors with 27 students, Vidya Vikas Kendra has provided free education, along with free uniforms and textbooks. Children have access to computers, science labs and field trips. Student enrollment has grown to about 450. "We are just a group of middle class housewives," says Susheelamma Sundar Rao, secretary of the trust who became a member in 1965. "This just goes to show that every person can make a difference."

The women came together as the Jayanagar Sthree Samaja in 1954 in a suburb of south Bangalore. Their building became a thriving hub of the neighborhood with classes in dance, music, sewing and Sanskrit that continue to this day. In the 1970s, the group's focus began to broaden. Members wanted to reach out and fulfill other unmet needs in the community. Their first project was building a hostel for single, working women. Such facilities were almost nonexistent in Bangalore in the 1970s. Today, the hostel has 50 residents and a building of its own. The next effort was starting the school. Most

recently, the trust completed the building of Sandhya Sanjeevini, a senior living community in the outskirts of Bangalore. The members of the Jayanagar Sthree Samaja, mostly stay-at-home mothers and grandmothers, continue to work tirelessly to spread the word about their work and enlist support for their projects through loans, contributions from individuals and businesses, as well as government agencies.

"We have trained each and every one of our 250 members to become fund raisers," Mrs. Sundar Rao said. "It's all through word of mouth with our members asking for support from their friends and family. We don't have the money for advertising or for public relations. People have come forward to support us after seeing what we have accomplished."

As the leaders of the group grow older,

Mrs. Sundar Rao said her priority now is to groom a new generation of members. "We want younger people to carry on the work," she said. "There is still a lot to be done."

To learn more about the Jayanagar Sthree Samaja Trust, write to No. 141, 5<sup>th</sup> Cross, 10<sup>th</sup> A Main Road, Jayanagar I block, Bangalore-560011, India, or call 80 - 2656 3134.

- Triveni Sheshadri

## Sikshana and the story of Pushpalatha

For immigrants, severing the emotional bond with one's mother country is akin to severing the umbilical cord; one is separate, yet one remains forever connected. During my visits to India, I can not help noticing the differences between my two loves, US and India.

Let me share with you the story of Sikshana, an organization in Bangalore dedicated to serving the needs of young children seeking to get meaningful education within the deplorable public education system. I arrived at the Arehalli School in Bangalore, southern India. At 10 AM, over three hundred boys and girls, all neatly dressed and excited to begin another day at school had just finished their school prayer, and were reading aloud "Today's News Headlines" from Deccan Herald, the local news paper. Then the kids filed into their class rooms, if it can be called that. There were three rooms one for each of sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The kids were sitting cross legged on the floor with a pen, writing note book and text books in a bag next to them. The only teaching props I saw were on the walls and consisted of some pictures, some old maps and a black board with some chalk pieces next to it.

The initial impact is one of sadness at the sight of the school, and the conditions under which the kids had to study. But then, after spending a few minutes and sharing my personal experiences of America, I was amazed to observe how charged up they were and how very motivated in learning. In fact their enthusiasm was so palpable, that I could not help

agreeing to come back the next day to talk more about America, its people, geography and culture.

The enthusiasm was all the more remarkable as only a couple years ago, more than 30% were failing in their grades in annual exams and only a few of them could get admission to high school. The public school system had failed these children and was unable to develop their natural curiosity and interest in learning. It took dedication and genuine interest of Mr. Ramamurthy, a recently retired senior engineer at Bharat Heavy Electricals, a major public sector corporation, to make a difference in these children's lives. After spending quite some time and getting no where with the bureaucrats of the public schools and the politicians, he decided to do something about it. Arehalli School is the first school to be adopted under Sikshana and is now proving to be a role model. Arehalli is a semi-urban village cluster in the South of Bangalore, 12 kms from the Center of the City. It is now a bustling school with more than 300 kids accommodated in three different buildings. To augment the sparse teaching staff provided by the government, Sikshana is providing two additional well-trained teachers to the school. One can not help noticing the difference Sikshana has made in the standard of the school and the life of the kids.

