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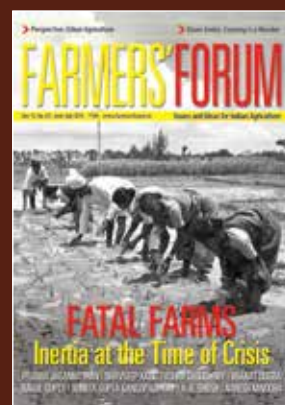
Issues and Ideas for Indian Agriculture



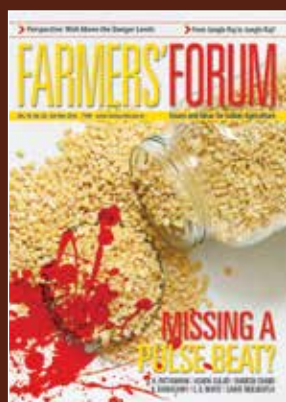
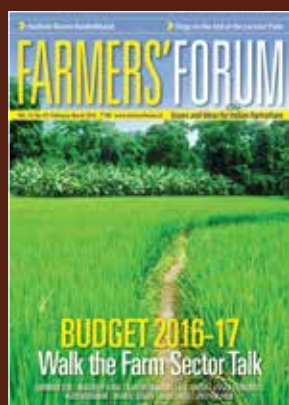
STANDING WITH THE STALWARTS OF THE PRECARIAT AND PADMA SHRI FARMERS

GUY STANDING | SHAMBHU GHATAK
ADRIJA KUNDU | LOPAMUDRA MAITRA BAJPAI





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Ploughing Hope Out of Despair

As the country goes to the polls, the campaigning is again rich with promises for the plough bearer as it was half a decade ago. Half a decade is a long time to spend in misery and farmers who were sold a dream in 2014 — that everything was going to change — have waited in vain. Even the humble farmer, who has managed to survive on hope through the years, knows that these are hopeless times, never mind the manifestos; the reasons are too compelling to think otherwise. Deceit, not '*acche din*', is writ large all over the farming landscape.

Party manifestos indicate what the politicians want one to believe prior to the polls; which may or may not be overtaken by selective amnesia (₹15 lakh in each bank account); sheer chicanery (reinterpreting promises around MSP of C2+50 per cent); with failures masquerading as successes (crop insurance); or policies devised with the fine print excluding proposed beneficiaries from the promised largesse (farm loan waiver).

Yet, there were 'non-manifesto' acts that possibly wreaked havoc on the countryside, destabilizing a delicately-balanced economy (demonetization and GST), which delivered the death knell in the shape of unmanageable unemployment. Unable to create jobs (let alone the promised 100 million jobs in five years) or kickstart the Make in India initiative, the wisest thing that the ruling BJP did was to simply let go of them as lost causes even while keeping afloat the talk of "doubling farmer income by 2022" and not just burying it.

The redoubtable C.S. Lewis had said that: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending". Thus, while there are countless reasons and measurable indicators whereby rural India can reject the government, given the enormity of the rural landscape, it makes sense not to cry over spilt milk but ponder over what can be done by way of restitution, taking into account the acuteness of the crisis in the rural economy and external factors. The situation is not irredeemable if one wishes to deliver solutions. India's Padma Shri farmers have shown the way forward.

What are the practical deliverables that could be prioritized from amongst the best combination of trade-offs, instead of riding such populist unicorns as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme, Farm Loan Waiver or even the Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY)? Planet earth is on the verge of crossing the climate change tipping point with natural capital badly depleted courtesy

PRIORITIZING A "NATIONALLY CONSISTENT DATABASE" WILL BE THE KEY DRIVER FOR IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY, TRACEABILITY, GOVERNANCE, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION



POLITICIANS HAVE CLARIFIED THAT THE PROPOSED LARGE CASH TRANSFERS WILL NOT BE FUNDED BY REMOVING EXISTING SUBSIDIES, SOMETHING THAT IS AT BEST WISHFUL THINKING AND AT WORST WILFUL DECEIT

sins of omission and commission, which have a cost that is being transferred to the next generation, including some things that have not been even attempted.

The unregulated over-exploitation of scarce natural resources is resulting in, amongst others, a falling groundwater table, deteriorating soil health and environmental pollution. While this generates today's food surpluses and low commodity prices, it ultimately foments farm distress. Ironically, this leads to public scorn and policy apathy towards farmer demands, as political parties are not even able to fathom the urgency of the existential crisis that the country is headed for.

To revert to things that are within policy radar, such as transferring agriculture input subsidies (fertilizer and power) to farmers in cash, there is no question that this is the need of the hour, which must precede attempts to transfer cash for subsistence. Politicians have clarified that the proposed large cash transfers will not be funded by removing existing subsidies, something that is at best wishful thinking and at worst wilful deceit. Experts advising on cash transfers, define it as a "rationalization" of subsidies; an academic's way of saying 'reducing or removing' subsidies.

The fear is that the fund crunch that will hit the economy in the next few months will not only bring to a grinding halt improvements in essential basic services of healthcare and education, which are, in any event, far below acceptable levels, it will also lead to a strangling of the flow of productive public investments. Implementing policies propagated by theorists, twisted by politicians, fine-printed by bureaucrats is akin to jumping from the frying pan to the fire.

There is also little doubt that many government programmes will need to be shelved; the concept of 100 smart cities, for instance. This must be replaced by developing 6,000 smart census towns (population over 5,000) spread across rural India. Even a novice would have suggested the need for developing the hinterland rather than drawing millions to a few megapolises. Instead of aping western



development models, it would be wiser to set up institutions like the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide timely market intelligence services.

Prioritizing a “nationally consistent database” will be the key driver for improved transparency, traceability, governance, policies and implementation. The undeniable fact is that farmers will need to be supported in perpetuity and there is a need to tread cautiously in designing support systems because India has neither the luxury of time nor do its numerous and nuanced problems lend themselves to silver bullet solutions.

The required transformative change can come from a statutory “farmers commission” headed by a farmer with a mandate to review existing interventions and recommend new initiatives to improve rural livelihoods. For co-ordination and deliverables, ideally, the commission must comprise an IAS officer as a full-time member-secretary and the agriculture secretary as a member.

These, however, are matters of details that only the wise and willing can take up. For the present, after the heat and the grind of the divisive elections, India needs a national government with practicing professionals heading important ministries. It is time for professional politicians and armchair experts to step aside. ●

**IMPLEMENTING
POLICIES TWISTED
BY POLITICIANS,
FINE-PRINTED BY
BUREAUCRATS IS
AKIN TO JUMPING
FROM THE FRYING
PAN TO THE FIRE**

05



Ajay Vir Jakhar

Ajay Vir Jakhar
Editor

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To the Editor

For Whom the Votes Poll

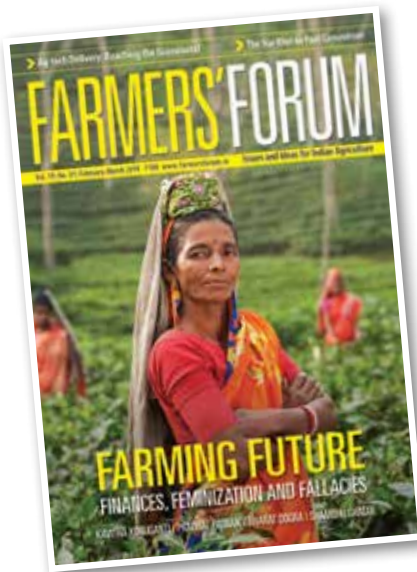
Apropos of your editorial “When Ballots Hold No Hope” (*Farmers’ Forum*, February-March 2019), you are right that the utter ruin that rural India finds itself in is nothing short of a “maelstrom that threatens to suck in the entire economy”. Regrettably, even after electioneering is on full swing, there is scant attention to farm issues, even though the last five years have been replete with slogans and promises not delivered. You rightly say that, “everything that this government says is discredited by the fact that the government said it” but there seems to be no hope in the offing. I wonder if there is any means whereby farmers can organize themselves to deliver their vote en bloc to elect members of Parliament who understand their issues, irrespective of political affiliations?

Krishan Singh

Panipat, Haryana

Needed: Inter-linked Solutions

I read with enormous interest excerpts of the book “The Planet in Peril, Survival Crisis and People’s Response” by Bharat Dogra (*Farmers’ Forum*, February-March 2019). He is extremely perceptive in his observation that the “real concern should not be just to increase production but to increase it on such farms, in such ways as to meet the food needs of the most needy households”. Towards this end, I believe that we should not think of solutions for



Vacuous Schemes

“Interim Budget and the Rural Space: Only a Blast of Hot Air by Prabhat Patnaik” (*Farmers’ Forum*, February-March 2019), makes mincemeat of the budget proposals but more importantly exposes the vacuousness of the schemes. Even the cash transfer scheme for agricultural households has cut out the poorest from its ambit by covering land-owners (with “land” excluding “homestead land”). Landless labour has got the chop.

Madhusudan Pramanik

Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

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a comprehensive
understanding of Indian
farmer concerns

India’s deprived in isolation but should develop inter-linkages among the movements for environment protection, peace and justice. We should develop a movement for people’s unity “cutting across all boundaries even if for the limited end to resolve survival issues before it is too late”. However, the country seems to be regressing into greater divides.

Sachin Khandekar

Nagpur, Maharashtra

Women at the Bottom

The article by Kavitha Kuruganti “Of Defeminization In Indian Agriculture and Gender Disaggregated Data” (*Farmers’ Forum*, February-March 2019) highlights the misery of women farmers in India. She correctly points out that “there is a great deal of gender-disaggregated data that affects how women’s rights get treated”. What is even more cynical is the manner in which certain basic demands get sidelined. Over the decades, despite all the talk about adding one more column in the basic land records along with the serial number, name of the land owner, which is about the gender of the land owner, that has not got done. Where is the question of liberating women from the male domination?

Narendra Barik

Puri, Odisha

Hope for the Farmer?

‘Ag-tech delivery: reaching the grassroots?’ (*Farmers’ Forum*, February-March 2019) was interesting in that farm produce is receiving attention. Hopefully, the farmer will follow.

Smriti Panicker

Cochin, Kerala

THOUGHT LEADER

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UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AND THE PRECARIAT

In The Emerging Global Order

Guy Standing

The globalization era has resulted in the fragmentation of national class structures amidst growing inequalities, with the world moving towards a flexible, open labour market. Class has not disappeared but has emerged in a more fragmented form. Edited transcript of a lecture at the Bharat Krishak Samaj programme on “The Precariat & why Basic Income would be good for farmers” by Dr Guy Standing on February 28, 2019 at The Theatre, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

It is not usual to talk about basic income in the context of farmers and the precariat but I was reflecting, while coming here in the car, on a wonderful 19th century scientist, often called the “inventor of nature”, a Prussian, Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt, the first person who went around the world and appreciated the interconnectedness of nature and talked about it; how the human being has to fit into the ecology of nature, as a part of nature.

Unless you see the human being as a humble part of nature, you lose perspective on the whole sense of civilization, reproduction and the balance of life. I happen to own a plot of land where I grow fruits and vegetables. I just had my first harvest of olives and made my first olive oil of which I am enormously proud. This connection with nature is something very fundamental and farmers appreciate this but all of us need to reconnect with nature in order to appreciate the incredible ecological crisis and threats of extinction that we are facing today; where our children and grandchildren are being affected by the toxic air, by global warming, by the disappearance of species and the loss of balance in society. That is an important contextual approach to the subject on which I will be talking.

There is a wonderful comment by C.L.R. James in the preface to his book, *Beyond the Boundary*: “What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?” At a time of specialization, we are in silos, where we do not see the interconnected nature and

In sociology and economics, the precariat (precarious + proletariat) is a social class formed by people suffering from precarity, an existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare



GUY STANDING
Professorial Research Associate at Soas, University of London and a founding member and honorary co-president of the Basic Income Earth Network



the multidisciplinary character of social change and the challenges that we face. The precariat debates and the debates on basic income come together in that sense.

You have to understand the context of change to really understand it. We are at a very important moment; in the middle of a crisis of the global transformation. Those familiar with Karl Paul Polanyi's book of 1944, *The Great Transformation*, would remember the disembedded face, followed by a crisis, followed by a re-embedded face, if we are lucky.

There is a crisis point, however, where, in Polanyi's terms, there is a threat of the annihilation of civilization in which many of the insecurities, inequalities and the tensions could easily lead to a frightening scenario, politically, socially,

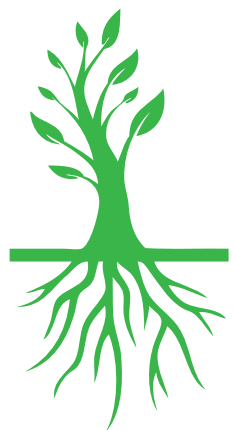
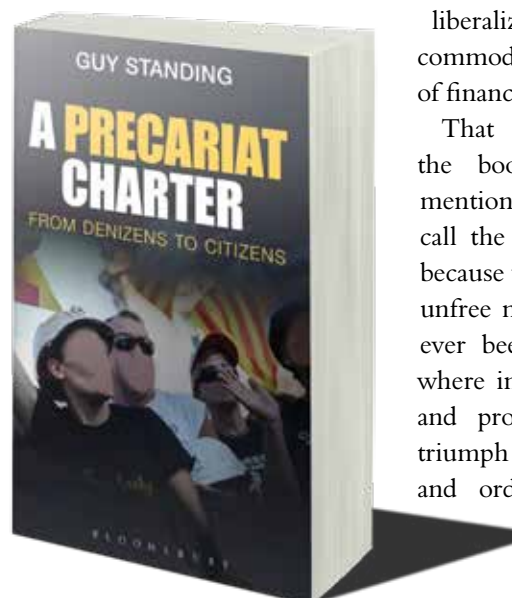
We are at a very important moment; in the middle of a crisis of the global transformation. Those familiar with Karl Paul Polanyi's book of 1944, *The Great Transformation*, would remember the disembedded face, followed by a crisis, followed by a re-embedded face, if we are lucky.

ecologically and so forth. I think we have been, for the last decade or so, at the crisis point of this global transformation: the painful construction of a global market economy.

Whereas Polanyi was talking about the development of national market systems and closed economy and capitalism, we are seeing the painful emergence of a globalized system in which the disembedded face that began in the 1980s dominated by the multiplarian society and the neo-liberal agenda

institutionalized through the World Bank, the IMF and other international agencies pursued a global strategy of market liberalization, commercialization, commodification and deregulation of finance and capital markets.

That agenda morphed in the books, which have been mentioned, into a system that I call the corruption of capitalism because we actually have the most unfree markets systems that have ever been envisaged or created, where intellectual property rights and property rights in general triumph over free market principles and ordinary understanding of



economics. Yet a lie is told by politicians and institutions; that they favour free markets that we do not have. We have vested interest taking more and more of the rental income.

This is the contextual crisis behind what I am going to be talking about. The outcome of all this is the breakdown of the 20th-century income distribution system where more and more of the income is going to the rentiers and less and less is available to the people who are producing, working and creating economic value. That is the context. If you have a system where a tiny minority is sucking out more and more of the wealth and income and the power that comes with that, you are going to create that crisis of civilization. You do not have to be an economist with a PhD to understand that.

That is the nature of our crisis today. We have inequalities that have reached unprecedented levels. We have a situation all over the world, including China, India, United States, Europe, everywhere, where labour's share of the national income is going down, where wealth inequality is much greater than income inequality. Wealth and assets are possessed by tiny minorities and we do not do justice to our subject or our context without seeing that concentration of wealth and power that comes with it.

