

**Nandini**

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***Voice For The Deprived***

Dedicated to the cause of marginalised and downtrodden

VOL XII

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RS.10/-

**Think about the plight of  
visually impaired women.**

**There are around 4.8 lakhs  
in Tamil Nadu alone.**

## THOUGHTS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

### WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE LIFE AFTER DEATH?



As long as a man remains ignorant, that is to say, as long as he has not realised God, so long will he be born. But after attaining knowledge, he will not have to come back to this earth or go to any other plane of existence.

The potter puts his pots in the sun to dry. Have not you noticed that among them there are both baked and unbaked ones? When a cow happens to walk over them, some are broken to pieces. The broken pots that are already baked, the potter throws away, since they are of no more use to him. But the soft ones, though broken, he gathers up. He makes them into a lump and out of this forms new pots. In the same way, so long as a man has not realised God, he will have to come back to the Potter's hand, that is, he will have to be born again and again.

According to Vedanta, Brahman alone is real and all else is maya, dreamlike and unsubstantial. The ego, like a stick, lies across the Ocean of Sachidananda. When this ego is taken away, there remains only one undivided Ocean of Sachidananda. But as long as the stick of ego remains, there is an appearance of two: here is one part of the water and there another part.

By attaining the Knowledge of Brahman, one is established in Samadhi. Then the ego is effaced.

A child has no attachment. He makes a play house and if anyone touches it, he will jump about and cry. The next moment he himself will break it. The moment he may be very much attached to his cloth and say: "My daddy gave it to me. I won't part with it". But the next moment you can cajole him and he will go away with you, leaving the cloth behind.

The Brahmos insist that God is formless. What if they do? It is enough to call on Him with sincerity of heart. If the devotee is sincere, then God, who is the Inner Guide of all, will certainly reveal to the devotee His true nature.

I see people who talk about religion constantly quarreling with one another. Hindus, Mussalmans, Brahmos, Saktas, Vaishnavas, Saivas, all quarrel with one another.

They have not the intelligence to understand that He who is called Krishna is also Siva and the Primal Sakti and that it is He, again, who is called Jesus and Allah.

There is only one Rama and He has a thousand names. Truth is one; It is only called by different names. All the people are seeking the same Truth; the disagreement is due to differences in climate, temperament and names. Everyone is going toward God. They will all realise Him if they have sincerity and longing of heart.

## WHERE IS BHAGAVAN RAMANA MAHARISHI?



Once when Sri Ramanasramam was in its initial stage, a devotee who had only heard of Bhagavan came to Thiruvannamalai to see Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi. Asking for directions to Sri Ramanasramam, he was very excited that he would soon meet Bhagavan and started asking everyone he met "Where is Ramana? Where is Ramana?"

One devotee pointed out the way Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi usually went on his walk and so, because of his eagerness and unable to sit still, he went off searching for him.

By that time, Sri Bhagavan had returned from his stroll on the Hill and went to the kitchen at the same time as the devotee arrived there. The devotee saw four or five people

standing about and was not at all sure which one was Ramana. Seeing all those strange faces, he chose to ask the person who seemed like a simple man who would not get angry with him. The person he chose to ask was of course, none other than Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi.

He asked him, "Who is Ramana"?

Without any hesitancy, Bhagavan smiled and pointed to a big vessel which had the inscription of 'Sri Ramana'. Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi out of compassion explained his answer, "At least on these vessels 'Sri Ramana' is inscribed, but nothing is written on this body."

The devotee who came to see Sri Bhagavan with love got a rare instruction (upadesa)

The whole of Sri Ramana's philosophy is contained in this. Sri Bhagavan's Self-Knowledge (jnana anubhavam) is that he is not the body.

# Desperate Calls

You can enjoy your prosperity only if you share your income with the deprived and thus discover the satisfaction that it provides

## Needs medical treatment

Ms.S.Jothi Vincent, age 45 years is suffering from tuberculosis. She has two school going children. She is working as coolie and with that meagre income, she is running her family.

Due to her illness, she is not able to attend to her job regularly

Ms.S.Jothi Vincent requests financial help for her medical treatment and for setting up a small shop to run her family.

Contact address:  
Ms.S.Jothi Vincent,  
42, Vinayagar Street, Vivekananda Nagar,  
M.K.Kottai, Tiruchirapalli.

## Poor lady needs medical support

Mrs.Maya D.Raheja, a widow, is suffering from chronic ailments viz. Hepatitis (C) virus infection, tuberculosis, hiatus hernia and kidney ailment. On account of the chronic nature of her disease, she is currently diagnosed to have further complication viz.bilateral renal disease with renal culcuius and thyroid.She is undergoing medical treatment in Hinduja National Hospital and Research Centre.

She has completely exhausted all her resources due to the medical expenses and is not in a position to continue her further treatment.

Kind hearted persons are requested to draw the cheque in favour of Hinduja National Hospital and Research Centre,Mumbai and send it to the following address

Mrs.Maya D.Raheja,  
2/10, Siddhivinayak Building, North Keluskar Road,  
Sivaji Park, Mumbai-400 028

## Boy suffering from epilepsy

Master Sunil Shetty, age 10 years is suffering from epilepsy.The doctors have advised him to undergo surgery immediately. The estimated cost of the surgery is Rs.50,000/-

The boy's father Sri.Chandra Shetty is working as ward boy at Sheetal Staff Service and his monthly income is Rs.3,500/-. He has two school going/college going daughters.