Before the emergence of Sikshana, the situation was as follows: the student population of the Arehalli School was at 220 with 13 students in the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, only 70% students were able to pass that

grade and the highest score in the open exam was 60; the admission rate to nearby high schools was very low; morale among the staff was low; student dissatisfaction resulted in poor attendance; and the community was completely indifferent to the conditions in the school. After four years of proactive participation by Sikshana, there is a tremendous improvement in all these areas. The student population has gone up to 320 and there are 35 students in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade; all children pass 7<sup>th</sup> Grade with the highest score reaching 85; there is a reverse migration from private schools; morale of the staff is very high and they willingly work beyond their regular hours; children throng the school gate before the bell starts ringing; the outstanding students get scholarship to study professional courses, holding out hope for the rest; the image of the Arehalli School has reached to a level where private high schools in the area 'scout' for kids from this school; and above all the community participation has made a significant contribution in bringing the daily attendance to eight hundred. Committed as he is, Ramamurthy spares no effort in making a difference to the kids in motivating them and infusing them with hope. He is fond of narrating the stories of several kids who would have fallen through the cracks, but now have made to the top. When asked about it he enjoys telling about the following, one of the several success stories.

### The Story of Pushpalatha

"Along with a few dedicated colleagues,

I went on to adopt three primary schools with the limited resources at my disposal. I was neither surprised nor deterred when



I got my quota of sneers at this seemingly hopeless quest, considering that there were as many as 48,000 schools in the state. The first school I stepped into was at Arehalli, which had a dismal record for performance in the State Examinations. The high schools in the area were unwilling to take in even the successful kids for the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade for fear of losing their reputation. I still remember the faces of some of the bright kids who

were desperately responding to our efforts for enhancement of academic standards, with a glimmer of hope for a bright future which will enable them to break out of the socio-economic barriers which are inherent to the Indian rural environment. Pushpalatha was one of them. She came from a family where the father was a daily wage earner. Her mother was making ends meet by doing odd jobs. None in her family ever got educated beyond 7<sup>th</sup> Grade. As for the school itself, none of the kids got through to the Pre-University level. Apart from our efforts at the primary level for all kids, we decided to support three bright kids from each school. Pushpalatha was one of the lucky students during the first year to be awarded a scholarship.

We were following her career for the last five years; she was scoring 'A' grades right through. She courageously chose English as her medium during her Pre-university course and commerce as her

major. She is now due to enter the degree course with the clear objective of becoming a chartered accountant- an occupation of which she had no knowledge when she left the school. In the process, she has also acquired enough courage to resist efforts to get her married even at such a young age, which is common in her community. Her husband was bold enough to support her studies. We brought young Pushpalatha back to the school in Arehalli recently to talk to the kids and to let them know that they too can make it if they give it a good try. She was, indeed a model for other kids to follow. She even told them that she would come back to the school and do her bit, once she has made her career. The interaction was indeed a trail blazer! We think we have initiated a chain reaction which will have a momentum of its own."

Pushpalatha's story is one of the several such success stories, where Sikshana has

### Dr. Prakash Bhandari and his fight against poverty in Pune's slums

Dr Prakash Bhandari is a doctor with a difference. He does not merely write out prescriptions. For nearly three decades, he has been running health care, educational and self-employment programmers in Pune slums through his organization, the Snehddeep Jankalyan Foundation (SJF). "We help slum-dwellers improve their overall life, become self-dependent and join the mainstream," he says. His modest clinic near Kasewadi slums is a beacon of hope for many.

Inspired by his mother, Bhandari started treating Kasewadi residents in 1978 when he was only 25. He soon realized that patients steeped in poverty, squalor and superstition needed to be educated in hygiene as well as learn certain other basics if their lot was to be bettered.