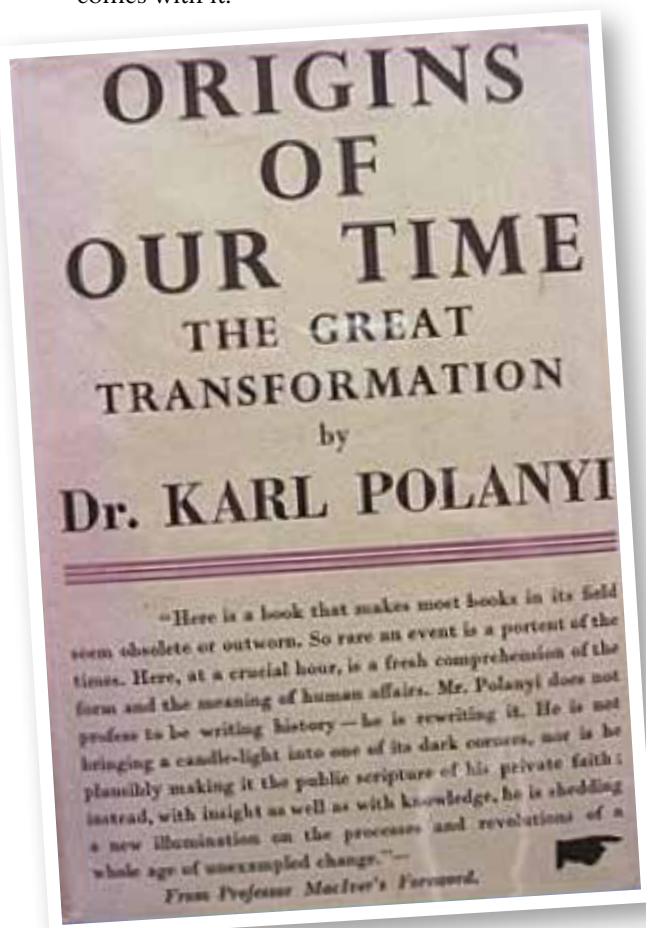
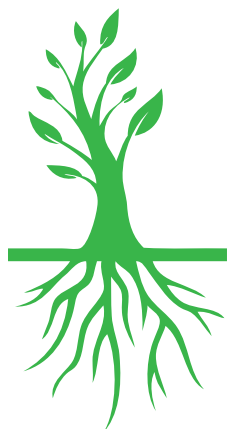




Photo: Dinodia

Politics of Paradise

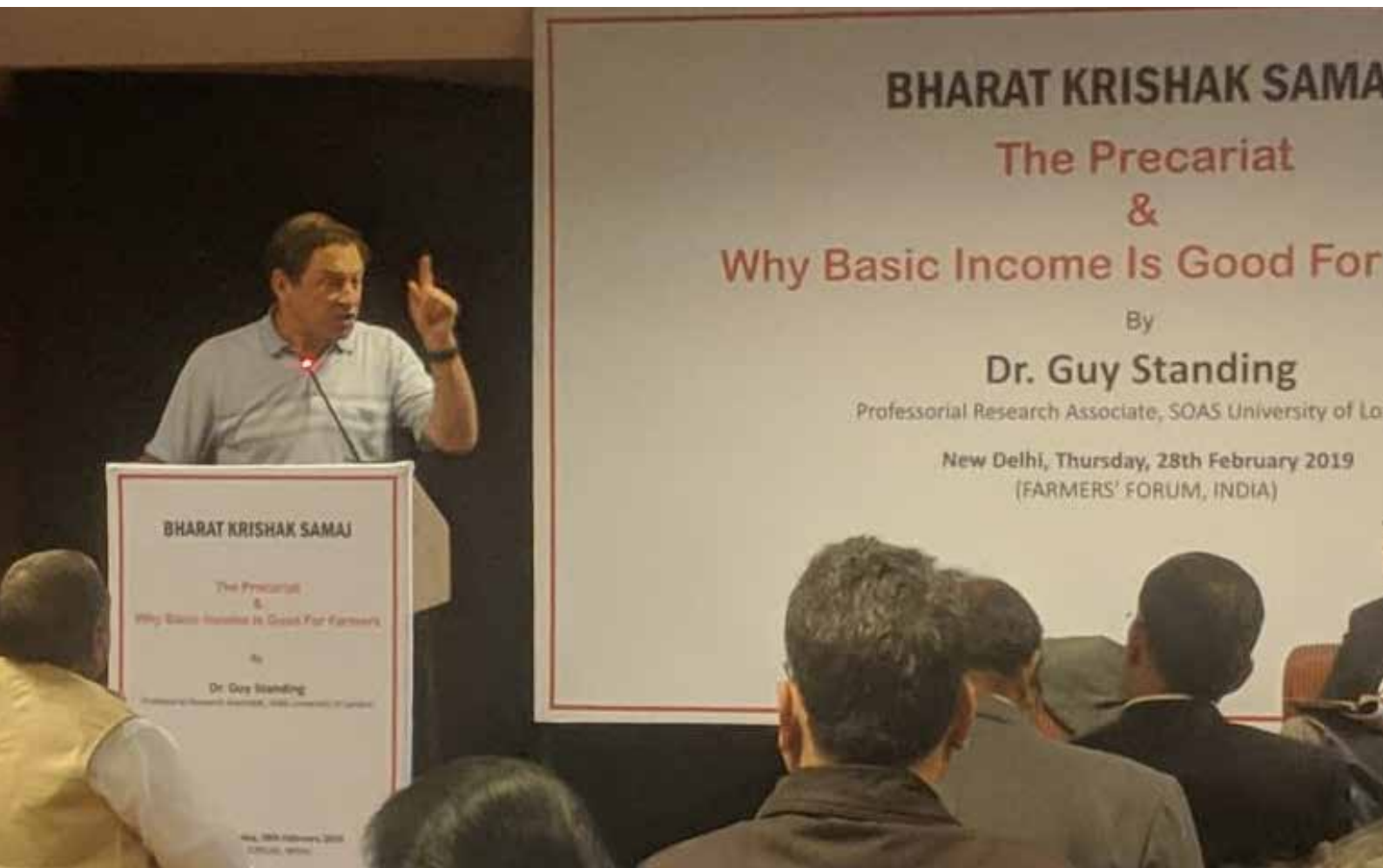
Presenting the precariat, an emerging class, comprising the rapidly growing number of people facing lives of insecurity, moving in and out of jobs that give little meaning to their lives, Guy Standing argues that this class is producing instabilities in society. Although it would be wrong to characterize members of the precariat as victims, many are frustrated and angry. The precariat is dangerous because it is internally divided, leading to the villainization of migrants and other vulnerable groups. Lacking agency, its members may be susceptible to the siren calls of political extremism.

To prevent a 'politics of inferno', Guy Standing argues for a 'politics of paradise', in which redistribution and income security are reconfigured in a new kind of Good Society, and in which the fears and aspirations of the Precariat are made central to a progressive strategy.

One of these things that I did not emphasize enough in my earlier books – but which I have tried to correct with a new book that is coming out in several months – is that among the changes that have been taking place, which are very important for farmers and people connected with agriculture and the countryside, is the loss of the commons. My book is called 'The Plunder of the Commons: A Manifesto for Sharing Public Wealth'.

The 'commons' are the land, the sea, the water, the air, the ideas, the social amenities that make a society. In the neo-liberal perspective, you say that they do not have any value because they do not have a price. To a neo-liberal, something that does not have a price has no value. Therefore, you can dispense with it; give it away. What has been happening in fact, under the aegis of that ideology is an erosion of the commons.

When I started writing the book, I had not fully appreciated the extent to which we have been losing the commons in the last several decades, in every part of the world. The commons provide the base of our society, that of income security and our capacity to support each other and to be a part of the society together. It is unappreciated. I hope 'The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class' makes a contribution to change and indeed a lot of people are becoming aware that the commons are a vital part of society and that we have been losing it.



The richest man in history, however, happens to come from a developing country today; from Mexico. The name is Carlos Slim. You have a near equivalent in India

The story that I have been trying to tell is in this book, produced in 2011, which has taken me all over the world and has been translated into 24 languages. I have been asked to speak about it in over 400 places, in 40 countries. It is a global phenomenon. It is not something that just pertains to rich countries. I have just examined a fantastic PhD on the growth of the precariat in China. It is growing everywhere.

All this is taking place in the new globalized class structure that has been taking shape, which is superimposed on all national class structures. In other words, there are still landlords, peasants and the informal economy. This new global class structure is the trend that is dominating the developments in social relations, in the economic and political crises we are facing.

At the top, there is a plutocracy, a tiny percentage of humanity that owns a vast percentage of wealth

and income. The plutocracy are the richest men, mostly men, in history. In 1776, Adam Smith said that you measure a man's wealth by how many average people his income can buy. Everybody used to think that Rockefeller in the 1920s was the richest man in history because with his annual income he could buy a 1,20,000 American workers on their average income.

The richest man in history, however, happens to come from a developing country today; from Mexico. The name is Carlos Slim. You have a near equivalent in India. In 2004, Carlos Slim could have bought 440,000 Mexican workers on their average wage with his annual income. By 2014, his annual income could have bought over two million Mexican workers on their average wage. You can do the calculation for others around the world in the Plutocracy.

I was invited to speak about the growth of the



precariat and the plutocracy to the Bilderberg group, an extreme right-winged elite of the world. I initially thought it was a joke when a leftist friend invited me to address the Bilderberg group in Dresden but, on their request, I agreed to go. I had to give a similar talk, a bit more radical, before 100 people of the world's elite with Henry Kissinger looking at me, Christine Lagarde seated next to him and I talked about the growth of the precariat.

There was one multi-billionaire sitting in the third row back, whose name I will not disclose, who wrote to me and asked me to come to California at Silicon Valley to address a group of billionaires. As my son lives in California, I agreed and went. Towards the end of my talk, this multi-billionaire stood up and said: "Guy, I think what you are saying is that the system is rigged." I looked at him and said, "Yes, I think that is right." To which he replied, "I want you to know and I want everybody in the room to know that I fully agree with you." They know the system is rigged; the plutocrats with their philanthropic gestures, power and ability to dominate politics are part of

There is a danger that, unless the precariat is understood, its emergence could lead society towards a politics of inferno. This is not a prediction. It is a disturbing possibility. It will only be avoided if the precariat can become a class-for-itself, with effective agency and a force for forging a new 'politics of paradise', a mildly utopian agenda and strategy to be taken up by politicians and by what is euphemistically called 'civil society', including the multitude of non-governmental organisations that too often flirt with becoming quasi-government organisations.

– Guy Standing, Preface, *The Precariat; The New Dangerous Class*

the crisis, not the solution.

Beneath the plutocrats is an elite that makes millions but serve their interests. Way below them, in terms of income, is what I call a salariat, which some of you in this room are a part of. When I was at Cambridge, we used to imagine that was the future with employment security, pensions, paid holidays, paid maternity leave and so on. This is shrinking all over the world. Many of the salariat write to me or have bought the books; some want to give it to their sons and daughters because they are not entering the salariat.

Alongside the salariat is a group of what I call the 'proficians'; people who are making piles of money, they are the whiz kids, running around, really clever with the latest technology on their shoulders and they are smug. They are not numerically great but they are important because they are setting a tone. Many of them suffer from burnout, alcoholism, drug addiction and such like later but this group is very important strategically.

Beneath them in economic terms is the old proletariat. In India, you have never had a big proletariat but the image of a growing proletariat dominated many social policies and political agendas in the second part of the 20th century. As it was an agenda of social democracy, paternalistic welfare state systems that went with labourism, the belief was that you were going to have a society where a large majority would be in full-time employment with all the trappings of the salariat.

The proletariat has shrunk all over the world and is disappearing. Its agenda is also disappearing but beneath the proletariat is the growing precariat and beneath this precariat, in economic terms, is the lumpen, an underclass, which includes many people surviving in the informal economy in petty



production, out in the streets, trying to survive. That is not the precariat. The precariat consists of growing millions of people around the world who are linked to the wage labour market. They can be definable in four dimensions.

The first dimension is that they have distinctive 'relations of productions', a Marxist term¹. 'Distinctive' in the sense that they are having to grow accustomed to the prospects of a life of unstable labour, in and out of jobs, changing without a sense of occupational narrative or career that they are building. They have to do a lot of work that does not get recorded statistically, remunerated or recognized in order to be able to remain in this part of the labour market. They have, in general, a sort of job or an activity that is beneath their level of educational qualifications. They are suffering from the insecurities of instability.

The second dimension is that they have distinctive 'relations of distribution' in the sense that they have to rely on money wages. They do not get access to non-wage benefits, which many of us expected to be the norm, to rights-based state benefits or to informal family benefits and the commons. The commons is vital for the precariat. If you have a commons, you can at least survive but if you are denied the commons, which gives you the informal set of networks, if it is shrinking, your insecurities increase.

Fundamentally and importantly, if you are in the precariat, you suffer from economic uncertainty as distinct from welfare risks. This is important for social policy development. Uncertainty is different from welfare risks. If you have an unemployment system, a maternity or illness insurance, you can calculate the probabilities and then build an insurance system. Uncertainty is to have unknown unknowns. A shock or a hazard, from anywhere in the world, can hit you at anytime and there is nothing that you can do about it. You cannot calculate probabilities to develop an insurance system.

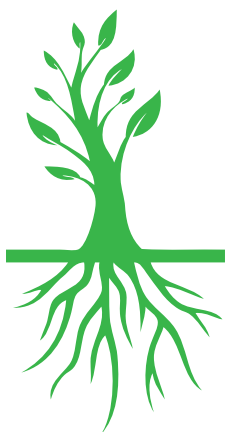
This is the vital part of the debate on basic income because it means that you are living in a zone of constant uncertainty, with all psychological and mental health problems that come from that. Thousands of people from around the world have written to me saying that this aspect of being in the



precariat is fundamentally the most important one. I have had people who have contemplated suicide and then have committed suicide. Politicians and policy-makers fail to understand something so fundamental that even ordinary human beings can appreciate. This uncertainty and the stress that comes with it is, what I have called in the books, the precariatized minds, one does not know the best way of operating and one is out of control. That is the reality of being in the precariat.

The third very important dimension is that you have a distinctive relation with the state if you are in the precariat. Your primary antagonist is the state because the state is operating in the interests of its perceived majority or its mainstream or the donors or the salariat or the people around it and neglects the interests of the precariat. There is no

¹ Relations of production is a concept frequently used by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their theory of historical materialism and in *Das Kapital*. It is first explicitly used in Marx's published book *The Poverty of Philosophy*, although Marx and Engels had already defined the term in *The German Ideology*





The Children's Strike are part of the Fridays for Future protest movement, led by students that want adults — particularly those in the halls of government — to get serious about saving the planet

party in any country that has been understanding or promoting a set of policies for the precariat. I have used the term 'denizens' rather than 'citizens' because this is the first time in history when millions of people in society everywhere are losing rights of citizenship and social, economic, civil and cultural rights.

That sense of loss leads to the most important part of the precariat. If you are a part of the precariat, you feel like a supplicant, someone who has to beg; who has to ask favours from a bureaucrat or some institution; "please show me a favour", leading to the most demeaning aspects of life. That is the nature of being in the precariat and millions of people feel the sense of being a supplicant, which is the most important aspect. They lose the sense of

agency. Now, this sense of loss goes into the final aspect. If you are in the precariat you have the sense of relative deprivation that is linked to time. The sense of relative deprivation is because this is a class in the making and not yet a class for itself. It is split between three groups.

The first group, I call the 'atavists'. These are people who are falling out of all working-class communities, out of being in a zone of expectations of a proletarian life. They do not have a lot of education. They tend to look back on a model, on a paradigm, on a set of policies that they thought their parents or communities had and this sense of loss is leading to them listening to the sirens of the populists.

On page 1 of the book written in 2011, I said unless the politicians, policy-makers, intellectuals

understand the precariat, we are going to see the emergence of a political monster. In November 2016, I received a deluge of emails from around the world saying that the monster has arrived. I think he is symbolic of the crisis of populism, neo-fascism, racism and misogyny and so on, which is the outcome of neglecting the need to respond to the insecurities of the precariat.

The second group, which also does not receive a lot of attention, I call the 'nostalgics'. The first group feels they have a lost past. The second group consists of the migrants, the minorities, the disabled, who feel they have lost a present. They do not have a home anywhere and they do not feel like they are moving towards having one either. The sense of loss leads to a detachment socially and politically in many parts of the world.

The third group are the young and educated people, whose parents and teachers encourage them to go to universities that will enable them to have a future; a career. In the end they come out of universities with debts, disappointments, disillusionments and no future. This group will not support the Donald Trumps or other neo-fascists but they are looking for a new politics of paradise, which is progressive for the 21st century. They are not going to go back to old communist or social-democratic models. They are looking for a new politics.