Sri.Chandra Shetty requests kind hearted persons for financial help for his son's surgery.

The cheque may be drawn in favour of Bombay Hospital, Mumbai and sent to the following address:

Sri.Chandra Shetty  
Sankar Pada No.2, Samshan Bhumi Road  
Kandivali (West), Mumbai-600 037.

## Needs support for education

Sri.V.Senthilvelayutham, disabled boy is studying Bachelor of Education course in K.S.K.College of Education,Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu.

He has already paid an amount of Rs.20,000/- towards college fees with the help of philanthropists.He requests kind hearted persons for financial help for a sum of Rs.20,000/- towards the balance amount to be paid by him to the college.

The cheque may be drawn in favour of K.S.K.College of Education, Kumbakonam,Thanjavur Dt. and sent to the following address:

Sri.V.Senthilvelayutham  
S/o.Sri.S.Vasudevan  
K.S.K.College of Education,  
Ammapettai, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur (Dt)  
Tamil Nadu

## Cancer patient needs support

Sri.Ajay Bharat Poul, age 24 years is suffering from blood cancer. The approximate cost of the treatment will be Rs.4 lakhs and the duration of the treatment will be two years.

The father of the patient is a casual labourer.

The cheque may be drawn in favour of Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai and sent to the following address:

Mr.Bharat Tulsiram Poul,  
Dongripada, Bhavani Chowk,  
Room No.267, Behind Shiv Sena Shaka  
Post Kasarvadavali, Godbunder Road,  
Thane (W)400 607. Maharashtra

## Needs support for education

Ms.G.Malathi is a poor girl and she is studying Diploma in Teacher Education course in Sri Ramakrishna Teacher Training Institute, Maleri, Sankarapuram.

Ms.G.Malathi requests kind hearted persons for financial help for her studies.

Contact address:  
Ms.G.Malathi, D/o.Sri.N.Govindan,  
Adaiyur, Aruthangudi (Post), Thirukoviloor (Tk)  
Tamil Nadu

## Deaf and dumb boy needs support for education

Sri.K.Thirunavukkarasu age 21 years is a deaf and dumb boy studying II year B.Com course in St.Louis Institute for the Deaf and Blind at Adyar in Chennai.

The boy's father is a farmer ad belongs to low income group. Boy needs around Rs.10,000/- towards the fees to be paid to the institution. Please send the cheque in favour of St.Louis Institute For The Deaf and Blind payable at Chennai and send to the following address:

Sri.Kaliappan,  
F/o.Sri.K.Thirunavukkarasu  
Radhapuram P.O. Thirukanur (Via),  
Villuppuram Dist. Pin:605 501

### Hearing and speech impaired lady desperately needs job

A speech and hearing impaired lady, age 39 years has passed SSLC. She has passed typewriting English and Tamil Lower grade. She has knowledge of computer operation. She belongs to lower income group and her father is no more. Her brother is also speech and hearing impaired.

She urgently requires a suitable job in Mylapore area in Chennai. Kind hearted persons are requested to respond.

For further details, please contact  
The Editor, Nandini Voice For The Deprived

### Child has to undergo heart surgery

Sri.Chandru, three months old baby, needs to undergo open heart + closed heart surgery due to the heart disorder. The child's father Sri.Palaniswamy is from poor background and he is getting around Rs.2,500/- per month by way of salary.

Total cost of the operation is likely to be Rs.2.5 lakhs. The family have collected Rs.1.5 lakhs through friends, relatives, company support including CM fund, MLA fund, etc

For further details, please contact:  
Sri.Priyesh  
helptolive@yahoo.com

### Disabled girl needs job

Ms.SP.Sathya, age 24 years is a disabled lady and has successfully completed Master of Business Management (Banking and Insurance) during the year April 2007.

Ms.SP.Sathya needs a suitable job.

Contact address:  
Ms.SP.Sathya,  
3/84, P.Alagapuri, Kilasevalpatti-630 205  
Pudukkottai District, Tamil Nadu

### Disabled girl needs computer system for self employment



Ms.N.Navamani, age 24 years is a disabled girl and has passed B.Sc.Computer Science and she belongs to a poor family. Her father passed away recently.

Ms.N.Navamani requests kind hearted persons for donation of used computer and printer in good condition for self employment. She also requests for donation of tricycle to move one place to another.

Contact address;  
Ms.N.Navamani, D/o.Sri.V.Natarajan,  
20/11, Gandhi Nagar, Rajakadai,  
Thiruchinna Kuppam Road, Chennai-600 019.

## NEARLY 1.5 LAKH FARM SUICIDES FROM 1997 TO 2005

Nearly 1,50,000 Indian farmers committed suicide in nine years from 1997 to 2005, official data show.

While the suicides occurred in many States, nearly two-thirds of such deaths were concentrated in five States where just a third of the country's population lives. This means that farm suicides occurred in these (mainly cash crop) regions with appalling intensity.

The five States are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (including Chattisgarh) and Kerala. Of these, only Kerala showed no sustained increase in the number of yearly farm suicides over this period. That was mainly because of a decline after 2003, which was that States's worst year. Maharashtra, for which data exists from 1995, is by far the worst hit. Farm suicides there more than trebled from 1083 in 1995 to 3926 in 2005.