Bhandari, who does his work without much publicity, started off by launching cleanliness campaigns. Subsequently, the French organization Inter Aide funded his activities. Now, with additional help from other quarters, his team of devoted teachers, social workers and volunteers has provided free tuberculosis treatment to hundreds.

To arrest malnutrition among slum children, it has developed inexpensive protein supplements using groundnut, jaggery, gram and soya, which helped bring down malnutrition in Pune's worst slums from 15 per cent to 2 per cent. A team of 25 slum women has been delivering door-to-door healthcare since 1980. SJF also focuses on ante-natal and post-natal care, immunization and birth control. Counseling by SJF for alcoholism, mental health and HIV/AIDS has been well received.



On the educational front, SJF runs 10 balwadis or nursery schools, 25 study guidance centers and five centers for school dropouts who wish to continue their education. It also sponsors students and supports some municipal schools hit by high dropout rates. Its day-care centers ensure that girls don't absent themselves from school and its library engages children in reading and storytelling.

SJF also helps community members obtain birth certificates and ration cards, and avail government benefits. To help slum-dwellers start businesses or secure jobs, the organization helps them with interest-free loans, vocational training and personality development programmers. "More than services, we provide skills," says Bhandari. "Our work has expanded to five more slums in Pune covering over one lakh people."

Contact: Seva Clinic, Memzade Building, 545, Bhavani Peth, Katarkhana, Pune-411042

(Previously published in the Outlook magazine, Jan. 22, 2007 )

made a difference in the lives of children. There are 50 schools under the Sikshana organization with a total student population of 10,000 today. One gets a feeling of fulfillment when one looks at the impact a low cost program like Sikshana can make in the lives of the deprived and dispossessed, even with moderate rate of success. There must be hundreds like Pushpalatha just waiting for an opportunity. All that it takes is for some one to reach out to them.

To learn more about the organization Sikshana visit [www.sikshana.org](http://www.sikshana.org).

-Shekar Rao

## The George Foundation: the eradication of rural poverty in India

“Back where I come from there are men who do nothing all day but good deeds. They are called phila... er, phila... er, yes, er, good deed doers ...,” says the self-styled wizard ‘de luxe’ of Oz. Philanthropy has a history in the West that parallels the rise of capitalism, and has been linked by Max Weber to the “protestant ethic” and the rationalization of benevolence. In India, charity in an institutional form exists within the religious tradition of temples and Dhams, but gradually the emergence of wealth and benevolence have created institutions that go beyond giving towards creating self-sufficiency.

Another related impulse to “do good” comes from the diasporic community of scholars, entrepreneurs, the business community and NGOs. Mohammed Yunus’s micro-credit scheme is now a household word. One NGO that is making a difference where it is perhaps most desperately needed is the George Foundation, created by Dr. Abraham George,

whose book *India Untouched : the Forgotten Face of Rural Poverty* says it all.

The George Foundation was created in 1996 and address issues of poverty alleviation through education, health, women’s empowerment and community development. *Shanti-Bhavan* is a privately funded boarding school for 336 children from the most deprived dalit communities. To read the stories of Vijay or Sheena is to understand the uphill struggle such an enterprise involves. Centuries of rural abuse by landowners, moneylenders, and traditional beliefs compounded by governmental ineptness, or bureaucratic corruption make for a daunting challenge. It requires true vision, dedication and plain dogged determination to persist. Dr. George draws on both spiritual resources and a secular ethic of the kind propounded by Bob Rubin, former Secretary of the Treasury under Clinton, and later professor at Harvard Business School in his vision of

what George calls a “hope for a more ethical society.”

One additionally highly significant contribution by the George Foundation is its creation of the *National Referral Centre for Lead-poisoning in India*, a non-profit joint undertaking with St. John’s National Academy of Health in Bangalore. Dr. George recognizes the environmental hazards that accompany rapid industrial development under a globalizing world. Although the foreword of the book is written by Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, George is no gung ho advocate of the private sector; in his own words, “...only through a determined and sustainable effort by the government, supported by non-governmental organizations, and with active participation by the private sector, can the social and economic problems faced by the rural population in India be effectively tackled.”