I say to all the left-wingers that they do not want the old-labourist model. Do not tell them they must accept a lifetime of being in a full-time job. That is not the politics of paradise. You have to offer a sense of work, creativity and development, an agenda that is going to enable that group to develop themselves through their work with security and a new income distribution system.

That leads to the last part of my talk. I think the crisis can be crystalized in the sense of a breakdown of an income-distribution system. It is not the only aspect. The sudden interest in basic income in the mainstream of the world is because of a realization that what we have at the moment is a model of inequality, mass insecurity and class fragmentation that is unsustainable in the longer term. We will either see a lurch to the authoritarian neo-fascist populism or we will need a new thinking and a new realization that yesterday's non-answers could be tomorrow's answers.

I plead with all those people in this country and everywhere in the world, who are taking up positions against basic income that are based on nothing more than opinion and what I will call a prejudice, because





We need to respect the commons; we have to realize that the earth belongs to all of us and the amenities and wealth produced by generations of our forebears, whether it is here or anywhere else, is collective in character

they have not studied or worked on the issues, to open their minds and at least be open to discussions. I have written this book trying to bring together 30 years of research and evidence from around the world and I think ultimately the reason for supporting basic income – it is not a panacea – is fundamentally ethical, in the sense that we need social justice.

We need to respect the commons; we have to realize that the earth belongs to all of us and the amenities and wealth produced by generations of our forebears, whether it is here or anywhere else, is collective in character. Our income is far more to do with the efforts of those who went before us than anything you or I have done. Instead of private inheritance of wealth, we should have a social inheritance and allow social dividend to be part of our imagination and our agenda. There are other reasons of social justice. If you are religious you can say that God has given us unequal talents and a basic income would be a compensation to those who do not have the same talents as those who can make money. You can look at it in other ways too but social justice is fundamental.

The second ethical justification is that it would enhance freedom, the value of which neither the left or the right politically have given due respect. A basic income will not give total freedom but it will enhance the capacity to say no to an oppressive relation, employer or bureaucrat. It will also give you a sense of republican freedom, the ability to be non-dominated and it would give you a sense that the emancipatory value of a basic income is greater than the money value.

I urge everybody to try and look at the pilots that we have done in Madhya Pradesh, West Delhi and in tribal communities. We would go to the villages where we were implementing basic income schemes and we found ourselves asking the

Photo: Dinodia

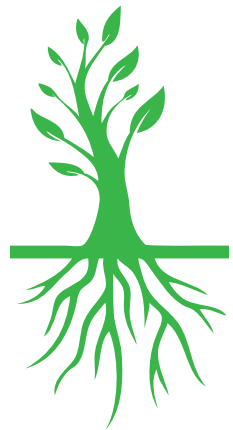




Photo: Dinodia

The emancipatory value of a basic income is that it gives one a sense of security; that there will be an income to buy food, send children to school and be a little more in command of one's life

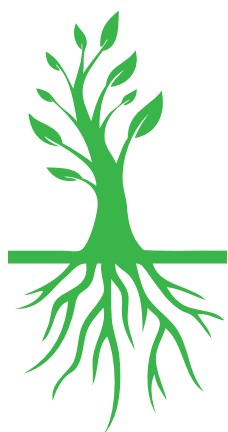
following question: "Why is it that we are giving just ₹300 per person per month. Honest amount? Small amount? Why is it that the effects of this small amount on nutrition, health, schooling and community so much greater than this money?" In rural communities, in slums, money is a scarce commodity. Anyone who knows any economics knows that a commodity that is scarce, has its price forced up. When you increase the supply of a commodity that is scarce, you drive down the price.

I remember going to one of the villages in MP, where some women came up to us and told us, "The money-lenders in our village hate your scheme because we are not using them as much, the price they can charge us has gone down and we can help ourselves more." The emancipatory value extends to giving people a sense of security, a sense that tomorrow I will get the income that will at least enable me to get my food, send my child to school and to be a little more in command of my life.

That is why the disabled who are getting the

same basic income as everybody else benefitted more than everybody else because instead of being last in the queue, they have their own basic income. I would like to request the politicians of every party at the moment who are talking about basic income, to make it individual and not on household basis. A household is endogenous, it may be large or small. A woman or a man should have his or her own basic income. This will help the dynamics of relationships, as our pilots showed.

Women benefitted more but they were in favour of an equal-individual basis. Many of them will have survey evidence showing that. I think this sense of freedom is something that comes with being your own agent. None of the opinion pieces written in newspapers give any emphasis to this issue; there is no one saying: "A basic income would give a sense of freedom and control." No, instead they say, "we must give them jobs, choose their food through PDS, be benevolent and charitable donors, in effect. We know what they want and need".



I remember when we were designing our pilots, a very prominent person in this country said: "What are you wasting all that money for? They will waste it on alcohol and tobacco. They sit around doing nothing in the villages". After we implemented the pilot, the politician wanted to see the results. Nutrition, schools and school attendance, healthcare and health and sanitation had all improved. One of the funny results that we could not understand was that the consumption of alcohol and tobacco had gone down. Usually more money leads to more consumption.

Eventually we found out through the women that the men have more work to do, they are more in their fields and hence do not consume as much alcohol. Further research showed that these results are replicated in Africa, Latin America and other countries. When you give people basic security, they want to better their lives, their children's lives and help the community. We found an increase in work. Those who claim that if you give a basic income, the people will become lazier are liars or prejudiced or stupid.

If you have basic income, you are energized, you have more confidence, you invest in seeds, fertilizers or machines. You do a new activity, you take a little entrepreneurial risk and you diversify your portfolio of activities. If you have a connection with agriculture or rural life, you understand that connectivity. All of these can be unlocked so that one does more things. The sense of freedom goes with the sense of security, basic security, which is a natural public good.

We all want basic security. It is a human need and a superior public good because your security and my security benefit from everybody else having security. Then we all tend to behave better, more altruistically with a greater sense of reciprocity and citizenship. These things are all ethical and they are right. This approach and way of thinking is fundamentally different from the old paternalistic agenda of the labourists and also from the market fundamentalists on the right.

We have asked these questions in the book and the report that we did for the Unicef. Many of the little benefits of moving towards a basic income are actually so interconnected that they lead to a transformative agenda. I only plead with the policy-makers and advisors, who are now newly relevant all over India, to open their minds to the interconnectedness and transformative agenda and stop being paternalists.

We are at a very interesting point in India, where we now have an opening, we are in the middle of a rhetoric, a change in imagery and India could lead the way. I have a sneaking suspicion that Sikkim could be the first state in the world to have a genuine comprehensive basic income system in place. It will be wonderful if parts of India moved in this direction. Get away from the targeting, the selectivity, the conditionality and the household basis, all of which are contradictions in the political debate. These will be exposed and we will gradually move in this direction.

ARVIND BAHRI: *Prof. Standing, you have been advocating universal basic income concept. In India, we have empirical evidence that subsidies are cornered by the farmers with larger land holdings. When we have such a confined resource envelope, how can we go on an individual-based income support to farmers?*

A.K. SRIVASTAVA: *Can you throw some light on how a farming community that does not own any individual property benefit from this as an institutional mechanism?*

QUESTION: *Who holds the key to unrigging the system? Why do the ultra rich invite you for talks when you speak on behalf of the precariat? Are they trying to unlock your thought process?*

STANDING: I will start with the third question. As I was indicating in my talk, I think many of the cleverer members of the plutocracy realize and say that they have been winning too much and they have been gaining more than they need, want or expect. They know the system is corrupt and at the top of it is the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Trade Organization and the intellectual property rights regime. This is a very important thing for anybody who is connected with nature.



I have been looking at figures recently. I have just come from Africa; not only are we seeing intellectual property rights through patents, industrial brands and all these things affecting agriculture and the whole nature of our relations to the land but we are also seeing a rentier capitalism in the oceans and the marine spaces. It is an extraordinary development that has not been satisfactorily addressed by the intellectual communities. We are seeing a privatization of the marine areas of the world, which is often seen as the future for producing foods, substitutes and medicines.

One company owns 47 per cent of all patents taken out on marine species and process. Three countries have over three quarters of the intellectual property rights in the oceans. You can see a system that has been rigged and this is due to the fact that there is an intellectual property rights system organized by multinational corporations and governments that think that they are benefitting. They failed to recognize, when they set up TRIPS in 1994 – which they thought would benefit US and American multinationals – the import of China, which was not a WTO member then but wisely joined in 2001. By 2011, it had overtaken the US, taking out the most patents and intellectual property rights. By 2015, China was taking out twice as many patents than the USA.

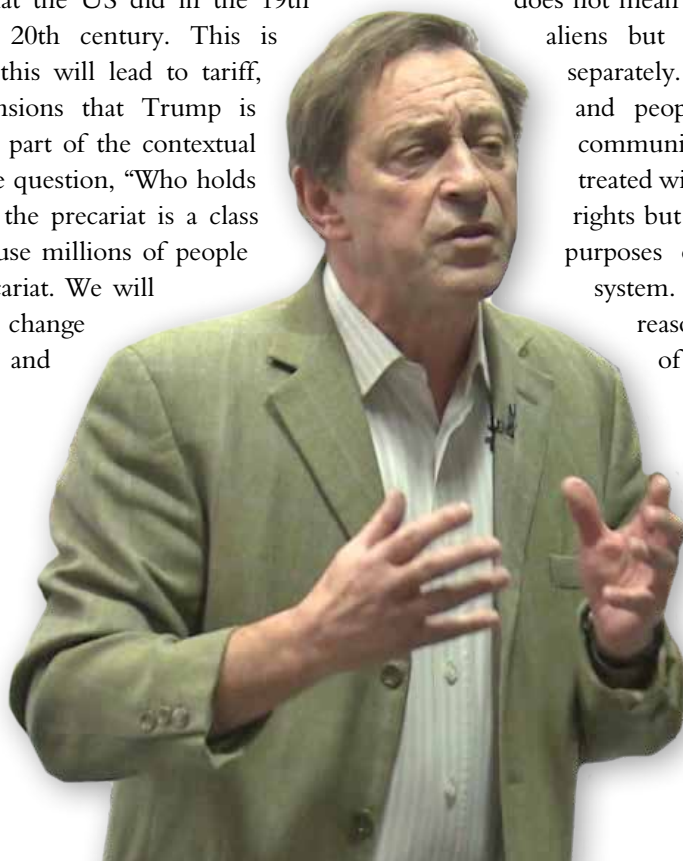
You can interpret Donald Trump as representing the losing mega power economically, lashing out and accusing the Chinese of stealing the property rights; precisely what the US did in the 19th century and early 20th century. This is dangerous because this will lead to tariff, restrictions and tensions that Trump is unleashing but it is part of the contextual thing. You asked the question, “Who holds the key?” I believe the precariat is a class in the making because millions of people are joining the precariat. We will only get effective change at the international and national level when pressure is put. I am not calling for a revolution or anything like that. I am calling for pressure; in the sense of saying that we count and

unless you make changes, we will make life very unpleasant for you. In that context you can interpret this wonderful movement that is just about to hit the world on March 15. Tell your children to join it; the Children’s Strike. Children are coming out in numerous places across the world and saying, ‘You adults are ignoring nature. You are allowing global warming and ecological decay so we are refusing to go to school.’

I have just signed a public letter of support that has been published in the media in Europe. I think it is wonderful. Pressure will shame people. We need those changes so the precariat will be the agent and it is gradually taking shape. We are seeing political movements such as Green Movements and such others taking shape. I have documented them to a certain extent in the book. I think there is a little hope and you and I must play our little parts. We have a responsibility. We cannot sit back and complain. We have to be active ourselves.

The second point is universality. I favour universal principles in terms of rights but I do not use the term because inevitably you will have certain restrictions on eligibility. I do not believe in targeting such as means testing and income testing or selectivity as choosing farmers as beneficiaries. You are always going to be arbitrary, have an administrative complex system that will be unfair and there will be petty corruption that will breed big corruption. I believe in rights but I also recognize that pragmatically we must say that our communities must have priorities. That does not mean discriminating against aliens but treating those issues separately. We all have migrants and people coming into our communities. They should be treated with respect, given equal rights but treated differently for purposes of the basic income system. I have explained the reason. That answers a part of your question.

The chair has, very wisely advised me not to address the question of subsidies but not being a wise man, I will address it. I have been privileged to be coming to



I am against subsidies because they distort, do not work, encourage corruption and they do not reach the people they are meant to be reaching

India for 40 years and have been to numerous communities and tried to document the existence and practice of the subsidy system. Anybody who believes that these are effective, equitable or redistributive is either naive or dishonest or perhaps making some money out of the system. I am against subsidies because they distort, do not work, encourage corruption and they do not reach the people that they are meant to be reaching.

If you accept that perspective, we have to be honest in our discussions with the politicians. We know why they support it but we still have to oppose it; speak up. We have got data in the book on our pilots that shows that subsidies do not reach people. I wrote a paper about clogged pipes in political and economic policy where we put all the data together. I do not understand how any sensible person can believe that these systems function effectively.

I really liked the third point of your question. One of the things that we found in our pilot was that in one community, in particular, which we went back to numerous times, the landless and those with marginal pieces of land, must have got together when we provided them with their basic incomes and formed an informal fishing co-operative. They set up to transform the big pond that was on the edge of the community into a fish pond. They looked after it just as anybody would have hoped. They made sure they reproduced the fish stocks and they stocked and then sold it. The diet of that village community changed dramatically.

When we first got there, I got the most revolting chilli that I could not possibly eat. At the end of the pilot, we were able to go and have nice fish for lunch. One of the lessons is that if you have a community with some basic income security, you will start to form a collaborative resurrection of the commons. You can see that in many parts of the world and I have tried to summarize the evidence. If people are a community, they want to strengthen



Photo: Dinodia

and resurrect their community. That leads to a key point. In rural communities with connection with the commons, you need collective bodies that can represent the people in that community because without that we all remain vulnerable. I think that is the part of rescuing of the commons.

RAVAL: *You gave an example of the commons and of basic income motivating people to invest and earn more along with the consumption of tobacco and alcohol going down. Could you talk about some adverse cases as well? Second, what ecosystems need to be put in place to see that changes happen?*

QUESTION: *How long were your pilots in India and Africa? Have you ever thought about the general equilibrium adjustments especially when the money for basic income comes in from within the system as opposed to the exogenous, as in your pilots?*

PUSHPEN SINGH: *There are two or three models in currency right now; one recently launched by the central government. The central government will be giving ₹6,000 to each family owning up to two hectares. There is a Telangana model in which ₹4,000 goes to each family, per acre/per season, which is being increased to ₹5,000 per acre per family. In another model in Orissa, ₹10,000 is going to families for next 2-3 seasons. Which of these models is good for the farmers? Also, considering the conditions in India, what is the amount that should be dispersed through these schemes?*

AMITA: *Why are you fixated on the individual-basis, especially in patriarchal societies in India? Does that mean equal share for women as well? Even though subsidies are supposed to be for the poor, in India we see that the richest get the maximum subsidies from the government. On a different note, did you get an equal number of emails from India in May 2014? Should we really be looking at the implementation of proper minimum wages? I come from Kerala, where the standard of living is really good. The minimum wages are implemented across the board and should that be an alternative to basic income?*

STANDING: I will begin with the first question about NGO and ecosystems. I agree with the premise of your remarks that one must consider systemic change and the feedback effects. What we did in Madhya Pradesh was very interesting. We



worked with SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association. We divided the area into four sections: where people just had their individual basic income, second where they had their basic income and access to SEWA to give them advice, third where there was SEWA but no basic income and fourth where there was neither basic income nor SEWA.

We were comparing four types of areas. In some respects, voice matters more than elsewhere. I would urge the policy makers to get the involvement of reputable NGOs and civil society organizations to help in the rollout of the scheme because they will help getting it the legitimacy, efficiency and the sense of ownership. This was very interesting and leads to the second question. Our duration was not long enough because we did not have enough funds. We did it for 18 months. In other places in Africa we have done it for two years. There is a big scheme in Kenya going on for 12 years. Anyone who researches knows that going out on the field in the heat, doing surveys and training people and processing millions of digits of data, analysing and doing correlations and regressions make people tired.