Suicides as a whole rose nationally in the 1997-2005 period. But the rate of increase in farm suicides was far higher than the rate of increase in suicides by non-farmers. In Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, the percentage increase in farm

suicides were more than double the increase in non-farm suicides in this period.

While suicides by non-farmers went up by 23 percent in the big four states, farm suicides went up by 52 percent. Indeed, these States might be termed the "Suicide SEZ" or Special Elimination Zone" for farmers this past decade. In 1997, these States accounted for 53 per cent or just over half of all farm suicides in the country. By 2005, it was 64 per cent. That is, in less than a decade, their share of farm suicides, already disproportionately high, leapt to nearly two-thirds.

These and other grim findings emerge from a comprehensive study of official data on farm suicides by Professor K.Nagaraj of the Madras Institut of Development Studies (MIDS).

The data analysed by him were drawn from various issues of Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India.

This is a publication of the National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. The period covered by the study was from 1997-2005.

# Readers' forum

Readers' forum provides space for the enlightened readers to give expression to their views on a variety of socio economic issues that is of relevance to the society.

Further enrichment of the journal with your thoughtful inputs would certainly go a long way in promoting the cause that the journal seeks to espouse.



## Anbumani vs Venugopal

Dear Sir,

The issue of retirement of the Director of All India Institute of Medical Services, (AIIMS), New Delhi has become extremely unwholesome, nasty and brutish .

AIIMS is recognised as an university among academic circles.

It is not clear, in the first instance as to why the past governments did not mention any upper age limit for the two AIIMS of Delhi and Punjab. It may be a deliberate move to accommodate some special experts who may be superannuated but still remain talented, knowledgeable and useful. This is not unique. The states of Bihar, Punjab and Rajasthan do not have upper age limit for the post of Vice-Chancellors in their state universities. However, all central universities have fixed the age limit of 65 years. Many universities like Aligarh, Delhi, Jammia and JNU do not allow a second term for vice chancellor. Being a central institution, the two AIIMS also should have had their age ceiling for the Director. If the present government has rectified this mistake and passed an Act, it should be recognised, as better late than never.

However, this can not be applied retrospectively. If it is a term appointment and the term has been specifically mentioned in the letter of appointment, this should be respected and adhered to. After all, there are precedents for this.

One can mention the appointment of the eminent educationist Dr. Madhuri R Shah as the Chairman of University Grants Commission. Her letter of appointment merely mentioned the term of five years and no maximum age. She refused to give up when she became 65. The UGC had to recognise its fault, accept her plea and allow her to continue till the end of her term. The mistake has been rectified and it is now "a period of five years or until the attainment of the age of 65 whichever is earlier". Many subsequent chairman, vice chancellors and others have followed this norm.

Dr.Venugopal should be allowed to continue till his term ( as given in the appointment letter) is over. The present Act should be applied only for the future directors.

Dr.Susheela Kaushik, Gurgaon, Haryana

## Why Prime Minister not visiting Nandigram?

Dear Sir,

Our Prime Minister, closes his eyes to very frequent incidents of horrors and corruption taking place in the

country. He appears to be keen to complete his five years terms at any cost. He often tours around the world and spending time in various countries. He should have rushed to Nandigram and established tranquility there. But, he escapes from such roles.

K.N.Narayana Pillai, Chennai

## Karnataka's murky politics

Dear Sir,

All these days when the politicians were fighting for power, the administration at Karnataka was at standstill.

Whereas the politicians were engrossed in their greed to hold on to power at any cost , the common men have to suffer the brunt of spiraling prices and the terrorism unabated. In short, we have a situation with no holds barred for the politicians.

S.Sivaraman, Chennai

## Racial superiority

Dear Sir,

I read with interest the article by Sri.N.S.Sankararaman (Nandini Dec.07 issue) giving his view that racial discrimination is diminishing in all countries.

The white races of Europe who conquered and colonised several countries in the past developed superiority complex and treated the other people as slaves. In South Africa, they enforced the apartheid policy and in Australia they adopted the white Australian policy.

All such discrimination and humiliations were fought by the subject countries themselves and the uprising of the natives finally emancipated their nation from the tyrannical yoke of the white race. These countries are now developing fast and are competing with the white nations in every field of activity.

In this connection, I am reminded of a speech made by former president Dr.S.Radhakrishnan decades ago in England. He said , "God first baked too much and the black people came into existence; then he half baked when the white race followed and finally when he baked at the correct degree, the Indians appeared".

Racism is an anachronism in the 21st century.

M.R.Pillai, Coimbatore

## Dynasty rule

Dear Sir,

The well written article on political families derailing Indian democracy(NVD Dec.07) is not only timely but also places things concerning family domination in politics in proper perspective.

The blame for encouraging and ushering in family rule in party and government goes to the congressmen.

Are such elevation of undeserving wife, sons and daughters as rulers conducive to the growth of genuine democracy and development of the nation? The voters should be wary of the designs of selfish politicians promoting their family members in politics

M.R.Pillai, Coimbatore

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### Free legal aid call

Dear Sir,

There is a free legal aid cell functioning in Indian Officers Complex, Royappettah, Chennai-600 014 (Phone No.28111160) every Saturday from 11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Each session is chaired by an honourable judge. Weaker section of society can avail of the facility to get remedies readily for their own legal maladies.

