



International Fellowships Program
India Alumni Network

SAJAG

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EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

We are happy to present the first issue of our newsletter 'SAJAG.' The word SAJAG in Hindi means Alert or Aware. The name of our newsletter signifies our alertness regarding the issues of social justice in our country. It also shows its mission to make readers aware on major social justice issues and make them alert to take timely action. Publication of SAJAG is started with objectives to foster communication within the network and with other stakeholders with whom we would be working and to consolidate understanding on the issues under discussion and to share relevant information with the audience.

It is envisaged that SAJAG would provide information and news on the burning issues in the area of social justice, new initiatives of alumni in different parts of the country, research and discussion papers, upcoming conferences and other relevant information.

We hope that SAJAG would become a repository of resources and information with articles, reviews, success stories, announcements and any other content that might be useful for our work on the issues related to social justice.

We would be happy to receive your contributions, comments and suggestions to make it better.

Let us join hands to make it a great success!

Editorial Team

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Reproductive and Sexual Health of Adolescents in India: Issues and Challenges

Tej Ram Jat



India is one of the ten countries with largest adolescent population. With 225 million population adolescents comprise nearly one-fifth (22%) of the total population of India (Census 2001). Adolescence (10 to 19 years) is a very important stage of growth and development in life, which marks the period of transition from child hood to adulthood. Adolescents form a dynamic group of population with specific needs for their reproductive and sexual health. This stage of life is a time of exploration and experimentation, with the lack of adequate knowledge that is being offered to young people about sexuality, contraceptives, HIV/AIDS, STDs, pregnancy and gender issues there is a high vulnerability for adolescents health in India.

District Level Health Survey conducted in 2002-03 by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare revealed that over 90 percent girls between age group of 10-19 years suffer from anaemia. It is well known fact that adolescent mothers are at a higher risk of miscarriages, maternal mortality and giving birth to stillborn and underweight babies. As per National Aids Control Organization's figures over 35 percent of all reported AIDS cases in India occur among young people in the age group of 15-24 years, which indicates that young people and adolescents are at high risk of contracting HIV infection.

The average age at marriage is gradually raising but the NFHS 3 data for India indicates that 44.5 percent women (20-24 years) are married before 18 years and 16% women (15-19 years) were already mother or pregnant at the time of the survey. In the changing external environment adolescents have more opportunities for premarital sex. The National Behaviour

Surveillance Survey 2006 indicates that 6.2 % adolescents in the age group 15-19 years reported sex with non-regular partner in last 12 months. Studies suggest that a substantial proportion of adolescents are sexually active but they have limited knowledge about reproductive and sexual health.

Adolescents being sexually active within marriage or out of marriage combined with a lack of knowledge about the body, reproduction and contraception are responsible for increasing number of unwanted pregnancies. Complications of pregnancy, delivery and unsafe abortion are the main threats and causes of morbidity and mortality among adolescent girls.

Adolescents face many barriers to service use, including cultural norms and policies that may restrict their access to affordable services and useful information, embarrassment at being seen at clinics, fear that confidentiality will not be honored and concern that staff members will be hostile and judgmental. The barriers to quality health services for young people can be seen in three broad categories logistical barriers, program related barriers and provider's attitude related barriers.

Various ministries of Government of India and state governments, UN agencies, other development partners and NGOs are working on the issues and concerns of adolescents in various parts of the country. These interventions include advocacy, awareness generation, capacity building of adolescents through training and resources provisions, counseling and delivery of services for reproductive and sexual health of adolescents. These efforts are not enough to address reproductive and sexual health needs of adolescents in the country.

The major challenges regarding reproductive and sexual health of adolescents in our country include

rapidly changing external environments and family dynamics, inadequate opportunities for education and training, gender based discrimination, exclusion and inequities in social, economic and political participation, malnutrition and diseases, lack of adolescent friendly health services, lack of appropriate policy framework, lack of resources available for funding programmes and activities for overall development of adolescents.

The importance of understanding the special and unique needs of adolescents regarding reproductive and sexual health must be recognized. The adolescent population is not a homogeneous group, therefore the planners need to recognize the vast diversity of adolescent population group which includes- in-school and out of school, rural and urban, married and unmarried, adolescent boys and girls, adolescents from tribal and minority groups, the employed and the unemployed etc. Keeping the diversities in mind there is a need of a supportive policy framework, age appropriate and culturally sensitive programmes and interventions, which can address specific need of various groups of adolescent population. Adopting a rights and

equity based approach for bringing adolescents in the mainstream of development is very crucial. Given the fact that adolescents tend not to use existing

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generalized reproductive health services, specialized approaches must be established to attract, serve and address special health concerns of the adolescents.

Along with the above mentioned

measures the policy makers must focus on adopting appropriate policy framework, increasing resource allocation for adolescent programmes, expanding reproductive and sexual health services for adolescents, improving quality of general health services, removing cultural barriers for adolescent's access to services, promoting and strengthening inter-sectoral coordination at policy and programme levels, making conducive environment for holistic development of adolescents, ensuring adolescents' involvement and participation in planning and implementation of programmes as well as developing appropriate programmes for socially disadvantaged adolescents.

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IFPIAN PHOTO GALLERY



A Stitch in Time Saves Nine

Abdul Lateef Usta

'Art is much less important than life, but what a poor life without it.'