The commitment is inevitable, so is the turnover of staff but, of course, the dynamics of change involve things that take time. In Madhya

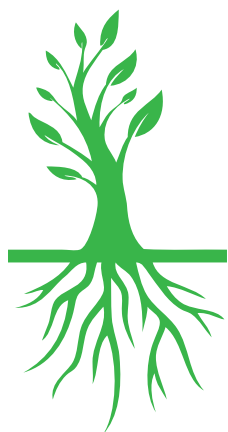




Photo: Dinodia

Once they break out, the women are not going to go back. There are going to be defeats but the sense of being empowered leads to strong resistance to any going back

Pradesh, probably for the first time ever, we had the enormous opportunity of doing what we call a legacy survey. Three years after we ended the pilot, we went back and asked people questions: “What issues drifted back to what was before the pilot? What things that had changed continued and even improved?”

This leads to the third question. One of the outcomes of giving an amount to every woman as well as man in the community, was that the emancipatory effect on women was dramatic. We have a lot of data showing a sense of agency; having their own money; control of their own bank accounts and making decisions, enables women collectively and individually to oppose patriarchal practices and break the mould dramatically. It left me in tears. We saw empowerment taking place.

Our legacy survey showed the gender aspects were the things that were actually sustained. Once you have broken out, the women are not going to go back. There are going to be defeats but the sense

of being empowered leads to strong resistance to any going back, particularly with things like access to food and healthcare. Women were able to say “No, my health matters just as much and I have my basic income.”

To go to the big question about the various schemes being proposed, to me they are all flawed in different ways. They are so obviously flawed that I am confident that in the intellectual fervour that is going to be unleashed; the contradictions; will lead to reform. I hope that Indian advisors and people are going to be wise enough.

For example, the idea of only giving money to landowners is that you automatically exclude the tenant farmer. You automatically lead to fudging and arbitrary decisions. It is a cut off that penalizes someone who wants to expand agricultural production. What we saw in our basic income pilots, for example, is that a large number of people, who had land, expanded their land that they turned into agriculture. If you are going to be



Photo: Dmodia

One of the things we found is that if you provide a basic income in a local community, it has multiplier effects. Every ₹1,000 will generate an extra ₹1,200

penalized when you push above any threshold that you define, you are not going to do that because you will lose that money.

In the second one, you get a certain amount per acre. The more acres you have, the more you get. The regressive aspects of that are blatant. So, the wealthier farmer gets more than the poor. That does not pass the fairness test. I also think the amount of money should start broadly but be low. As the fiscal space expands, you can raise the level but you start on an equitable basis. Every member of your community gets the same amount.

You can tax back from the wealthier if you wish. What we have been discussing not only in India but in other parts of the world is how to build up capital funds from public resources so that you can build them up as permanent funds, as investment machines as well as institutions and use the proceeds from those funds as they increase to distribute as dividends.

We have a wonderful system in Alaska that has worked quite well. My friends in Goa are developing a scheme of this type and in a number of other countries, the idea of using public resources, the commons, to build up funds from which you can pay off dividends and gradually raise the amount is catching on. Then you dynamically create the fiscal space that you are talking about. The question of fiscal space leads to the question of general equilibrium that was thrown at me.

In chapter 10 of the book on basic income, I have tried to summarize all the economic studies. One of the things we found is that if you provide a basic income in a local community, it has multiplier effects. Every ₹1,000 will generate an extra ₹1,200, whatever the multiplier might be. You generate localized production and work and income. In the process, the evidence from various parts of the world shows that the multiplier effect is quite important.

Something more people should research on is the feedback effects. If you give a basic income, as we

have found, health improves. People were taking their medicines to completion and, therefore, getting cured. Thus there was better health. They are also making sure that different groups get access to healthcare. It means potentially you are luring the demands on the public spending on healthcare because you are improving the system.

The same with education. Not only did attendance in schools go up, particularly among girls, but achievements went up as well. Therefore, the investments in schools were being more effective. There are all sorts of little reasons that policy-makers may not appreciate, like buying shoes or bus tickets, little things but the nature of the feedback effect is that you are making your public investment more productive and stimulating the economy and the localized system to a greater extent.

I strongly believe in equality of gender or disability of every group in society. You can only have that equality if you treat people as individuals and they have a non-withdrawable right to security. If you do not take the paternalistic approach and genuinely believe in gender equality, you must stimulate a system based on those values and not talk about giving women this or that. Confront inequalities of gender relations directly. Educate people better.

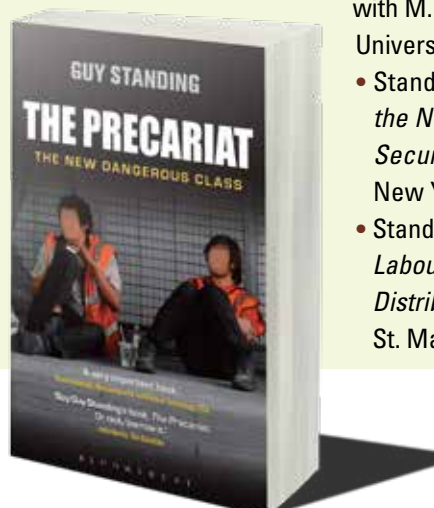
Force people to behave better. Treat people as individuals and women will take charge of their own life if they find security. They will find a way to liberate themselves.

I will end with a very poignant story. We were doing a basic income pilot in Africa. At the end of two years, I was visiting one of the areas and I called some young women across and asked, "Could you please tell me what is the best thing about having had a basic income?" One giggled and was timid but one of them replied, "Before we had our basic income, at the end of the month when the men came down from the fields with their minimum wage in their pocket, we had to say 'yes'. Now we have our basic income; we say 'no'". That is liberation. I think one must trust people and give them agency and that is what gender equality should be about. All of us should be feminists and believe in equality.

PS: We are organizing an international conference in Hyderabad in August 23-25. Everybody here will be very welcome to come to that. It is going to be on all aspects of basic income. It is being organized by the Indian network of basic income and Dr Sarath Davala could give you further information on it. ●

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FARMING'S HALL OF FAME

India's Padma Shri Farmers

Adrija Kundu

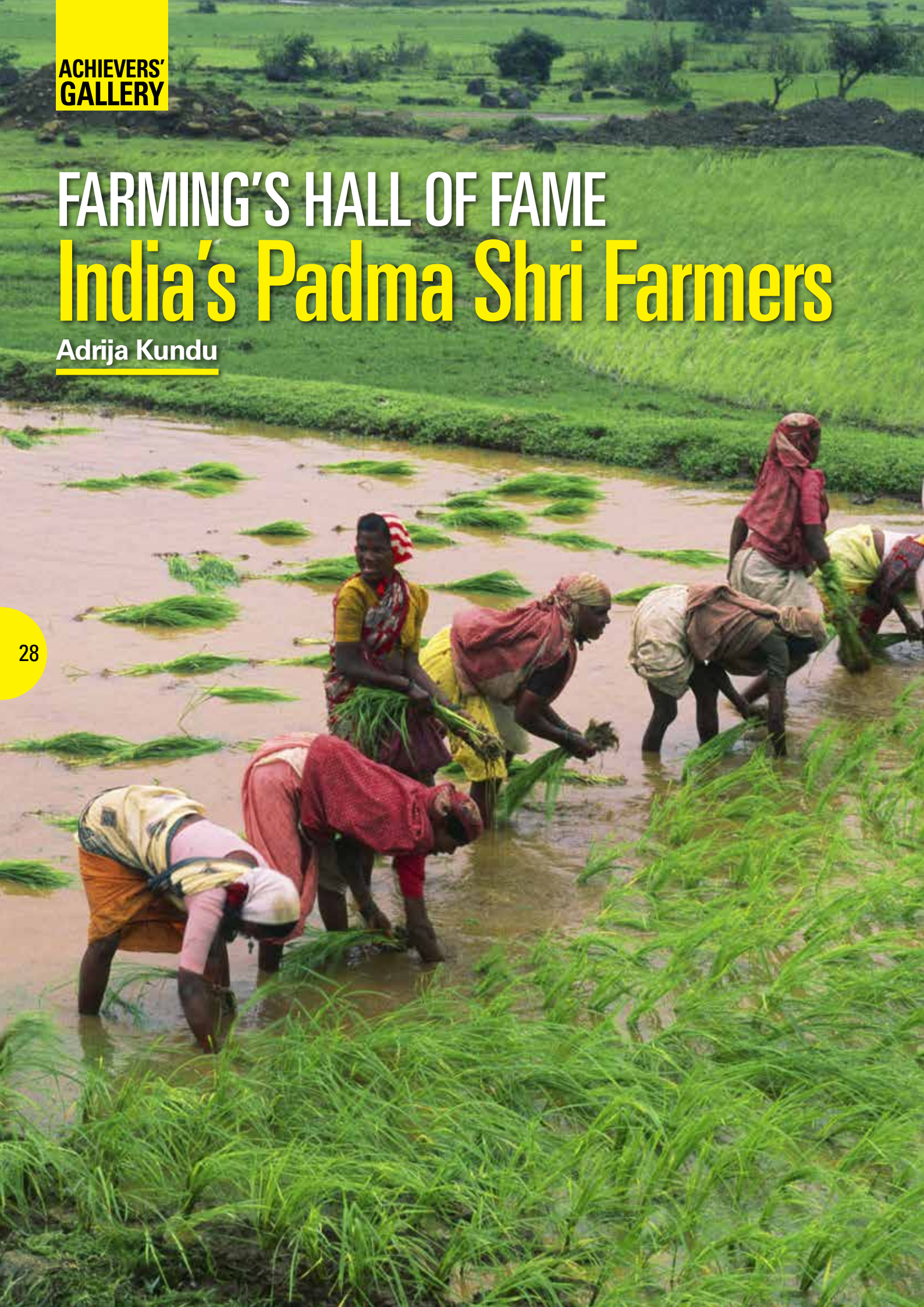




Photo: Dinodia

These are trying times for India's farming community but some outstanding souls ease the pain, relieve the others of some of their burdens, inspire those around them to improve their own circumstances through enterprise, vision and innovation. Often untrained and uncelebrated, they have had a transformational impact on their communities and on farming policies at a national and local level. The President of India conferred on a dozen of them the country's fourth highest civilian award, the Padma Shri. From organic farming, traditional seed conservation, soil analysis or innovations with adopting scientific methods; they cover several critical aspects of modern-day farming and have remarkable results to show.

Four of them have demonstrated outstanding results using traditional methods to impact output. A tribal from Koraput, Orissa, Kamala Pujhari has conserved several hundreds folk rice varieties and professionally promoted organic farming to motivate the entire belt to get out of the chemical fertilizer trap. Technologically savvy Venkateswara Rao Yadlapalli, from Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, has developed an app, Rythu Nestham, to encourage farmers to stick to organic farming, supporting such efforts with technical and marketing support and easing access to labs and research centres.

From Madhya Pradesh, Babulal Dahiya, too, has preserved folk rice varieties apart from some 110 other crop varieties that he has grown in two acres of land, while Rajasthan's Hukumchand Patidar has practiced organic and mixed farming on a 40-acre plot, going on to become an exporter to several countries. From Muzaffarpur, Rajkumari Devi, has broken barriers of a male-dominated farming society, studying the family's small plot of land intensively to develop her innate understanding of soil characteristics, encouraging neighbours to grow a mix of crops for better returns and go in for food processing through self-help groups that she helped create and nurture.

Her high-tech counterparts in Uttar Pradesh include Bharat Bhushan Tyagi and Ram Saran Verma, who have focused on such advanced techniques as hybrids, tissue culture, green manuring, biofertilizer use, irrigation and crop management, assisted by competent farming practices that have yielded rich dividends. Equally remarkable is the story of Vallabbhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya who, at 13, chose to ask why carrots were meant for horses exclusively and not for humans, going on to promote this nutritious vegetable for human consumption, beginning to sell it in Gujarat in 1943 and going on to achieve much more. Kanwal Singh Chauhan from Haryana did the same with babycorn and mushroom; while Jagdish Prasad Parikh developed a jumbo variety of cauliflowers. Sultan Singh and Narender Singh from Haryana did remarkable work in the fishery and dairy breeding space, with transformational impact on the farming scene.

Adrija Kundu provides life sketches on each of them.



ADRIJA KUNDU

The author is a researcher with ARG Syndication

CHAACHI PADMA SHRI Rajkumari Devi



She is the 'aunt (chaachi) next door'; seemingly an unremarkable, low-income, rustic lady from Bihar, village Anandpur, Saraiya block, district Muzaffarpur and yet Rajkumari Devi, saw herself before the Indian President on March 11, receiving the Padma Shri for her stupendous contribution to agriculture and for inspiring millions with her commitment to promoting good farming practices.

A rather unusual aficionado is a certain one VVS Laxman, India's cricketing heart throb of the yesteryears, who tweeted her story: "Rajkumari Devi, 63, of Bihar is popularly known as 'Kisan Chaachi'. She was married in 1974 but faced humiliation in her family and hence she started farming and adopted scientific methods. She made pickle and marmalade and started selling them on a bicycle".

That, however, is only the tip of the iceberg that broke traditions and taboos in society as Kisan Chaachi developed an expertise for determining soil characteristics and health that helped hundreds of families transform their lives through appropriate farming choices; in much the same manner as this poor farmer's spouse transformed her own life. It was in the early eighties that she started helping her husband with his tobacco farming, which was all

that he farmed, on his one-acre plot but the innate farmer in Rajkumari Devi prompted her to suggest alternative crops.

Putting her physical labour into action, she started to grow vegetables and local fruits when her husband went to nearby towns to sell the leaves. Intensive farming made her aware of how the crops responded to various soils. Nature was not kind to her though as the annual floods devastated her crops but Rajkumari Devi would not let the waters ruin her vision, which was all about growing paddy and wheat in the low-lying areas and banana, mango and papaya trees in the remaining land.

She had a feel for the soil, knew what could be grown where and, putting this innate understanding to work, she developed a scientific approach to farming. She admits: "I am no scientist but, over the years, I have come to know the soil of this area well. I might not be 100 per cent right always but I do know what can grow in this region".¹ Floods were not her only antagonists; so were fellow farmers, all men who sneered at a woman expressing herself on soil character and often being right.

Nor would local market approve of a woman growing and selling her produce. VVS Laxman tweeted: "Locals could not accept a woman selling products in the market and she was boycotted". The boycott did not break her spirit but made her more resolute, striding off on her bicycle to sell her ware. She started encouraging more women to adopt her ways. "Today 250 women are associated with her making pickles and marmalade".

Attitudes changed when her land became rich with crops of different varieties and villagers started flocking to her for counselling, especially the women, who started following her ways and listening to her advise that she gave for free. More importantly, she taught them to form self help groups (SHGs) in her block.

Meera Devi, 40, of the Pipra Khusboo SHG, sums it up: "We had been simple housewives until 'Kisan Chaachi' taught us how to grow vegetables and fruits. Now we have become self-reliant. We can earn up to ₹3,000 a month". Says eldest son, Amrendra Kumar: "My mother has taught me to be a farmer. Now, not only do we grow crops, we also make pickles, banana wafers, jams and so on, which are packed and sold in the market".

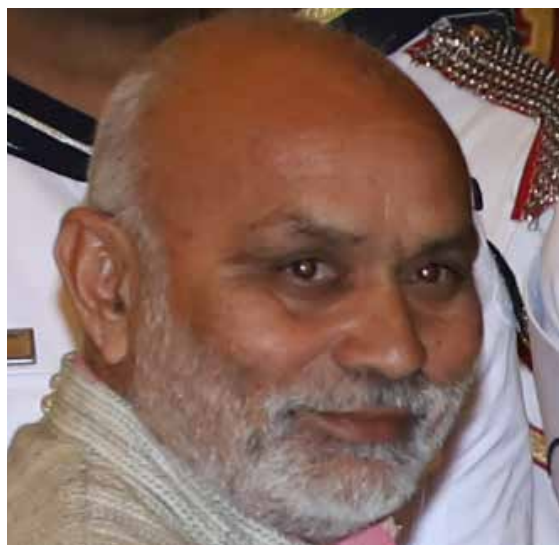
Much more is afoot for more inspiring times but today nothing is more inspiring than to have a Padma Shri awardee for a mother.