Fifty five years ago, then Burmah-Shell had a slogan to sell their quality petrol "Fill up and feel the difference".

This slogan eloquently applies in the case of functioning of the free legal aid cell.

K.N.Narayanapillai, Chennai

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### Hurting the sentiments

Dear Sir,

The Government of India has agreed to provide shelter to exiled Bangla Deshi writer Dr.Taslina Nasreen, provided she would refrain from hurting the sentiment of others.

It is absolutely true that one should not hurt the feelings of others irrespective of their religion.

But what about Government of India, which had hurt the sentiments of crores of Hindus by denying the existence of Lord Rama who is venerable God for them.?

Renowned artist Mr Fidu Hussain also committed obnoxious act by depicting Hindu god and goddesses in nude manner under the pretext of freedom of expression.

Sridhar V Kulkarni, Kalyan, Maharashtra

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## Tears of Poor People

Dear Sir,

A recent news item regarding the plight of a disabled person is shocking. The news is all about a "battle against official apathy".

Ms.V.Manjula went to the local Tahsildar's office in Tamil Nadu several times to obtain what her 15 year old mentally challenged son is entitled to. He is eligible for an allowance of Rs.400/- per month under government scheme.She applied for the allowance and knocked at the doors of Tahsildar's office more than 15 times. Alas! all the poor woman's efforts were proved futile. The added shame is that the office staff were so rude with her. The story goes on not only with Ms.Manjula but there are others like Mr.Selvam, Mr.Mohammed Basha and so many. These people are also knocking at the government office doors.

In another incident, Mr.Annadurai and his wife were living in Manavalannallur,Tamil Nadu.

A Sub Inspector of Police, picked up Mr.Annadurai from his house on 7.11.2004 and he was cruelly beaten up and due to the severe beatings that he received, Mr.Annadurai died at Government Hospital the next day - 8.11.2004. His widow Ms.Selvi lodged a complaint with State Human Rights Commission and cause of death was established by the Commission on 2.4.2007 that it was due to the cruel excesses of the police. It ordered compensation of Rs.1.5 lakhs; In other words, the value of Mr.Annadurai's life was fixed as Rs.1.5 lakhs.

No doubt it was a cold blooded murder by the police in the police station. This kind of murders are going on throughout the country.

Human life has now-a-days become so cheap and the grieved families losing their loved bread winners in police atrocities have to be satisfied by same compensation amount.

Our father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi dreamt of gram swaraj and earnestly had much concern about the farmers of our country because with their sweat, the country's masses are fed.

Alas! now the farmers are committing suicide; 1.5 lakh Indian farmers committed suicide between 1997 to till date.

I wonder what the Heads of Government departments are doing? What the MPs and MLAs are doing after reading such news each day? They are getting huge pay and allowances from government. Hence it is their duty to ensure that such incidents would not occur.

If they would fail to do so, it is every man's and woman's duty to handle them properly, when they would come to the door steps with folded hands for votes during the election.

The present time is ripe for the poor masses in the country to get up to fight for their rights.

Daniel Vedamuthu, Chennai

# VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN HONOURED

## A MEANINGFUL MEETING IN CHENNAI

Nandini voice For the Deprived organised a meeting in Chennai on 2nd Dec.2007, in connection with the World Disabled Day to honour visually impaired women and discuss their problems.

The meeting was presided over by Sri. R.C.Gandhi IAS, Secretary, Social Reforms, Government of Tamil Nadu and addressed by the following persons

Dr. Susheela Kaushik, former Professor and Director, Centre for Women Studies, Delhi University,

Sri K. Pandiarajan, Managing director, Ma Foi Management Consultants,

Prof. G. Jayaraman, a visually impaired person and retired professor from Madras Christian College and

Ms. Vidya shankar, Chairperson, Relief foundation.



**A section of the audience**



**Dr. Susheela Kaushik presenting the award to a visually impaired lady. Others in the picture are Prof. G. Jayaraman and Sri. K. Pandiarajan**

Sri. N.S.Venkataraman, Trustee, Nandini voice For the Deprived presented the findings of the study made by the NGO on the problems of the visually impaired women. The study revealed the extent of the problems faced by the visually impaired women, 90% of whom belong to lower income group. In Tamil Nadu alone, there are around 17 lakhs of disabled persons, of which 9.75 lakh persons are visually impaired and out of which around 4.75 lakh is constituted by visually impaired women.

Most visually impaired women do not get any support from the family members after passing away of their parents and are driven from pillar to post to find a place of stay and get their livelihood. Many visually impaired women get married to get social security. But, most of them could marry only visually impaired man, since normal persons mostly refuse to marry visually impaired women. Many of such marriages of visually impaired man and woman have failed, leaving the married visually impaired women deserted by their husbands with one or two children to support.

The study made by Nandini Voice For the Deprived stressed that visually impaired women should be adopted by the government and should be given full social security and place of stay, food etc. free of cost. With no where to go and when the government also would neglect them, the visually impaired women undergo tremendous frustration and sufferings which should be seen to be believed. Caring for the visually impaired women is the duty of the government and the society.

During the meeting, the following twenty two visually impaired women were honoured with awards for their exceptional initiative to forge ahead in life, inspite of their extremely difficult and stressful conditions.