- Manjari Chatterji

## Dr. Maxine Berntsen: An educator making a difference in a far away land

Finding my way to Maxine’s house or schools in the city of Phaltan was a piece of cake. Everyone seemed to know Maxine Bai (honorific term) or Maxine Mavashi (Aunt). Schoolchildren called her Maxine Aaji (Grandma). So loved, it is hard to believe that she is an American

by birth and a citizen of India by choice.

Maxine was a bi-annual visiting professor at Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin. She came to teach Marathi to students getting ready to travel to a distant land on their study abroad program. She did that every other year. She also invited music maestros, dancers, historians and literary critics to equip them with aspects of culture other than the language.

For the past forty years she has lived in India. She went on a Fulbright fellowship for her dissertation on sociolinguistic study of Marathi speech of Phaltan, in Maharashtra and stayed on even after receiving her Ph.D., because of satisfy-

ing friendships and meaningful work. Not only has she made India a home, but mastered an alien language Marathi enough to be able to speak and write flawlessly. She has written several books to teach English through Marathi and also to teach Marathi to Americans.

A strong advocate of the use of the regional language as the medium of instruction, in collaboration with her friends, in 1978, she started Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (Progressive Educational Society). Today the Sanstha runs two pre-schools, a primary and a secondary school. They are considered models to emulate. In addition, they provide outreach services to help improve other



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local schools. One of the pre-school is for ex-untouchable children. For a visitor, it is a treat to see her and other teachers interact with children so eager to learn, who but for this school wouldn't have such a chance. In addition to teaching she has administrative and fund-raising responsibilities. In the past, her bi-annual trips to the US and to Lawrence University as a visiting professor afforded her an opportunity to raise funds for her beloved schools. She continues to seek similar opportunity.

Maxine has become thoroughly Indian today, in her attire, speech, values and

thinking. She regrets that the middle class in India is committing cultural suicide with English medium schools mushrooming all over. She actively propagates her love for education in the native language by writing articles in local newspapers.

Interested in learning more? Write to [maxineberntsen@rediffmail.com](mailto:maxineberntsen@rediffmail.com), or

Dr. Maxine Berntsen, Pragat Shikshan Santha, Phaltan 415523. Dist: Satara, Maharashtra, India, or call 9102166-223041/ 9102166-220586

- Sandhya Sridhar

## News ...

### IndUS: Changing of the Guard



*Sandesh* is pleased to announce its new president, Dr. Mahendra Doshi, of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, Tappi award recipient, and founding member of IndUS as the new president of IndUS of Fox

Valley. He has a proven track record of devoted service, and we are sure the organization will benefit greatly under his leadership. We wish outgoing President, Dr. Sridhar a well deserved respite from these duties.



Sridhar needs little introduction to the readers of *Sandesh*, as his presence is writ large in countless ways. Nevertheless, we offer a short appreciation of his contributions toward "promoting Indo-

American friendship and goodwill by serving the community through social, cultural, educational and charitable activities" in the words of IndUS's mission statement.

If ever anyone tried to live up to Gandhi's dictum—"you must be the change you wish to see"—it is Sridhar. And the verb *being* for Sridhar inescapably involves *doing*. Perhaps it is his early schooling in India's prestigious Ramkrishna Institutes with their

vision of social service as preached by Sri Vivekananda; perhaps it is his parents' devotion to social causes; perhaps it is his Business School outcomes orientation; certainly having a committed spouse is an enormous plus, but Sridhar makes it plain that activities that do not promote tangible good and social benefit, fall in the futile category of hand-wringing, navel-gazing, and other colorful terms—he has a few!