She broke traditions and taboos in society and developed an expertise to determine soil traits

¹ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/3818/rajkumari-devi-kisaan-chachi-farming/>

BABY CORN; BIG REWARDS

Kanwal Singh Chauhan



To have passed the law and gone on to become a farmer is not an everyday event; but then Sonapat's Kanwal Singh is not an average farmer. He is Padma Shri Kanwal Singh Chauhan, whose questioning outlook made him cast his eyes over the family farming landscape – the usual wheat and paddy – and ask what could be done differently. He knew of friends in distant villages who had diversified profitably but the conservative farmers in his Haryana village were suspicious of change, even after wheat and paddy had ceased to be profitable.

A colleague in village Bhadana, Sonapat, opened his eyes; baby corn, a little known produce, would triple incomes. So, disregarding the Doubting Thomases, he went on to be a baby corn farmer and made it big. An initial investment of around ₹7,000 per acre fetched a minimum of ₹30,000 to ₹40,000, because it gave the farmer three yields. Thus, even 300-400 acres under baby corn has made Aterna the baby corn capital of the country, with some 5,000 farmers inspired by Chauhan.

Even the seed was developed and owned by the farmers and integrated farming introduced; harmonizing livestock and crops into a productive ecosystem that centres around sustainability. Not just with baby corn, his innovative ideas have seen him lead the farmers into a mix of profitable produce for which minimum spot prices have been fixed: babycorn at ₹40 per kilogram; mushroom at ₹40,

tomato at ₹4 and sweet corn at ₹6 per kilogram. These vegetables are processed and these farmers cannot cope with the demand. From 2009, Chauhan promoted a canned variant with a three-year shelf life.

His abiding message to farmers²: “I believe that there is immense scope for youth in agriculture. With education and increasing awareness of the harms of chemical additives, their participation can be crucial to better the crop quality and help India to become the world's food bowl through sustainable practices”³.

That is the eventual dream but today it is time to celebrate. There have been rewards and recognition galore for Chauhan but this one is extra special.

ONLY CARROTS; NO STICK

Vallabhbhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya

An education that did not go beyond Class V and a plot of land that did not exceed five acres... but this was all that Vallabhbhai Vasrambhai, from Gujarat's Khamdhrol village, Junagadh district, needed to win, in his 95th year, the Padma Shri, having been engaged in farming from the age of 13. It was the curiosity of the young mind that prompted the teenager, producing the routine pulses, grains and groundnut, to taste the rather pretty looking produce that was designated for horses only.

Gujaratis did not eat carrots and Vallabhbhai wondered why. It tasted as nice as it looked and he told his



² <https://www.thebetterindia.com/175485/haryana-farmer-padma-shri-baby-corn-farming-india/>

³ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/175485/haryana-farmer-padma-shri-baby-corn-farming-india/>

Not only was Vallabbhai entrepreneurial, there was an innate scientist in him. By the mid-eighties he was growing his own seeds

father so, only to receive a smirk. Quietly, the boy dug out carrots from the field and took them to the market, where his customers loved it and he came back with a princely sum of ₹8 from his first sale; more than the combined sale proceeds for a month from other crops. Vallabbhai's father was impressed. Since then, it has been more than eight decades of devotion to improved methods of growing carrots, using improved irrigation and mulching methods and, of course, growing the farm from five acres to 50.

A transformational influence on his life was the Nawab of Junagadh, Muhammad Mahabat Khan III, who heard about the new vegetable and became a patron, ordering it for his langars (public kitchens), spreading its popularity and providing a ready market. Partition of India saw the nawab shift to Pakistan and Vallabbhai proceeded to develop an independent market.

Not only was he entrepreneurial, there was an innate scientist in him for, by the mid-eighties, he was growing seeds for what he called the Madhuvan Gajar that he has nurtured. Son Arvindbhai has an interesting story to tell: "When we planted the carrot seeds all over and they started flowering, there were lakhs of honey-bees visiting our farm, so my father named the variety Madhuvan"⁴.

Since then Vallabbhai, along with his family, has been working for conservation and development of the Madhuvan Gajar that has an average yield of 40-50 tonnes/hectare. Its cultivation has crossed the borders of Gujarat, into Maharashtra and Rajasthan as well and yielded collateral benefits in terms of improving general soil quality by naturally injecting anti-fungus properties. Honours for his spirited efforts came in 2017, when he received the National Grassroots Innovation Awards for Madhuvan.

⁴ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/109895/vallabbhai-marvaniya-madhuvan-carrot-farmer-junagadh-gujarat/>

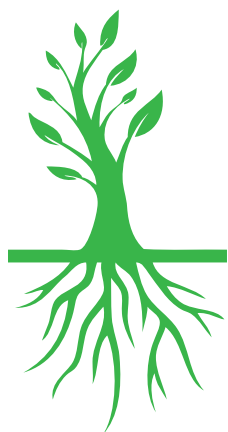
⁵ <https://yourstory.com/socialstory/2019/03/paddy-seeds-preserver-padma-shri-odisha-woman>

As the nonagerian sits under the son directing the family business he is happy to advise anyone who seeks it, there is a sense of pride all round that goes beyond the success with their enterprise; it is the pride in having secured enormous national recognition when the Padma Shri came Vallabbhai's way.

MISTRESS OF THE INDIGENOUS Kamala Pujhari

The panel of members of the Odisha State Planning Board bears an unusual name. That of Kamala Pujhari, from the Dangarichhinchhi panchayat, a 69-year old tribal woman. Check out her photographs and you see a smiling visage, eyes glistening with intelligence. Check out the Padma awardees list for 2019 and there she is again. Check out the photo gallery and she stands confident and resplendent in an orange saree, receiving the award from the President of India.

There are few agriculturists who are as familiar as she is with preservation of indigenous varieties of produce. From paddy to endangered breeds of black cumin, sesame, turmeric, maha kanta, phula and ghintia, Kamala Pujhari⁵ knows them all. In fact, her fascination with paddy and paddy seeds began as a child as she took to growing paddy on her land with a view to preserving these grains for further germination.



“Areas in which tribal families live are usually characterized by rich cultural, culinary and curative diversity. A rich centre of diversity in rice occurs in the Koraput area of Odisha. Women have particularly played a key role in biodiversity conservation. They have attended, in an integrated way, to conservation, cultivation, consumption and commerce. It is, therefore, a matter of pride that a leading member of the Koraput tribal families, Smt Kamala Pujhari, was recently conferred with the Padma Shri by the Hon’ble President of India. Kamala Pujhari played an important role in participatory breeding leading to the development of ‘Kalinga Kalajeera’. The life and work of Kamala Pujhari under difficult circumstances should be a source of pride and encouragement to all the tribal families of the area and I salute them.

– M. S. Swaminathan

Not an everyday occurrence in an impoverished tribal family from Koraput but outstanding enough for her to train with the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Jeypore, Odisha. There she impressed everyone with her grasp of heritage agricultural techniques. More importantly, every bit of knowledge that she gained, she shared with her community; her spirited activism for the organic way winning for her a position of equality with other experts. It saw her travel to Johannesburg in 2002, to participate in a UNDP-sponsored meeting, where she received the Equator Initiative Award for her innovative efforts to preserve grains and use it for community development⁶.

Growing in stature with every exposure that she received, she went on to be recognized as the best farmer by the state in 2004 and be awarded for her outstanding contribution in the agriculture sector. A feat of far greater import was organizing her community to stand up to the marauding might of chemical fertilizers, as she got the entire rural belt around the Patraput village and neighbouring villages in Nabarangpur district to go in for organic farming and quit the chemical fertilizers regime. “I had to virtually go from door to door, from village to village, convincing people of the rich returns

inherent in organic farming; highlighting the fact that it did not damage the soil fertility”⁷.

Rewards, honour and recognition have not made much of a difference to her financial status or access to good health care. An award received in New Delhi does not help with matters in her remote surroundings though the Padma Shri has moved the state to pay attention to her failing health. For everything else, Kamala Pujhari has had to struggle; as she still does today.

FARMING GEMS IN POETIC TRADITIONS

Babulal Dahiya



The Baghels of Madhya Pradesh are a culturally rich community, their artistic and poetic heritage, especially the tribal traditions, much applauded nationally. It was small surprise, therefore, that Babulal Dahiya of Pithorabaad, Satna district, would take to poetry and writing. What was serendipitous was that he would discover farming on the wings of poesy and use it with dramatic effect on the fields to win a host of awards, crowned by the Padma Shri in March 2019.

“*Dhaan bove Kargi, suvar khaye na samdhi*”. (If you sow the Kargi rice variety, it is neither eaten by wild boars nor by the family of the son-in-law)⁸. This variety has small protective spikes and so the boars cannot eat them” was just one of the delightful references to farming in folklore that Babulal

⁶ <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2019/jan/29/seeds-of-happiness-for-kamala-1931445.html>

⁷ <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/agriculture/they-stoop-to-conquer/article4016949.ece>

⁸ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/of-songs-and-seeds-this-mp-man-is-on-a-mission-to-save-tradition-local-crops/story-WEeAopnFRUtXHVZsY8MvNJ.html>

had found. There were many others; nuggets of information on the magic of traditional farming that the poet would come across and even present at the many *kavi sammelans* that he attended or articles and poetry that he wrote and published.

The richer his repertoire of folklore got, the richer his knowledge of indigenous farming became. “Such knowledge, such genetic heritage should not vanish”, he believed and made it his life’s mission to preserve them as living heritage in the fields of Unchehara. Upon retiring as a post-master, he devoted himself full time to such preservation.

There were intriguing stories of the ‘kalawati’ variety of a black rice that is ready in for harvest in 145 days, has amazing medicinal properties and many more that he kept reading about, especially as he served as a member of the Madhya Pradesh Adiwasi Lok Kala Academy. Babulal the poet turned farmer, taking leads from literature, developed into an innovative farmer par excellence, growing 110 traditional varieties of rice without using any fertilizer, save for cow dung, on a two-acre plot and another 100 varieties of pulses, grains and vegetables, such as kodo, kutki and jowar, on another six acres.

Then, with the typical old-world generosity, he got together farmers from 30 villages in the Unchehara block to understand and practice organic farming. Using his skills as a communicator, he held regular workshops for farmers and for school children to spread the good word about the many qualities and tastes of traditional rice varieties, the special purposes that each variety served and even made demand projections. With equal élan he documented details of the folk varieties of rice and seeds, using the Sarjana Samajik Sanskritik and Sahityik Manch as a platform to disseminate information.

Not only have the farmers been inspired, so has the Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board that has started a Beej Yatra to collect indigenous varieties of vegetables and medicinal plants. Babulal’s own collection of seeds has been deposited in the seed bank developed, with the help of the Biodiversity Board.

As Babulal says: “Words and seeds have a long history; when they are lost, all knowledge they coded is also lost. There are rice varieties that need less water, varieties that are disease resistance, varieties that are comparatively drought resistant. But for larger yield and more profit, we started sowing hybrid and dwarf rice varieties, which need

more pesticides and fertilizers. Local rice varieties have longer stalks that help them hold moisture and need less water”. Sustainable farming at its best.

FARMING WITH CROP-SPACE GEOMETRY

Bharat Bhushan Tyagi



“At 24, when I completed my MSc from Delhi University in 1972, I got a job at a private firm. At that time, my father said to me ‘*Naukri chhod, kheti kar, zyada fayda hai*’ (Forget about the job, work on our farm instead, it is more profitable)”⁹. Times have changed; farm incomes are seriously threatened but Bharat Bhushan Tyagi has made his father’s belief come true not just through farming but by pioneering organic farming and training more than one lakh farmers to farm sustainably following the organic route.

An education in science helps, especially if a farmer is to apply technology and science in his organic operations and Bharat Bhushan has constantly sought to put his academic learning to work, innovating with technology, applying the principles of inter-cropping of sugarcane with wheat, mustard, pulses, turmeric, garlic, banana, bakyan (timber tree) in his bid to ensure integrated nutrient and pest management and bringing in the advantages of crop space geometry to bear on his fields.

The results have been remarkable at both personal and societal levels. The new technology helped him increase his income from his eight acres between three and four times, thanks to reduced costs of input and labour. What made the feat remarkable is

⁹ <https://thewire.in/agriculture/sugarcane-farmers-western-up>

that Bharat Bhushan promptly went about sharing his knowledge not just at his own centre but in collaboration with the union agriculture ministry; something widely recognized and awarded. He has also worked with organizations like the International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture and the National Centre of Organic Farming, the Nabard and the Agriculture Finance Corporation. Eventually, the idea is to make farming sustainable and financially rewarding.

The Chetna Vikas Swarajya Trust, in Bulandshahar that Bharat Bhushan heads, subscribes to the participatory guarantee system (PGS), involves 70 peasant families and has a land bank of about 58 hectares (2016 figures), where produce is branded with the PGS label for better market access for spices, flours, oils, vegetables, fruits and sweeteners¹⁰. The farm is an integrated one, using traditional cow and bull breeds, such as Haryana Desi and Rathie and pursues advanced agricultural practices to ensure good yields (the cumulative yield per hectare of the farm is 30-40 tons).

Among the techniques implemented are different combinations of inter-cropping systems with seasonal and annual crops, vegetable and root crops and cereal and leguminous plants. Agroforestry with Burmese Teak is also carried out and a variety of organic fertilizers is added in order to sustain and improve soil fertility. The PGS group says that its overall goal “is to earn ₹700,000 to ₹900,000 per hectare”. Such turnover will allow the group members to sustain their families while being competitive enough on the market”.

GREENING FIELDS; GREENING MINDS Yadlapalli Venkateshwar Rao

Yadlapalli Venkateswara Rao tossed and turned in his bed. Son of a Guntur farmer from a small village in Kornepadu in the Vatticherukuru mandal, he had decided to quit farming and improve his lot through a printing business in Hyderabad. Even a decade and half later, however, the plight of farmers back home tormented him and he kept thinking of ways to alleviate the suffering. Enhancing their knowledge base and

changing their approach to farming, he thought, might provide some succour.

He got hold of journalist friends and started printing a farming magazine, Raithu Nestham, in 2005, to publish research-based articles that farmers could use. It became popular with farmers and in 12 years got a readership of 20 lakh farmers a month, in both rural Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Once it became financially stable, Yadlapalli started printing Pasu Nestham (cattle friend) and Prakruthi Nestham (Nature's friend). Guntur was the hot spot for chemical farming with several deaths by suicide that was very disturbing for Yadlapalli.

“I was dejected to see farmers taking extreme steps. I wanted to see them become independent and self-sufficient and I felt this is possible if I introduced ‘organic farming’, a cost-effective, environment-friendly and a healthy practice to yield the harvest”¹¹. Thus his commitment to championing natural farming, animal husbandry and horticulture. For his professional approach to spreading scientific knowledge amongst the farming community, using traditional and high-tech means, the government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in 2019.

His website has also launched a mobile application for farmers on natural and allied farming and guides them as they adopt organic farming, while the Raithu Nestham foundation that he started in Kornepadu has evolved into a major training institute that even the department of agriculture uses, with its focus on awareness and orientation classes that would help farmers switch from chemical to the



¹⁰ https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/pgsnewsletter_julyaug2016_2.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/lifestyle/viral-and-trending/100219/making-greenery-his-mission.html>

organic farming model. The resistance to change was strong initially but Yadlapalli was persuasive and a powerful teacher who won his students over.

He helped farmers realize that their produce suffered in the market because of the chemical residues and going organic would obviate the problem and fetch better prices for the same stock, while ensuring better health of the farmers and a better, chemical-free environment. His active mind never stops planning. Having achieved a change in rural environments, he has started advocating terrace gardening in the cities too. His message is simple: "Eating veggies from your own backyard keeps the family healthy, saves revenue and also educates children on agriculture".

These are transformative thoughts that have won him accolades. Nothing prepared him for the Padma Shri though but even this award he shares with his community, as he says: "I never expected Padma Shri. I feel glad that the efforts are recognized... This award is for the entire farming community and for all those who are working in agriculture and allied sectors".

'VERMAAGIRI' PAYS **Ram Saran Verma**

There is 'dadagiri' in the country side and there is 'vermagiri' and the latter seems to be winning in village Daulatpur, Barabanki district, Uttar Pradesh. For, the propounder of the latter school of thought is the intrepid Ram Saran Verma, who began his life as a humble farmer and has gone on to start Hi-Tech Agriculture & Consultation, through which he manages a network of 200,000 farmers in UP and other states; produces over six acres of owned land; has an annual turnover of ₹1.5 crore; provides 25,000 jobs annually over 150 acres under co-operative farming¹². His remarkable change-making endeavours, with technologically-advanced farming practices that influenced farmers at the micro-level, have won him the Padma Shri in 2019.