1. Ms.R.Anitha, B.A.
2. Ms.P.Aruna Devi, MSW
3. Ms.K.Devi,M.A., B.Ed.
4. Ms.Gnanasundari- Recently met with an accident and presently in hospital
5. Ms.S.Jalaja, B.A., Dip.in Teaching.

## **VISUALLY IMPAIRED WOMEN HONOURED - A MEANINGFUL MEETING IN CHENNAI**

6. Ms.R.Jayachitra,M.A.,B.Ed.
7. Ms.K.Kolanji Ammal,M.A., B.Ed.
8. Ms.G.Manju, M.A.,B.Ed.
9. Ms.A.Meenakshi Sundari,B.A.,B.Ed.
10. Ms.V.Mercy Rani, M.A.,B.Ed.
11. Ms.M.Padma,M.A., B.Ed.
12. Ms.M.Podhumponnu,M.A., B.Ed.
13. Ms.Sahaya Mary – Self employed
14. Ms.M.Saraswathy,M.A., B.Ed.
15. Ms.K.Savithri, B.A.
16. Ms.K.Shanthi-Self employed
17. Ms.C.Sudha,M.A., B.Ed.
18. Ms.S.Sudha Mani,B.A., B.L.
19. Ms.S.Sumathy, B.A.
20. Ms.V.Tamilarasi-Self employed
21. Ms.M.Uma Maheswari - Self employed
22. Ms.C.Vijaya Lakshmi - Self employed

Several visually impaired women were given opportunity to speak in the meeting and express their problems and aspirations. Many of them spoke with great clarity and eloquence, surprising the large audience , who listened to them with rapt attention.

The objective of conducting the meeting was to sensitise the society and the government about the problems of the visually impaired women and to encourage them by honouring them with awards and to give them confidence that the society would care for them. It was the unanimous view of all those who attended the meeting that the objectives were largely achieved.

For further details, please contact:

N.S.Venkataraman, Editor,  
Nandini Voice For The Deprived



**Sri. R.C. Gandhi, Social Reforms Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu presenting the award to a visually impaired lady Ms. Gnanasundari.**



**Ms. C. Sudha, a visually impaired lady addressing the meeting.**



**Ms. M. Saraswathy, a visually impaired lady addressing the gathering.**

# NOW, THERE IS NEED FOR PARALLEL GOVERNMENT LIKE EFFORTS

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With the evil of corruption sweeping the country from one end to the other at all levels and disparity in income between the different segments of the society rapidly widening, many wonder as to whether there is any responsible governance at all in the country.

There is considerable concern amongst the country men that those in charge of the government appear to largely lack the intention to govern and are only concerned about their own family members and political groups. The politicians seem to be concerned only about staying on in power at any cost and the primary job of governance is subjugated to their desire for personal betterment.

In the process, the fabric and the fibre of the country is inevitably weakening at alarming rate, with no worthwhile role models that could create confidence amongst the countrymen.

Even with the governance not raising upto the required standards of performance, large section of the country men is only concerned about governing their own families and personal interests. In the process, most people look at the national progress only from their own narrow view point and think that it would not be their personal responsibility to ensure overall progress of the society. Large section of the population do not appear to be anymore concerned about the prevailing corruption but have made bribe money as part of their expenditure plans to get their things done at whatever cost. The affluent and those who can afford simply pay whatever is required to get their personal requirements, while the poor and deprived persons who cannot afford to pay bribe are left uncared and remain unattended. The quality education has become beyond the reach of the poor, denying them any possibility of improving their skill level and employability and improving their economic and social status.

There are evidence that the money intended for development projects and public welfare managed by the government are systematically being siphoned out at various levels, with the benefits not reaching the poor and downtrodden to the extent required.

Now, what is the way out? Should the country helplessly leave the matter to the politicians and bureaucrats and self centred people and reconcile itself to the situation? Is there any hope that those in charge of controlling the government would improve in quality and performance in the foreseeable future? Is there not

anybody in this country who would fight against nepotism and corruption and make the necessary sacrifices in the course of their fight? Has this nation lost its pride and self respect and gone under the control of self centred and scheming people who get into power and build themselves?

While the situation looks hopeless as on today, it really need not be so. There are still thousands of people in this country who have passion for ethics and honesty in private and public life. There are many of those who hate the present conditions and are highly agitated about the state of affairs but they remain wondering as to what can they do to redeem the conditions. They are all scattered and remain directionless, thinking that someone some how should reform the politicians and improve the government machinery and quality of administration and public life. Their anger looks like impotent rage at the present time.

In such circumstances, extremist groups are coming up everywhere and violence is becoming the order of the day. Even comparatively minor incidents are good enough to prompt local agitations and skirmishes and group fights. With even those occupying the positions of President, Governors, Prime Minister and Chief Ministers no more commanding any moral authority and their appeals for peace and harmony falling on deaf ears, it appears that violence and unrest would continue and further increase. This could be a very dangerous situation that should be avoided. How to do this?

Obviously, the only way out is for the good people to take the initiative and assume leadership role. In the past, several of them have attempted to do so by entering politics and contesting elections but have been consumed in the process. In the present political system and electoral process, with the vested interests holding total control on political systems, it is difficult and may even be impossible for concerned people to enter politics, win elections and get on to power to reform the society and the political system.