IndUS has become a household word, and its central event—a fund-raising banquet and cultural program—is sold out every year. This multi-dimensional show introduces the audience to some aspect of Indian culture and society. But there are many other ways IndUS impacts the world and community: disaster relief, musical performances by world class artists, volunteerism with the Salvation Army, childrens' cultural exchange, films, scholarships, and so on. Each idea has the unmistakable stamp of Sridhar's initiative, drive and dedication. His networking with local Universities, Rotary Club and other community organizations have channeled and focused the considerable talents, goodwill and skills of volunteers into a fine institution. His energy is boundless; his commitment unwavering, despite the ups and downs any new venture inevitably faces.

While Sridhar steps down as president, he continues to chair the Cultural Committee, and be a guiding force behind IndUS. We thank him for his leadership, and for forging a strong and proud friendship with our community.

## IndUS – 2007

This year the Annual IndUS banquet will be held on Saturday, October 27, 2007 at Reeve Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Like in the previous years, IndUS-2007 also has a unique theme: *Music and Dances of India*. Once again, an exhibition, a multimedia presentation, and live demonstrations of music and dances representing different styles and schools from all over India, and finally, an excellent cultural program would make the evening a rich experience for all to remember.

The popularity of these events is a testimony to the time and devotion of a large contingent of dedicated volunteers. If you are interested in being a part of this year's team, please contact Vivek Kulkarni (Tel: 920.722.0210 or sanvek@netzero.net) or Susan Stachowiak (Tel: 920.729.6208 or sstachowiak@new.rr.com) who co-chair the Steering Committee for IndUS-2007

Every IndUS banquet has been a sold out event! To avoid disappointment, please contact Kamal Varma, 920.731.0834 for tickets, at the earliest opportunity.

## Investing in Children

IndUS is committed to undertaking creative educational interventions that help lay a solid foundation in reading, science and mathematics among socio-economically disadvantaged children of Fox Valley and their cohorts in India. "Investing in Children", a new campaign recognizes the need to prepare children (0-8 year), both in the USA and in India, to become competent, productive, peace loving citizens of the world. A seed fund of \$9,000 has already been established and consulting with several area organizations and schools to develop a comprehensive strategy toward this goal is progressing well.

### A Tribute to Nasreen Majid

Nasreen Majid, a member of the founding board of IndUS of Fox Valley, passed away on December 29, 2006. She was a co-founder of SEVA, an outreach activity of IndUS, which serves food to the homeless at Salvation Army. A native of Bangalore, she made Fox Valley her home for over three decades, raised a wonderful family and supported causes dear to her heart. As a founding member of Islamic Society, she helped create awareness of

true nature of Islam. She organized many interfaith services and helped numerous displaced individuals settle in their new home in the Fox Valley. She was involved with the international students at the Lawrence University and helped them in organizing multicultural events. She took the initiative for India Association and IndUS to participate in Octoberfest. She will be remembered as a generous and genuinely caring individual and a trusted friend of IndUS. We will sorely miss this dear friend.

### IndUS Future Fund: An Appeal

IndUS has joined hands with Community Foundation of Fox Cities to establish IndUS Future Fund. Each year, IndUS will be able to use the investment income toward charitable causes. Sixty percent of the income will be devoted to local initiatives. IndUS aspires to reach a target of \$100,000 by the year 2008. This should enable IndUS to make a substantial and sustained contribution to the community. The effort has received a further boost, thanks to a matching grant from the Community Foundation. Your generous support will strengthen us in our resolve and our effort as we build IndUS Future Fund!

**IndUS Of Fox Valley**  
18 Woodbury Court  
Appleton WI 54915

### IndUS of Fox Valley

*Presents*

*A Celebration of Indo American  
Friendship and Goodwill*

## **IndUS-2007**

***Music & Dances of India***

**Saturday, October 27, 2007**

**5:00 to 9:00 p.m.**

**Reeve Memorial Union**

**UW—Oshkosh**

***Exhibition***

***Social Hour***

***Authentic Indian Cuisine***

***Cultural Program***