Ram Saran did not study beyond Class VIII but realized that the traditional produce of rice, wheat, potato, mentha and such others would not be a sustainable proposition for long and he started looking at options. He read whatever he could lay his hands on about new crops, new

farming techniques, went to fairs, met farmers and visited their farms and then understood that there was some magic with tissue culture that he could engage with because farmers had made it big with bananas in Karnataka.

Indeed on a two-year journey across farms in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana helped him decide on the crop of his choice "In 1995 (I) started with banana and tomato as new crops and mentha and potato with advanced scientific technique". Rebuked by his father for his new-fangled ideas, he went ahead with the plantation nevertheless and reaped a rich harvest for the next quarter of a century. "I always remained optimistic and pessimism could not touch me and by now farmers of neighbouring villages alongwith 150 acres of land are co-related with me", he states in his website.

So impressed was former President, APJ Abdul Kalam with his mastery over tissue culture and his ability to get large numbers of farmers to his way of thinking that he named Ram Saran Verma, "Farmer's wizard". In quick time an acre of plantation yielded 400 quintals of bananas and fetched a ₹4-lakh profit and he promptly went on to growing red bananas, popular in the southern states, in UP, where he planted 1,000 saplings and earned much higher profits than he did from his traditional yellow variety.

Many recognitions followed; the Jagjivan Ram Kisan Puraskar



¹² <http://www.vermaagri.com/about-us>



in 2007 and 2010 and the National Horticultural Award in 2014, amongst others, inspiring him to go in for more science-based agriculture. He introduced crop-rotation that enabled him to grow three crops of potato, tomato and banana in the same area in sequenced seasons¹³. Hi-Tech Agriculture & Consultation, as he calls his consultancy, has been engaged in teaching “advanced techniques on hybrid tomato, tissue culture banana, rotation crop of potato-mentha... green manuring, biofertilizers irrigation management, crop management, management of tillering, weed control, marketing and human resource development”.

For his many students all this was new and magical because Ram Saran was telling them that the fields were the farmers’ laboratories, as he invited farmers to visit him and learn from him the magic of technology-based farming. In the process he brought in prosperity to farming and obviated the need for the farmer to migrate in search of alternative engagements to eke out a livelihood. That is his greatest pride.

“Over 10 lakh farmers have visited my farm till date but my biggest pride continues to be that people in our village are not migrating to cities in search of jobs. Instead, people from the cities come to our village for employment. We have over 20,000 men and women working on 150 acres, earning good wages daily. In addition to this, most of the farmers who are using our techniques, are earning profits”¹⁴.

CLEANSING THE SOIL OF CHEMICALS Hukumchand Patidar

Amir Khan found this man engaging enough to present him in Satyameva Jayate for this was the man who had bucked a terrible trend – the Indian farmers’ fascination for chemical fertilizers introduced by the Green Revolution – and went organic, when there were neither advisories nor guidance for it. All that Hukumchand Patidar remembered was that once upon a time farming was chemical free.

“We never heard of chemical fertilizers until the Green Revolution was started by the government of India in 1965. Most of the farmers started using chemicals for more production. However, later on I realized that this is harmful for soil fertility and for the health of people in the long run. In 2004, I started doing complete organic farming, which yielded results”¹⁵.



The results did not come without much sweat of the brow and, even on the four acres on which he tried organic farming, his wheat crop saw a drop in the first year itself. It took a lot of gumption to persist nonetheless but Patidar did not quit. Instead, he borrowed money from the bank to start vermi-compost that he used on his crops. That was the beginning of the transformation that saw his four acres spread to 40 acres of organic farming in his Manpura village, Jhalawar and after many encomiums saw him receiving the Padma Shri in 2019.

The economics of chemical-based farming was going haywire and Patidar was quick to realize it. Farmers in his village, who used not more than 10 kgs of seeds in the initial years, found themselves using 40 kgs per hectare. “The lands of the farmers who have been using chemical fertilizers for a long time have lost most of their nutrients and fertility and they are forced to use high quantity of fertilizers. As per International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement, if Indian farmers did not stop using chemical fertilizers, by the end of 2030, our lands will become barren. Just imagine its effect”.

Patidar had long decided that not only would he never use chemical fertilizers but that he would devote himself to getting farmer friends off chemicals. Thus experimentation and innovation became his middle name as his basket of produce increased to wheat, barley, gram, fenugreek, coriander, garlic and many others and the produce sold not only nationally but exported to seven international destinations;

¹³ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/165736/uttar-pradesh-banana-farmer-news/>

¹⁴ <https://www.agricultureinformation.com/ram-saran-verma/>

¹⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/sikar-farmer-awarded-padma-shri/articleshow/68365671.cms>

Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Germany, France and Korea amongst others¹⁶.

His Swami Vivekananda Agricultural Research Farm¹⁷ is a hub of knowledge that is shared nationally and with international students who come to learn the organic way. As he told Satyameva Jayate, the returns from such organic practices are not just “*solah anna but bees anna*” (16 annas make a full rupee and translated this means more than cent per cent; 20 annas out of 16 annas).

The happiness on receiving the Padma Shri too seems to be more than cent per cent.

FILLETING A FISH FORTUNE

Sultan Singh

What would a poor pisciculturist in an inhospitable environment do with a meagre capital of ₹500¹⁸? Most would remain impecunious but Sultan Singh had a heart full of hope and a mind full of ambition to back his ₹500. Putting it together with grit and determination, he grew the small fish farming operation in Butana village, Karnal, to a multimillion rupee operation that encourages him to strategize to give KFC a run for its money.

Not just that, Sultan Singh, who received the Padma Shri in March 2019, also trained a large farming community in fish breeding and dairying, helping farmers survive the downturn in their fortunes.

The beginning was not easy because many of his neighbours, who did not believe in consuming animal protein, turned their noses up: “*Hai macchi* (eeks fish!)” but that did not deter him. Sultan Singh’s gut feeling was that there was future here and, having started with traditional fisheries near Karnal, he went on to breeding catfish and reared shrimp in adverse climatic conditions. He

intuitively understood fish and finances and, going the organic way, started experimenting and making innovations. Today he plans to take on KFC chicken with his own Fish Bite.

Sultan Singh set up north India’s first fish farm in 1984¹⁹ and his experimentation with pisciculture since then saw him come up with re-circulatory aqua-culture systems to increase productivity even when conditions were not conducive. As he says: “I have reared shrimp in the temperature ranging from 8°C to 20°C (November 2004 to January 2005) against its optimal temperature ranging from 21°C to 33°C in the open without using any water heater”²⁰.

Neighbouring farmers who questioned his venture started flocking to him and Sultan Singh was generous with his knowledge; teaching and training farmers about pisciculture the organic way because he believed that it was his responsibility to share such knowledge; one that has been increased with the Padma Shri award. Over time he created a love for fish and found “people who were once vegetarians and looked down on me for selling fish... asking for it” now²¹.

The story of his Sultan Fish Farm in the Nilokheri area of Karnal is a much talked about one with its



¹⁶ <https://udaipurtimes.com/organic-farming-success-story-of-hukumchand-patidarfrom-farm-to-foreign-kitchen/>

¹⁷ <https://www.thebetterindia.com/170970/organic-farmer-farming-padma-shri/>

¹⁸ http://www.iari.res.in/files/Latest-News/pressnote2_07032019.pdf

¹⁹ https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/agrarian-haryana-is-fishing-in-new-waters-117071400371_1.html

²⁰ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/karnal-s-fish-breeder-gets-padma-shri/719869.html>

²¹ <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/scales-dont-carp/234903>

supplies of both fish seeds and fish to governments and private parties giving him a name nationally and internationally. Meanwhile, fellow farmers are also asking for more training as his pioneering work and innovations have made Haryana a leading fish producer, as also Punjab. Some 20,000 have been impacted by his work as pisciculture has become a thriving business. Move over tandoori chicken; the days of Amritsari fish are nigh.

THE MURRAH MILLIONAIRE Narender Singh



The star attraction at the three-day Uttar Pradesh Agri Leadership Summit, 2017 and winner of the livestock beauty contest in 2016 is a spectacular 1,500-kg prize Murrah bull with gorgeously curved horns and jet-black hide that shines in the sunlight. He stands at 5 ft 10 inches and spans an astonishing 15 ft 5 inches from head to tail. Massaging him with large dollops of desi milk and ghee is his owner, Narender Singh. The bull is Shehenshah²².

Saikumar and Sat Singh wrote this remarkable story on July 6, 2017, a good two years before Narender Singh would receive the Padma Shri for his remarkable dairy farm where he rears a “hundred high-breed cattle in his dairy farm including the Sahiwal breed, the Holstein Friesian breed and more than 80 Murrah buffaloes”. He has been awarded the National Award in 2013 and

2015, the Gopal Rattan Award in 2017 and the Murrah Ratan Award in 2018²³.

A resident of Israna village of Panipat, Haryana, Narender embarked on his remarkable journey just about two decades ago and with just 10 animals. His father had died early and he could not go to college because he had to earn a living. One thing he knew: he was passionately fond of his livestock at home. Speaking of his early successes he says: “I could not attend college but was able to make farming a highly profitable avocation. Today, I have about 150 high-quality head of cattle, including indigenous breeds of cows and Murrah. My wife, Roshni Devi, takes complete care of the dairy business²⁴.”

The Murrah breed in particular is known for its abundant milk and Shehenshah is priceless. His owner, who has over the years become a specialist in the dairy breeding space, has inspired many farmers to follow suit. His generosity is evident in his donation of a progeny of his high-performance bull, Golu, worth ₹20 lakh, to the semen bank of Hisar-based Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University in 2009.

The first Murrah bull was acquired by the farm in 2007 and it became a ‘cash cow’ courtesy its sperm that fetched around a lakh of rupees a month. Today, Narender is globally known and farmers from the world over visit his dairy farm to learn about cattle diseases, preventive measures, vaccination schedules and his innovative techniques.

Saikumar and Sat Singh write that Narender Singh makes about ₹12 lakh from Shehenshah’s sperm and an additional ₹5 lakh annually in prize money, courtesy his army of Murrah buffaloes. He told Kurukshetra University students at an ‘Apni Baat’ programme, “The improvement of livestock breeds is my passion and my cattle have been winning various championships since 2004. I got Padma Shri for successfully venturing into rearing of livestock, particularly Murrah bull Golu, who is known for producing scores of high-milk yielding buffaloes in Haryana and other places through artificial insemination”.

Post the Padma award, Narender, now 47, has promised to start free distribution of high-quality doses of semen of Murrah breed bulls among

²² <https://www.arre.co.in/animals/murrah-bull-panipat-india-bull-sperm-bull-farmer-bull-breeder/?fbclid=IwAR3Dt7Evx6lxVD1l-fYRtTqUd3GkSbaVGA7G5R5g2yXcL5lbqVO16Fasw7U>

²³ <https://www.amarujala.com/chandigarh/padma-awards-2019-padma-shri-award-to-narender-singh-of-haryana-to-preserve-murrah-breed?pageId=1>

²⁴ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/padma-awardee-offers-to-provide-murrah-semen-to-dairy-farmers/741849.html>



Haryana dairy farmers as a gesture to repay society for the recognition conferred on him at the Republic Day function this year.²⁵

A CALLING FOR CAULIFLOWERS

Vasrambhai Jagdish Prasad Parikh



Not too many farmers are known to be kings. Vasrambhai Jagdish Prasad Parikh is; the “King of Cauliflowers”, a sobriquet earned by him because of his remarkable contribution to organic farming and cultivation of cauliflower. His feat has earned for him a place in the Limca Book of Records for growing one of the largest cauliflowers in the world; ‘Ajitgarh variety’, weighing 25.5 kg. What Vasrambhai, from village Ajitgarh, district Sikar, Rajasthan, has achieved now is far more weighty. He has won the Padma Shri in 2019 for his innovations in the field of agriculture through traditional methods²⁶.

Life has been a series of farming innovations for Vasrambhai, securing for him the National Grassroots Innovation Awards (2001) for the ‘Ajitgarh Selection’ and an IPR (Intellectual Property Right) for his high-yielding and pest-resistant innovative crops in 2017.

Life has also been about inspiring his village of 10,000 people a four-hour ride from Sikar, who now grow cauliflowers, that do not mind warm temperatures nor are they affected by disease or insects, regularly giving a three-crop yield of the cauliflowers and other vegetables. Vasrambhai has been innovating in this space from 1990²⁷.

Finally, life has been about observing and learning from nature, as he first did in 1970 on a visit to Char Darwaja, Jaipur, where he saw cauliflower saplings of a different kind. He borrowed them to plant near the well in his field and found the crop whiter and larger. This began his experimentations with seeds and selective breeding. From cauliflower, he extended his understanding to other crops, growing six-foot-long ridge gourd, three-foot-long brinjal, seven-foot-long bottle gourd and an 86 kg pumpkin.

His main crop is the cauliflower “as an intercrop on his two-hectare plot” that has fruit trees like pomegranates, lemons, wood apples, karonda (Bengal Currant) and roses. It uses nothing but farm-made organic fertilizers and pesticides and, thanks to their size, Vasrambhai’s cauliflowers are a hit with hoteliers and restaurant owners. Seeds are an equally important source of revenue for he sold one quintal of cauliflower seeds. More importantly, these are the seeds to eventual honour from the country and a major step in the spread of organic farming. ●

Tips on Growing Ajitgarh Cauliflowers

- Saplings at least three inches in height are ready for the fields after 20-22 days in the nursery.
- Avoid planting the long-stemmed one for they are unable to take the flower’s weight.
- Care needs to be taken regarding plant spacing.
- Watering to be done every third day before transferring from nursery and thereafter every fifth day. Water the plants only when leaves show sign of dryness.
- Cauliflower is infested with mosaic virus, which severely affects leaves of the cauliflower. To control the virus, use 100g copper sulphate, 400g ash and 100g lime and spread it on the field by a blow pipe. About 1.5kg of this mixture is sufficient for dusting over an hectare of crop.
- Formation of black spots on the flowers due to cloudy weather and dew can be avoided by covering the fruit by using its leaves.

– Sunday Farmer, November 2018

²⁵ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/padma-awardee-offers-to-provide-murrah-semen-to-dairy-farmers/741849.html>

²⁶ <https://greenstation.co/blogs/green-station-blog/top-10-organic-crusaders-in-india>

²⁷ <https://sundayfarmer.wordpress.com/tag/jagdish-prasad-parikh/>



A photograph showing two men in a rural setting, likely in India, carrying a large, heavy sack of grain (possibly wheat or rice) on their heads. They are standing on a large pile of grain. The man on the right is wearing a dark shirt and pants, and the man on the left is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The background is a clear sky with a few distant structures and a street lamp.

Falling Prices; Rising Costs

A Report by Shambhu Ghatak, im4change.org

Rural India has suffered a double whammy not only in terms of a higher rate of retail inflation in services (such as health and education) vis-à-vis the rate of inflation in Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) in 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, implying a higher cost of living for the farm-dependent population, alongside there is also a deflation in prices for farm produce.

An analysis by *im4change.org*, on the basis of various sectoral GVA deflators, shows that the agrarian sector faced a falling rate of inflation as compared to the non-agrarian sectors in the recent years. These implicit price deflators are an alternative measure of inflation and GVA essentially being the gross domestic product, net of all product taxes and subsidies, the GVA

deflator yields a truer picture of the underlying inflation in the economy.

The year-on-year (y-o-y) growth rate in the Agri GVA deflator has fallen over the 2012-13 to 2018-19 period, while there has been a rise in the y-o-y growth rates of the Industrial GVA deflator and Services GVA deflator (alongside overall GVA and GDP deflators), following the financial year 2015-16. The Industrial GVA deflator and Services GVA deflator (apart from overall GVA and GDP deflators) saw falling y-o-y growth rates from 2012-13 to 2015-16 (*Chart-1*).