In such circumstances, the only way out is to form parallel government like administration. The good people should form groups themselves, pool their resources and start several welfare programmes in a small and a big way to ensure support and protection to the deprived persons and build ethical value system in the society. This is possible and it is in the hands of the NGOs to do this.

# Impressions of an NRI

## DISCONTENTMENT IN THE WEST AND DISSATISFACTION IN THE EAST

Contributed by - Sri.N.S.Sankararaman E-mail:ns\_sankara@yahoo.co.in

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I have often wondered as to why, that some people in the Western World still manage to find reasons to remain unhappy, in spite of the fact that all their basic essential needs are fulfilled. And, if they are not in a position to meet the basic essentials, the Government does it for them by way of social welfare benefits.

Well, on greater reflection, I am inclined to trust Karl Marx's theory that the decline of capitalism would be caused and hastened by its own inherent contradictions.

The nature of consumer economy is such that if the individual stops spending, the economy would crumble. And, well, if the individual continues to spend mindlessly as they do now in the Western World, he is still going to remain discontented, as by the very nature of man's mindset, he would continue to crave for more. Do we not know the famous dictum that the desire is the root cause of misery? And so, there lies the contradiction and perhaps a vindication of Karl Marx's theory, though waiting to be proved conclusively.

During the past months that I have been in Canada and being engaged in the field that I am, as a mental health professional, I do come across quite a few unfortunate individuals, who in my view have no reasons to be complaining about, as all their basic materialistic needs are met, but still are distraught and end up with conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders or with one of the numerous poor mental health conditions.

In comparison to the conditions existing in India for the poor and the deprived, the conditions faced by the so called poor in the Western World pales into insignificance in terms of magnitude or seriousness.

Let me clarify here that anyone earning less than 27000 dollars per annum in Canada is considered poor by the Government. To provide a better perspective, on an average, a family with a couple of growing children is not compelled to spend more than 2700 to 3000 dollars per month staying in a three bed room apartment with 1500 sq.ft and maintaining a much better standard of life than an upper middle class family in India with a car et al.

So I do conclude, on observation, that while the Westerner or those accustomed to Western style of living

are all discontented perennially, more due to the fact of their being spiritually bankrupt and psychologically fragile, the poor Indian, by the extent of his maturity and the strength of his imbued wisdom is much better off as he is contented with what he gets, though he has sound, valid and justifiable reasons for being dissatisfied.

In terms of securing one's happiness or conversely, preventing one's unhappiness, contentment plays a far more crucial role than satisfaction and this is the factor to which the greater happiness of the Indian and more smiles on his face could be attributed to.

However, what is sad and disturbing in the India of today is that the younger generation is simply enamoured of the western style of living and is in fact fascinated by what is to be understood as the erosion of values in the western society and do not seem to have the ability to find merit in the traditional Indian values, which has truly helped India to sustain itself in spite of the numerous man made problems in recent times.

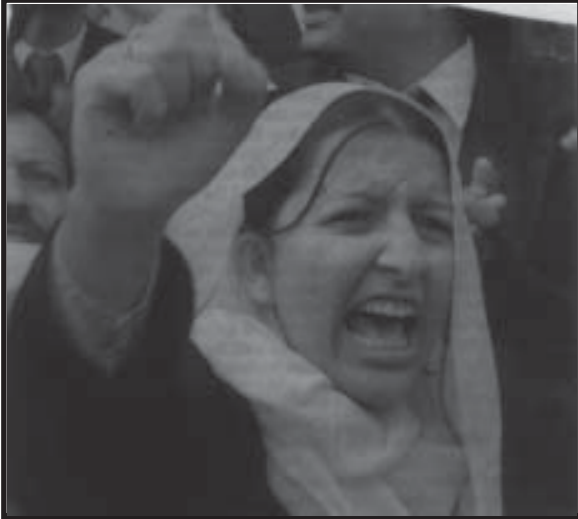
I do not find anything wrong in being fascinated per se, by the Western society for its numerous wonderful qualities that are surely there, but these are not the same as the style of life practised by the younger Westerner. Now, living together is more a rule than an exception and having a child out of wedlock is nothing extraordinary, though left to fend for eventually by the mother and not the father, in due course. Marriage is seen as an inconvenient bond that would incapacitate and prevent the individual from leading a nomadic, drifting or wandering existence. The establishment of such practices in the Western societies do have a lot to do with the detrimental transformation of the individual, in psychological terms.

When the individual becomes restless due to the fact of his being discontented, he constantly strives to look at directions which would provide him with illusory comforts and inevitably lead him into the deep abyss, leading him into further discontentment and more serious mental health issues.

Well, I do believe that KARL MARX when he referred to the contradictions that would exist in a capitalistic society, had in mind not only the economic factors but also the social and psychological factors, which, of course, is very real.

# CORRUPTION EVERYWHERE - A STINKING SOCIETY

Corruption is so widespread everywhere in this country that one cannot even cremate a human body without bribing and meeting the demands of the corrupt officials.



**The country needs unbending fighters against corruption**

A gentleman went to cremate his dear aunt who passed away at a ripe age. First, the problem started in engaging a van to take the body to the cremation ground. While he contacted several agencies, everyone demanded Rs.2000 and more whereas possibly the correct fare even considering the carrying of dead body could be around Rs.600 for a distance of hardly 6 kilometres. He had no alternative other than agreeing to pay the huge amount of Rs.2000/-.