The GVA deflator is implicitly computed from the National Accounts Statistics as a ratio of GVA at current prices to constant prices and covers the entire range of economic activities including services. It is available in India on a quarterly basis

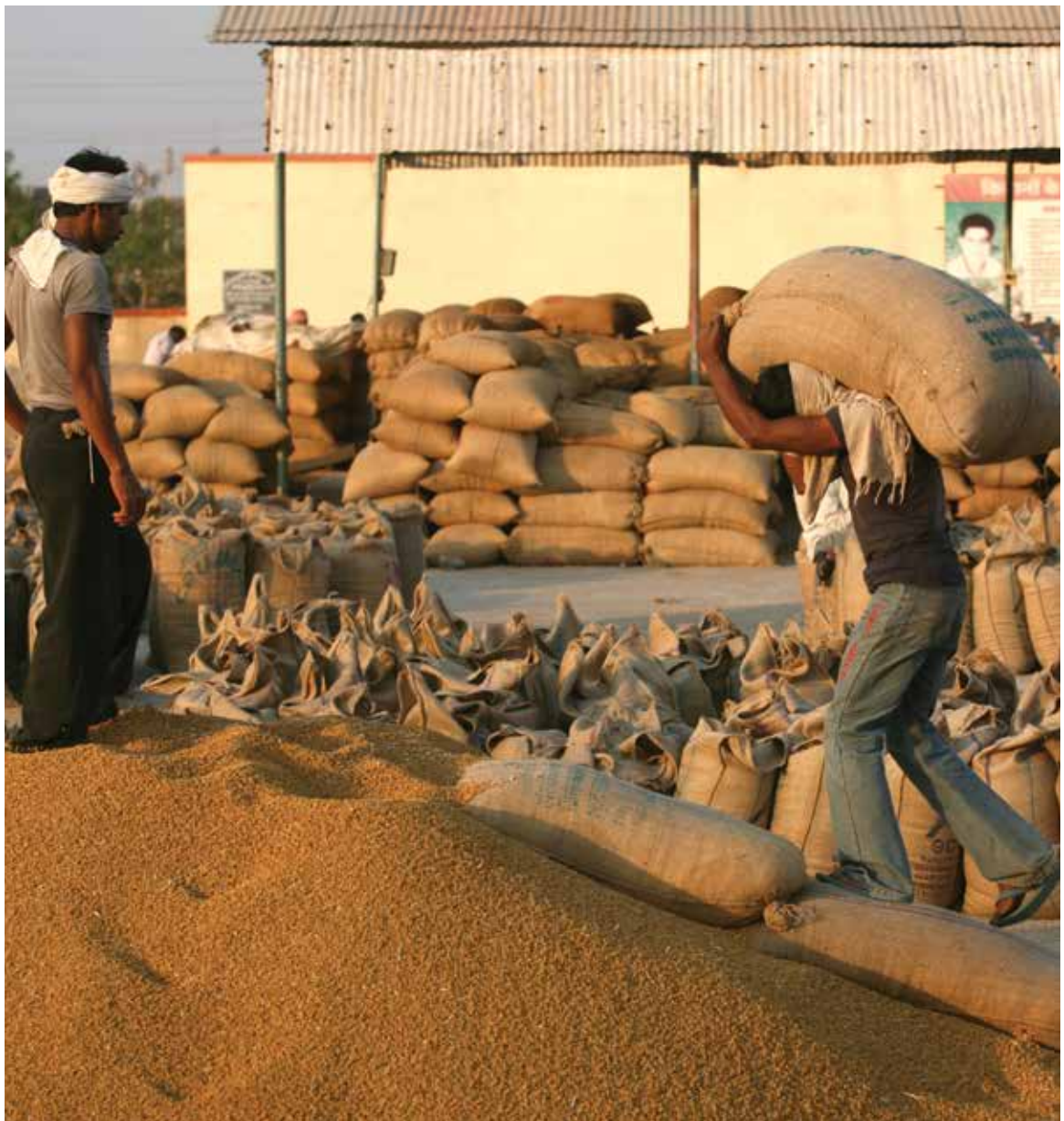
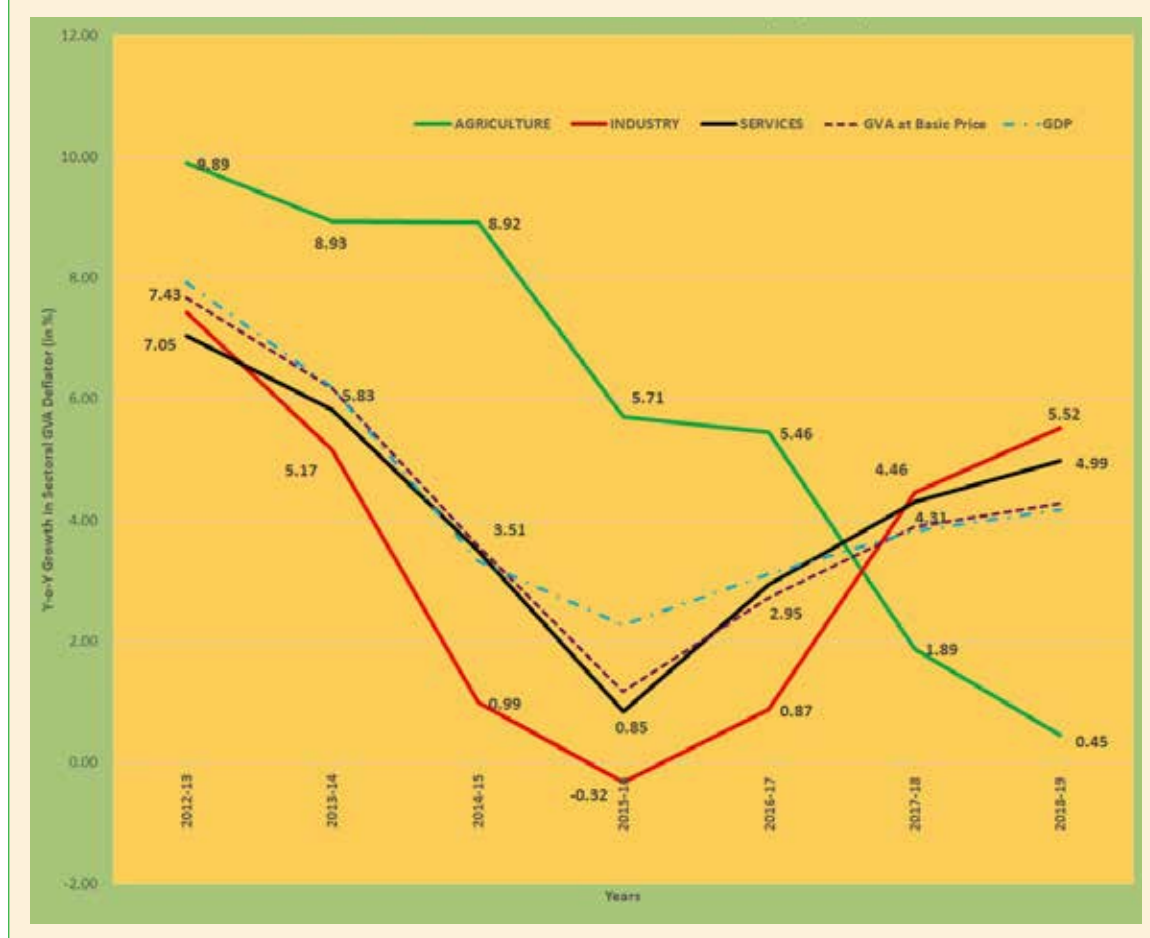


Photo: Dinodia

Chart 1: Year-on-Year Growth in Sectoral GVA Deflator in (per cent)



Note: Sectoral GVA deflator is calculated using the formula: $GVA\ Price\ Deflator = (Nominal\ GVA \div real\ GVA, which\ is\ in\ constant\ prices) \times 100$; Source: Press Note on Second Advance Estimates of National Income 2018-19 and Quarterly Estimates of Gross Domestic Product for the Third Quarter Q3 of 2018-19, released on 28th February, 2019, Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI); Press Note on First Revised Estimates of National Income, Consumption Expenditure, Saving and Capital Formation for 2017-18, released on 31st January 2019, CSO, MoSPI; and Press Note on National Accounts Statistics Back series 2004-05 to 2011-12 (Base 2011-12), released on 28th November 2018, CSO, MoSPI

and unlike the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the GVA deflator is not based on a fixed basket of goods and services; rather the basket for the GVA deflator is allowed to change from year to year as per people's consumption and investment patterns.

im4change.org had earlier found deflation in wholesale prices of eight kharif crops on average between 2016-17 and 2018-19.

The y-o-y growth rate in the Agri GVA deflator fell from 9.89 per cent in 2012-13 to 0.45 per cent in 2018-19 (See Table 1). Although the y-o-y growth rate in the Industrial GVA deflator fell from 7.43 per cent in 2012-13 to -0.32 per cent in 2015-16, it bounced back to 0.87 per cent in 2016-17 and reached 5.52 per cent in 2018-19. The y-o-y growth rate in the Services GVA deflator increased from 0.85 per cent in 2015-16 to 4.99 per cent in 2018-19, while the y-o-y growth rate in the Agri GVA deflator surpassed y-o-y growth

rate in the overall GVA deflator between 2012-13 and 2016-17, the latter exceeding the former in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

These statistics seem to have got reflected in the many farmers' agitations, demanding for remunerative crop prices, among other things, which have intensified during the recent years. Chart 1 is derived from Table 1.

After facing negative growth rates in second (Q2= -0.76 per cent) and third (Q3= -0.61 per cent) quarters of 2018-19, the Agri GVA deflator is expected to grow by 1.62 per cent in the fourth quarter (Q4) of the previous financial year. The quarterly growth rates in the Industrial GVA deflator and Services GVA deflator exceeded the quarterly growth rate in the Agri GVA deflator for both 2017-18 and 2018-19. (Table-2).

A financial report entitled Q3 GDP Data: A Whole Slew of Revisions, which was published by





Photo: Dinodia

Table 1: Year-on-Year Growth in Sectoral GVA Deflator (per cent)

| Sectors | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AGRICULTURE (1) | 9.89 | 8.93 | 8.92 | 5.71 | 5.46 | 1.89 | 0.45 |
| 1. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing | 9.89 | 8.93 | 8.92 | 5.71 | 5.46 | 1.89 | 0.45 |
| INDUSTRY (2+3+4+5) | 7.43 | 5.17 | 0.99 | -0.32 | 0.87 | 4.46 | 5.52 |
| 2. Mining & Quarrying | 8.85 | 3.29 | -4.95 | -13.47 | 0.00 | 3.82 | 17.75 |
| 3. Manufacturing | 5.78 | 3.79 | 1.60 | 1.06 | 0.80 | 2.77 | 3.93 |
| 4. Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & other Utility Services | 12.38 | 15.98 | 1.17 | 13.32 | -4.04 | 10.21 | 6.92 |
| 5. Construction | 8.89 | 5.68 | 1.87 | -2.30 | 2.98 | 6.17 | 4.56 |
| SERVICES (6+7+8) | 7.05 | 5.83 | 3.51 | 0.85 | 2.95 | 4.31 | 4.99 |
| 6. Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication and Services related to Broadcasting | 7.27 | 5.77 | 2.76 | -1.25 | 2.76 | 3.20 | 4.64 |
| 7. Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services | 5.75 | 4.80 | 2.84 | 0.41 | 2.01 | 5.18 | 5.08 |
| 8. Public Administration, Defence and other Services | 8.78 | 7.75 | 5.77 | 4.88 | 4.62 | 3.98 | 5.13 |
| GVA at Basic Price | 7.68 | 6.18 | 3.60 | 1.18 | 2.73 | 3.89 | 4.28 |
| GDP | 7.93 | 6.19 | 3.33 | 2.28 | 3.12 | 3.84 | 4.18 |

Note: Sectoral GVA deflator is calculated using the formula: $\text{GVA Price Deflator} = (\text{Nominal GVA} \div \text{real GVA, which is in constant prices}) \times 100$;
Source: Press Note on Second Advance Estimates of National Income 2018-19 and Quarterly Estimates of Gross Domestic Product for the Third Quarter Q3 of 2018-19, released on 28th February, 2019, Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI); Press Note on First Revised Estimates of National Income, Consumption Expenditure, Saving and Capital Formation for 2017-18, released on 31st January 2019, CSO, MoSPI; and Press Note on National Accounts Statistics Back series 2004-05 to 2011-12 (Base 2011-12), released on 28th November 2018, CSO, MoSPI

Table 2: Quarterly Growth in Sectoral GVA deflator, on a Y-o-Y basis (per cent)

| Sectors | 2017-18 | | | | 2018-19 | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| AGRICULTURE (1) | -1.32 | 2.71 | 4.34 | 1.13 | 1.67 | -0.76 | -0.61 | 1.62 |
| 1. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing | -1.32 | 2.71 | 4.34 | 1.13 | 1.67 | -0.76 | -0.61 | 1.62 |
| INDUSTRY (2+3+4+5) | 4.66 | 4.07 | 4.79 | 4.25 | 5.34 | 6.19 | 5.77 | 4.89 |
| 2. Mining & Quarrying | 6.06 | 2.48 | 6.48 | 1.15 | 17.74 | 24.12 | 17.90 | 13.66 |
| 3. Manufacturing | 2.67 | 2.47 | 2.70 | 3.09 | 3.78 | 4.38 | 4.11 | 3.53 |
| 4. Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & other Utility Services | 11.45 | 10.34 | 9.04 | 9.99 | 5.52 | 7.37 | 8.37 | 6.42 |
| 5. Construction | 5.56 | 5.99 | 7.04 | 5.99 | 4.68 | 5.02 | 4.56 | 4.03 |
| SERVICES (6+7+8) | 3.75 | 4.08 | 5.02 | 4.46 | 5.14 | 5.37 | 4.83 | 4.57 |
| 6. Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication and Services related to Broadcasting | 2.76 | 3.10 | 3.92 | 3.06 | 4.73 | 5.16 | 4.70 | 4.10 |
| 7. Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services | 4.52 | 4.89 | 6.33 | 5.31 | 5.17 | 5.55 | 4.99 | 4.42 |
| 8. Public Administration, Defence and other Services | 3.11 | 3.57 | 4.61 | 4.51 | 5.63 | 5.15 | 4.73 | 5.06 |
| GVA at Basic Price | 3.22 | 3.83 | 4.70 | 3.76 | 4.58 | 4.73 | 3.82 | 4.05 |
| GDP | 4.44 | 4.30 | 3.56 | 3.10 | 4.27 | 4.65 | 4.20 | 3.69 |

Note: Sectoral GVA deflator is calculated using the formula: $GVA\ Price\ Deflator = (Nominal\ GVA \div real\ GVA, which\ is\ in\ constant\ prices) \times 100$; Sectoral/ overall GVA for Q4 has been calculated by using the formula: $GVA(Q4) = GVA(Annual\ Estimates) - \{GVA(Q1) + GVA(Q2) + GVA(Q3)\}$; Source: Press Note on Second Advance Estimates of National Income 2018-19 and Quarterly Estimates of Gross Domestic Product for the Third Quarter Q3 of 2018-19, released on 28th February, 2019, CSO, MoSPI.

the State Bank of India in February, 2019, says that although the growth in the Agri GVA deflator is expected to become positive in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2018-19, the growth in real Agri GVA is destined to be negative for that quarter.

Analysis shows that the quarterly growth rate in the Agri GVA (at 2011-12 prices) has slowed down from 5.07 per cent in first quarter to -0.08 per cent in the fourth quarter of the previous financial year. Table-3 shows that the quarterly growth rates in Industrial GVA (at constant prices) and Services GVA (at constant prices) surpassed quarterly growth rate in Agri GVA (at constant prices) for 2018-19.