When he reached the cremation ground with the dead body of his dear aunt, he was told by the van driver that he would arrange to do the needful and to tackle the officials in the cremation ground. The van driver told him that he can straightaway go to the official and get the receipt without making any payment and the payment can be made later on to the van driver. The gentleman agreed thinking that the van driver was helping him.

When he came back to the driver with the receipt, the driver wanted him to pay Rs.2000/-, whereas the receipt given to him by the official was only for Rs.250/-. Obviously, the driver is a conduit for making bribe payment to the official who was treating the gentleman with exceptional kindness and politeness which is unusual in a government department. Over and above this, the driver demanded "driver bata" which was refused and there was an argument.

After the cremation was over, the vettians and a few others came to him asking for money. After some argument, he had no alternative other than paying Rs.150/- to them.

The gentleman said that he would have happily given all these amount to a deserving disabled person or a destitute in memory of his dear aunt on the occasion, but he was paying bribe money on this solemn occasion, which disturbed him emotionally.

He wonders as to whether there is anybody at all in the government who would ensure that a corrupt free administration exists atleast in the cremation ground. He said that these conditions reflect on the quality of leadership of the government and the government departments, who do not care to enforce discipline in the government machinery.

What is even more shocking was that when he was sitting in the office in the cremation ground, a phone call came from someone (obviously a political person) who said to the official that some of his people would be coming to the cremation ground soon and they should be treated honourably.

The gentleman thought that death is a great equalizer but it does not appear to be so in present day India. One needs recommendation even for a hassle free and honourable cremation in this present day society.

## INDIANS PREFER BRIBING !

An increasing number of Indians seem to prefer greasing palms to get out of a dicey situation.

According to the 'Global Corruption Barometer-2007', a report prepared by Transparency International (TI), on the occasion of World Anti-Corruption Day (December 9), India is ranked second among a set of nations where corruption is widespread. Pakistan, Albania, Cambodia, Cameroon, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania and Senegal are the other nations which fall within this bracket.

The report is a survey of public opinion that assesses the perceptions of the general public on corruption.

It shows that 25 per cent of the Indian population pay bribes and it groups the country in the 18 to 32 per cent category on the global corruption index. India shares the platform with Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Greece, Indonesia, Lithuania and Serbia.

Political parties and the police have been ranked as the most corrupt while the legislature comes second.

India may soon work its way to the top spot since more than 70 per cent of the 1,069 respondents believe that the situation can worsen. Corruption levels have reportedly increased by five per cent over the last year.

# DISTRIBUTION OF FREE PATTAS IN TAMIL NADU

Contributed by: 'Garland' N. Rajagopalan, I.A.S. Rtd.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is reported to have ordered that

[a] pattas should be issued without any consideration of the annual income of the beneficiary,

[b] that the extent shall be upto four cents in villages, 2.5 cents in municipal areas and two cents in corporation areas and

[c] that a high target has been fixed for the year.

It would appear that no norms such as those indicated below have been prescribed to be followed strictly by those who execute the orders:

a) Whether the occupation is unobjectionable from the viewpoint of public interests such as causing obstruction, etc.,

b) Whether the plot would be required for future public purposes such as forming roads, construction or expansion of public buildings, etc.

c) Whether the beneficiary is in possession/ occupation of other sites and whether he has received like grants earlier in the same or other villages, towns or corporations.

d) Whether the occupation is bonafied since it is well known that several people construct huts and houses at vantage sites and lease them out to those in need and whether in such cases benami names are advanced to gobble up valuable sites? This point is particularly relevant in urban areas where the practice is rampant.

e) Whether any condition is laid down that the beneficiary should not part with the physical or legal possession for a period of not less than 12 years and that

the assignment shall stand cancelled automatically without notice in the event of contravention or infringement or physically parting with possession.

f) Whether the occupant had physically vacated extra extents in his occupation before the assignment is made.

g) It is preposterous that valuable lands should be handed over to the economically affluent without collection of the value.

In the interest of proper governance, it is vital, mandatory and absolutely necessary that proper norms are applied and that the future development is not stifled, suffocated and retarded and needs for vacant areas for the community to breathe, for cattle stands, grazing grounds, threshing floors, play grounds, sites for public buildings, forming roads, streets, channels, etc. are kept in view. The assigning officer should verify and record the finding in each case.

Fixing a high number of cases as target is highly dangerous, since local officials will feel helpless and quite a large number of spurious, benami cases would positively crop up under pressure, etc. Target based on numbers will positively harm the interest of the public, its future development and wellbeing. Suppose a cent of land is needed for public purpose, the only tool will then be land acquisition at public cost! The incidents in some States should hold out lessons.

May wise counsels prevail and unwise steps be stopped forthwith. The Government should positively reconsider the case in all its phases. The hurry exhibited is unwise and unwarranted.

## RAG PICKERS CONTRIBUTE RS.220 MILLION TO EXCHEQUER



Delhi ragpickers are contributing Rs.220 million annually to the exchequer, says a study conducted by ASSOCHAM and ILF&S Ecosmart.

The study reveals that rapid economic growth and urbanisation has posed serious challenges for the management of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW). The majority of the cities are becoming vulnerable to communicable diseases, obnoxious conditions and causing negative impact on the biosphere as a whole.

The paper on "Cool The Earth Initiative" has revealed that MSW is disposed of in low lying areas without taking any precaution and operational control. The study has pointed out that the role of the government in recovering secondary materials is small compared to the informal sector largely constituted by rag pickers.

In Delhi, about 70% of the MSW handling is done by ragpickers, who collect, sort and transport waste free of cost as part of the informal trade in scrap, saving the government Rs.600 000 daily. In Bangalore, the informal sector is claimed to prevent 15% of the MSW going to dump sites.

# DEPENDENCY SYNDROME OF NATIONAL PARTIES

Contributed by: Dr.Susheela Kaushik

The regional parties are presently ruling India. Taking maximum advantage of the pluralistic socio-political context of the Indian polity, they have emerged into the centre stage. They are adversely influencing not merely the national parties but also the parliamentary democracy itself.

The importance attached to the regional parties in Indian media and politics is much larger than what is warranted by their contribution to national issues or politics. Their vision and sphere of operations and the issues they raise are limited, which are exaggerated and at times even harmful to nation's future. No serious, long term vision/ long term policy goals or issues figure in their calculations.

Based on merely personality factors, personal ambitions and factional factors, the regional parties, in order to survive, are resorting to all sorts of means.

The contingencies of securing and retaining power have many a time led the national parties to surrendering their ruling position or subordinating themselves to the regional parties.

The national parties need to revive their self confidence and feel empowered. Their programmes and policies should have a long term vision and basis. Mere slogans of secularism and poverty eradication cannot, any more, sustain them or improve their image or impress the people.

The nation is crying for stable, clear, positive and purposive governments, not just those who form government for the sake of forming one as a constitutional duty. National parties have a mandate to observe.

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## Fruit Bread for Corporation School Students is Good Idea But what about arbitrary collection of fees?

It is reported that Chennai Corporation school students of Classes X and XII can now munch fruit bread as they put in extra hours of study every evening to prepare for their final examinations.

The students stay back after school for two or three hours to work on their lessons as the final examinations approach every year. The Chennai Corporation provide bread slices for the students during this time. This year, the students would receive fruit bread.

The Corporation would spend Rs.50 lakh on the bread to be supplied till the end of March,2008. About 11,200 students study in Class X and 5,500 students in Class XII in Corporation schools.

While the above step is laudable, the problem for the poor school students studying in corporation / Government

owned/ Government aided schools is arbitrary collection of fees by the school management under various pretext. The fees prescribed by the government are very reasonable but the schools demand fees over and above the prescribed level in arbitrary manner such as building fund, parent teacher association etc which make the education unduly expensive for the students.

In such circumstances, several poor families have been forced to withdraw their children from the school, which would defeat the objective of the government to provide universal education to the poor students.

While distributing the fruit bread to the Corporation school students, the government should also ensure that arbitrary collection of fees in the schools would be totally stopped, atleast from the next academic year.

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## LANDLESSNESS IN INDIA

More than 15 million rural households in India are landless. Another 45 million rural families own some land, less than 0.10 acre each, which is hardly enough to make them self-sufficient, let alone generate a profit.

To benefit landless farm workers and small farmers, most states either prohibit or restrict renting of farmland. Where the law prohibits tenancy, the practice continues informally with the illegal tenants receiving no recognition or protection under the law.

The research done by the Washington-based Rural Development Institute (RDI) shows that landlessness is the best way of assessing the poverty in India. It is a much better way of assessing poverty than either illiteracy or membership of a traditionally "untouchable" caste.

West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh recently budgeted over \$11 million to provide landless families with microplots, on which they can build shelter and cultivate a home garden for family diet and income.

# INVESTIGATIVE STUDY ON JOB PROSPECTS FOR FRESH ENGINEERS IN TAMILNADU

Nandini Voice For The Deprived, proposes to conduct a study on the job prospects for fresh engineers in Tamil Nadu, in the present context of huge number of engineering colleges having been created in the state and large number of recently passed engineers remaining unemployed and with the unemployability factor amongst the fresh engineers causing widespread concern.

The NGO is highly concerned that many poor families have often borrowed heavily and some have sold their meagre properties to get money for admitting their sons and daughters in engineering colleges with the fervent hope that it would provide them rich dividends later on. But, the economy of several of such families have been wiped out in view of the high cost of engineering education and the passed out engineers not landing on lucrative jobs immediately after passing out. In spite of tall claims, the educational loans from the government owned banks are seldom sanctioned to the students from the poor families.

Nandini Voice for the deprived proposes to conduct a study in depth on the job opportunities in Tamil Nadu for

fresh engineers and provide facts and figures about the current scenario and prospects as well as firm guidelines to the students and their families, aspiring to get into engineering colleges in the forthcoming academic year 2008-2009.

The study would be carried out on the basis of desk research and primary survey.

Cross section of organisations and individuals involved including those students who have passed out recently from engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu , teachers and academicians, government officials and educationists as well as aspiring students and their parents would be contacted for discussions.

The findings of the study would be presented during a meeting in Chennai in the month of April,2008 and would also be made available free to the public.

Those who desire to send their views and experience are invited to send their request for the questionnaire.

For details, please contact  
Trustee, Nandini Voice For The Deprived

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