Table-4 indicates that the y-o-y growth rate in real Agri GVA was -0.22 per cent in 2014-15 and 0.65 per cent in 2015-16. Those were the two years when the country witnessed severe drought, which could have affected crop production. Although the y-o-y growth rate in real Agri GVA jumped to 6.27 per cent in



Photo: Dinodia

Table 3: Quarterly Growth in Sectoral GVA at 2011-12 prices, on a Y-o-Y basis, (per cent)

| Sectors | 2017-18 | | | | 2018-19 | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| AGRICULTURE (1) | 4.16 | 4.48 | 4.58 | 6.53 | 5.07 | 4.15 | 2.67 | -0.08 |
| 1. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing | 4.16 | 4.48 | 4.58 | 6.53 | 5.07 | 4.15 | 2.67 | -0.08 |
| INDUSTRY (2+3+4+5) | 0.81 | 6.95 | 7.98 | 8.10 | 9.98 | 6.73 | 7.07 | 6.95 |
| 2. Mining & Quarrying | 2.89 | 10.84 | 4.46 | 3.75 | 0.39 | -2.09 | 1.28 | 4.25 |
| 3. Manufacturing | -1.65 | 7.12 | 8.64 | 9.51 | 12.44 | 6.95 | 6.66 | 6.83 |
| 4. Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & other Utility Services | 8.55 | 9.16 | 7.52 | 9.21 | 6.72 | 8.66 | 8.23 | 8.49 |
| 5. Construction | 3.27 | 4.75 | 7.96 | 6.44 | 9.59 | 8.47 | 9.63 | 8.05 |
| SERVICES (6+7+8) | 9.42 | 6.79 | 7.98 | 8.20 | 7.23 | 7.43 | 7.22 | 7.71 |
| 6. Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication and Services related to Broadcasting | 8.30 | 8.27 | 8.30 | 6.44 | 7.77 | 6.93 | 6.87 | 5.78 |
| 7. Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services | 7.78 | 4.83 | 6.85 | 5.49 | 6.64 | 7.17 | 7.27 | 8.23 |
| 8. Public Administration, Defence and other Services | 14.84 | 8.84 | 9.16 | 15.17 | 7.58 | 8.68 | 7.63 | 9.95 |
| GVA at Basic Price | 5.91 | 6.57 | 7.32 | 7.91 | 7.78 | 6.84 | 6.32 | 6.25 |
| GDP | 5.99 | 6.77 | 7.69 | 8.13 | 8.02 | 6.96 | 6.55 | 6.47 |

Note: Sectoral/overall GVA for Q4 calculated by using the formula: $GVA(Q4) = GVA(Annual\ Estimates) - \{GVA(Q1) + GVA(Q2) + GVA(Q3)\}$; Source: Press Note on Second Advance Estimates of National Income 2018-19 and Quarterly Estimates of Gross Domestic Product for the Third Quarter Q3 of 2018-19, released on 28th February, 2019, CSO, MoSPI.

Table 4: Year-on-Year Growth in Sectoral GVA at 2011-12 prices (per cent)

| Sectors | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AGRICULTURE (1) | 1.49 | 5.57 | -0.22 | 0.65 | 6.27 | 4.98 | 2.75 |
| 1. Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing | 1.49 | 5.57 | -0.22 | 0.65 | 6.27 | 4.98 | 2.75 |
| INDUSTRY (2+3+4+5) | 3.27 | 3.79 | 7.00 | 9.58 | 7.73 | 5.95 | 7.66 |
| 2. Mining & Quarrying | 0.60 | 0.19 | 9.72 | 10.15 | 9.47 | 5.05 | 1.25 |
| 3. Manufacturing | 5.45 | 4.97 | 7.90 | 13.06 | 7.94 | 5.93 | 8.12 |
| 4. Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & other Utility Services | 2.66 | 4.16 | 7.24 | 4.72 | 9.96 | 8.61 | 8.02 |
| 5. Construction | 0.35 | 2.66 | 4.30 | 3.60 | 6.06 | 5.60 | 8.95 |
| SERVICES (6+7+8) | 8.33 | 7.66 | 9.81 | 9.44 | 8.44 | 8.08 | 7.40 |
| 6. Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication and Services related to Broadcasting | 9.77 | 6.51 | 9.42 | 10.24 | 7.66 | 7.77 | 6.81 |
| 7. Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services | 9.74 | 11.15 | 11.05 | 10.66 | 8.70 | 6.20 | 7.27 |
| 8. Public Administration, Defence and other Services | 4.26 | 3.85 | 8.31 | 6.12 | 9.20 | 11.90 | 8.50 |
| GVA at Basic Price | 5.42 | 6.05 | 7.15 | 8.03 | 7.88 | 6.94 | 6.79 |
| GDP | 5.46 | 6.39 | 7.41 | 8.00 | 8.17 | 7.17 | 6.98 |

Note: Same as in Chart-1 (no sectoral GVA deflator has been calculated for this particular Table); Source: Same as in Chart-1



Photo: Dinodia

Year on year growth rate in real Agri GVA was -0.22 per cent in 2014-15 and 0.65 per cent in 2015-16—two years when the country witnessed severe drought, which could have affected crop production. Although the y-o-y growth rate in real Agri GVA jumped to 6.27 per cent in 2016-17, it slowed down to 4.98 per cent in 2017-18 and further tapered down to 2.75 per cent in 2018-19





Of the three major sectors of the economy, the agrarian sector grew the slowest (in terms of real Agri GVA) from 2012-13 to 2018-19 (except in 2013-14)

2016-17, it slowed down to 4.98 per cent in 2017-18 and further tapered down to 2.75 per cent in 2018-19.

Significantly, India saw demonetization in the period from November 8, 2016 to December 31, 2016. In 2018-19, drought like conditions adversely affected agricultural production in various states.

Out of the three major sectors of the economy, the agrarian sector grew the slowest (in terms of real Agri GVA) from 2012-13 to 2018-19 (except in 2013-14). In 2013-14, the y-o-y growth rate in Agri GVA at constant prices (viz. 5.57 per cent) was greater than the y-o-y growth rate in Industrial GVA at constant prices (viz. 3.79 per cent), as evident from *Table-4*. ●



| Form IV (See Rule 8) | |
|---|--|
| Ownership Statement of Farmers' Forum English Bi-Monthly | |
| 1. Name of the Newspaper | Farmers' Forum |
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| 10. Status of Owner | Registered association of farmers under Societies Act, 1860 |
| I, Ajay Vir Jakhar, do hereby declare and confirm that the above particulars of Farmers' Forum English Bi-monthly are correct and true. | |
| Place: New Delhi | Sd/- |
| Dated: 1st March, 2019 | Ajay Vir Jakhar Signature of Editor, Printer & Publisher |

Photo: Dinodia

Padma Shri for Thimmakka; Glory for her Green Children

Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai

The canopy of trees on the five-kilometre stretch between Kadur and Hulikal is a sight for fatigued souls on any hot summer's day. The once dry and dusty road is also a current tourist attraction and a walk down the stretch is replete with significance. It tells a tale of what went into its making; there is symbolism in the trees, which represent the "children" of Saalumarada Thimmakka (meaning row of trees) and her late husband, Chikkaiah.

Thimmakka has been a celebrity for a while, especially now after the President of India awarded her with the Padma Shri in 2019. At 108, she is still going strong, her indomitable spirit showing in her beatific smile.

This verdant leafy roof is a homage to that spirit; the wide branches of the trees planted by the couple over eight decades weave patterns as they spread out in a shady cover, their leaves fluttering like delicate fans. The crisp leaves underfoot provide a soft lining to the road and in these idyllic circumstances, Saalumarada Thimmakka can be spotted, occasionally basking in the bright sun. Fame often means busy weekends with people wanting her over for various environment programmes. On other days, Thimmakka can be seen in her small dwelling happily interacting with visitors.



**LOPAMUDRA
MAITRA BAJPAI**

Visual anthropologist and author engaged in research in socio-cultural anthropology, including folk culture and oral traditions

Courtesy: www.thimmakkafoundation.org





On one sultry summer evening, Mohan Kumari¹ met Thimmakka at her residence in village Hulikal, about 10 kilometres from Kadur, on the main road from Bangalore to Kunigal, about 70 kilometres from Bangalore city limits. Kumari went on to write about her interactions and the remarkable work of the Karnataka environmentalist, who is clearly the epitome of diligence and devotion.

The media has been covering her feat for at least five years now but Thimmakka is unmoved by tributes or trophies; her name is synonymous with her work for the environment that she has served for more than eight decades planting banyan and many other trees winning her the sobriquet 'Vriksha Mathe' (Mother of Trees). Global recognition came to Thimmakka when the British Broadcasting Corporation listed her as one of the most influential and inspirational women of the world² but the lady has had to overcome grave trials and tribulations.

Thimmakka grew up as one of the six children of the late Chikkarangayya and Vijayamma in Kakkenalli of Gubbi, Hosalli taluk in Karnataka. Her impoverished family depended on the father's income from working in the agricultural fields in an adjoining village, while her mother served as a hired help in the homes of wealthy landlords, cleaning grain, washing

Awards Galore

Saalumarada Thimmakka and her great afforestation project shot to fame when she received the National Citizens Award in 1996. Her exceptional achievements won for her the prestigious Nadoja Award, Karnataka Kalpavalli Award, Godfrey Phillip Award and Vishwathama Award. Thimmakka's Resources for Environmental Education, an environmental organization based in the USA, is named after her. Many awards are displayed on her shelf while several others are neatly tied up in gunny bags in her attic. The best ones find a place in the old trunk kept on the cot on which Thimmakka sleeps.

Thimmakka has played an important role in constructing a water tank to store rainwater in her village and also dreams of constructing a hospital.

¹ Mohan Kumari wrote about her interactions with Thimmakka in her book "104 Women Will Inspire – Inspiring Stories from Karnataka", published by Pramaan Publications, Mysore (2014).

² <https://thelocalindian.com/story-feed/get-inspired/saalumarada-thimmakka/>

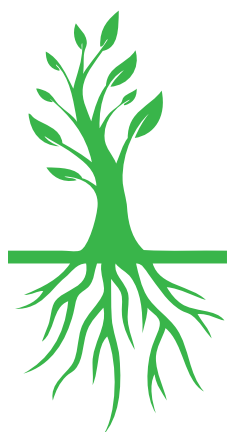




Photo: Pixabay

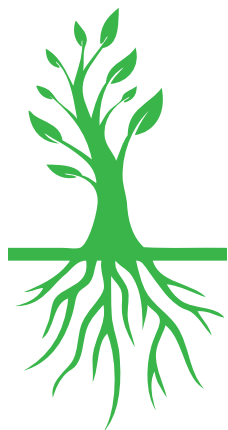
The British Broadcasting Corporation listed her as one of the most influential and inspirational women of the world

utensils and doing other sundry jobs. A spirited child, Thimmakka collected firewood and sometimes ‘muttukada’ leaves (sal tree or *Shorea robusta*) from the forest, which are sewn together to make plates to serve food. These she sold three kilometers away in the Gubbi village to support her family.

One day, Thimmakka had hidden half the money that she had earned from selling the leaves but was caught by her mother and severely scolded. The upset child marched out of her mother’s home and went to her father’s village, where she stayed on, doing odd jobs for the landlord’s wife. When it was time for her father to leave, the landlord’s wife requested Thimmakka’s father to let her live with them a little longer. Thus, Thimmakka stayed on for two more years, returning to the life of poverty once again and to prospects of marriage.

The marriage was finalized with Chikkaiah from Hulikal, who had four acres of land and managed livestock. Thimmakka made a happy home with her husband, mother-in-law





Courtesy: www.savitahiremath.com

Problems arose when Thimmakka failed to conceive. Relatives harassed them to give up their land because they had no heir

and brother-in-law, never mind the hard life, working at home and in the fields all day long. Problems cropped up when she failed to conceive and relatives started harassing the couple to give up their land because they had no heir. Infertility is an unforgiving condition in parts of rural India and complaints to the police did not help; taunts, gossip and abuses from the villagers continued; sometimes Chikkaiah joining the chorus. This would hurt her immensely. Thimmakka would be sad but Chikkaiah would soon be remorseful.

The couple despaired in solitude and started working at a stone quarry in Nagenahally; leaving before most people were up for their day's work. Reaching early meant that they could start work before the blazing sun made conditions worse. Matters took an even more tragical turn when Thimmakka lost one of her eyes. It was in the midst of such personal tragedy that the couple hit upon an idea. They would seek solace in Mother Nature; plant trees and tend to them as if they were

their own children. This showering of affection on nature soon bore fruit as the stretch between Kadur and Hulikal became brilliantly verdant.

This was the stretch on which Thimmakka and Chikkaiah had started their journey around eight decades ago. Every morning, before leaving for work, the couple watered several saplings; a daunting task as there was no water body nearby. Undeterred, they fetched water from a pond three kilometres away, 'Thopayya Kalyani, when necessary, while taking care to plant during the monsoons to spare themselves some of the rigours of carrying water. The saplings had to be protected from the marauding cattle and goats as well. So they built circular protectors around each sapling with firewood sticks. Once the saplings came up, the couple would rejoice.

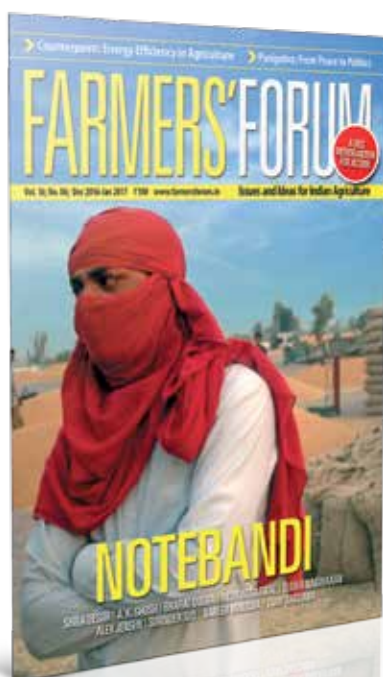
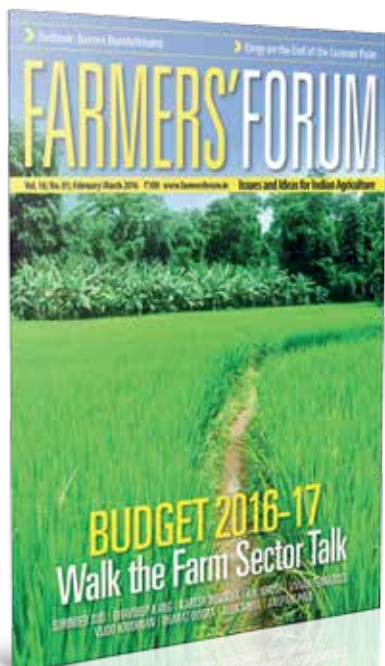
Initially they grafted the saplings from banyan trees (*Ficus*), available in plenty in the village. They grafted 10 saplings in the first year and planted these near the neighbouring Kudoor village, nurturing them and watching them grow. Once the saplings took roots, they planted another 15 the next year and 20 the year after. This continued for nearly 10 years and today 385 strong trees stand testimony to their efforts near Chikkaiah's hometown in Tumakuru district. The avenue is a sheer delight with its canopy of thick, wide and strong branches from two varieties of trees, 'Goni alla and 'Chittaru alla'.

Thimmakka and Chikkaiah's cup of joy was full, as they watched the saplings grow with lush green leaves. The remarkable feat soon caught attention and the village chairman gifted the couple a piece of land while the Director of Watershed Development Programme, K.V. Sarvesh, helped them to create a pond in it and gave Thimmakka the technical training to cultivate it.

Around 1991, Chikkaiah fell ill and passed away but his better half continued the work for the village and the environment. The asset value of the trees has been assessed at around ₹1.5 million³. Thimmakka has adopted Umesh Vanasiri as her son to help her manage in her advanced years. Apart from the banyan trees, the couple had planted some 8,000 other trees, which have flourished with her blessings.

Indeed, as she went to receive the Padma Shri, draped in a light green saree, forehead bedecked with lines of tilak and a red dot, she did not forget to bless the Indian President, touching his forehead, as any mother would. ●

³ <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/thimmakkas-green-crusade-transforms-heat-and-dust-hulikal/207401>



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WORLD BASIC INCOME CONGRESS

Basic Income as Freedom and Development

Schemes announced recently by a number of states addressing the farmers' crises will be discussed on the first day of the Congress – **The India Day**. The focus will be on Telangana's *Rythu Bandhu* and other similar schemes announced in different states, and their relevance to basic income discussion in India.

Basic Income is a modest income paid by government unconditionally to all the citizens individually without any means test or work requirement. The theme of the 19th World Basic Income Congress is 'Basic Income as Freedom and Development'.

A **diverse group** of people including academics, community organizers, policymakers and artists from all over the world will gather to discuss a wide range of themes from policy experiments to philosophical underpinnings of the concept of Basic Income.

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Hyderabad