Robert Motherwell



The various genres of arts and visual heritage have been considered to be the integrated parts of the various societies and nations. India, the country of extraordinary architectures, embellished manuscripts, astonishing handicrafts, and enchanting frescos and paintings contains a brilliant history of art from Proto-historic Harappa to these days of Malls.

In Indian context, it would not be exaggerated mentioning that from the past many years more arts, historic monuments, more artifacts and our other visual-cultural heritage have been on the verge of extinction or decayed. Invaluable works of art and manuscripts were dumped in godowns without documentation and records. Commercialization and the culture of mass production have started to erode our visual heritage, and aesthetic values of arts & handicrafts. At this rate, every art connoisseurs may fear that coming generations may never be able to experience the richness and wonder of our rich arts and visual heritage.

Issues in Art Conservation

1. Remoteness of the undeveloped regions causing injustice while decision making for Art Conservation. In Indian context, a numerous genres of art are nourished and recited in many economically undeveloped and remote regions. Owing to some contexts of social, geographical, cultural and economic relevance of these regions, the arts and visual heritage related to these can be considered to be more susceptible and less prolific than their counterparts of the developed regions. However, these traits might be taken in to account for benefiting the existence and conservation of them and their relevance better than in the developed regions.
2. Lack of strong legislation assurance
3. Financial scarcity and pessimistic approach of mass for art conservation
4. Political, cultural, economical and tourism invasion in economically undeveloped and remote regions, from developed regions.

Problem solving

The problems in art conservation exist nationally and locally as well. The many key efforts might be implied for conserving the arts.

1. Establishing the effective funding guarantee.
2. Conservation obligations by legislation.
3. Mobilising financial allocations and technical resource to conservation programs (particularly in remote and undeveloped regions)
4. Developing concrete plans and integrate them in the local urban and artist / artisan development theme.
5. Involvement of the local traditional- Indigenous artists and local expertise in order to negotiate and exchange the information fabricating a more realistic consequence.
6. Nurturing the public spontaneous conservation sense through promoting more practical public education programs. These might include the amalgamation and application of the Western as well as Indian -traditional techniques for conserving the arts and visual heritage.
7. Assessing and representing the Indian arts and importance of assets of historical and cultural significance (especially of country side and villages), in national and international arena.
8. Spic and span campaigning to portray the need of art & visual heritage conservation.

9. Sustainable and holistic development for the poor voiceless communities of artists and artisans, by:
 - I. Bringing traditional splendour of traditional and indigenous arts into urban lives while protecting the dignity and skills of the artists and artisans.
 - II. Arranging and providing the scholarships / financial assistance to the disadvantaged artists and art-scholars.

Conclusion

It is not the credit that we take with us, but the arts and heritage we leave behind. Therefore, we as citizen of today's global world, have the right to voice our concern and a responsibility to protect our arts and our heritage; whether it is conserving the aesthetic values and beauty of arts, handicrafts of our locality or conserving the glory of the ancient monuments. We don't have to be an art conservator or an art historian. We just need to have a passion and zeal to

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care enough for our arts and heritage. Today, more than ever, there is an urgent need for action, A need for all of us to come together and to accumulate our resources, voicing our concern to conserve and promote our arts and heritage.

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Leadership Academy for Social Justice (LASJ)

Sony Pellissery



Government of India has recently initiated a huge investment for talent hunting for the development of science and technology recently. The project aims to pick up bright brains from the secondary schools, and to nurture these children until they complete their research degrees through science education in India and abroad. The project aims to create leaders of science and technology in India.

Science and technology, which are important for progress, but at the same time with no track record of ensuring egalitarian society, are treated with such care and importance, with huge spending for nurturing of leaders in those disciplines. Paradoxically, democracy and the issues of social justice, which requires much

There is a frightening lack of leadership.

(Kofi Annan speaking on actions required for climate change response on 15 November, 2006)

more careful nurturing is left to take care of itself. Therefore, leaders produced and recognised by the society are puppets of the power structure of society. Leaders, who are ready to stand for powerless sections of society, are simply not created. The potential leaders or 'diamonds in the margins' have been left out. Often, well-intentioned leaders, shaped by the society, fall into the trap of corruption and public disservice, because their leadership skills had not been shaped by social justice concerns. Leadership Academy for Social Justice (LASJ) aims to take up this challenge of nurturing leaders to deal with social justice issues. IFPIANs will be involved

in identify & training such potential leaders and being available for mentoring if required.

Leaders can recognise leaders

LASJ aims to identify the young 'diamonds in the margin' (less than 30 years) from various corners of the country, and to bring them together for one week training at various locations in India. LASJ participants are not selected through any competitive procedures. LASJ participants are identified by developmental professionals during their practice in the villages or urban areas. The developmental professionals have identified them because they have already demonstrated some leadership traits in their communities. LASJ is not primarily designed for an employee of an NGO for improving their efficiency. (But LASJ may be done under the aegis of any NGO if they request such programme be run for their employees or selected individuals in their operation area). Rather, it is a programme aimed at enhancing the community leadership traits. Educational qualification is not a criterion for selection. However, a minimum qualification of 12th standard will be encouraged.

Leaders can train leaders

The training segment may be of the duration of 4-7 days, depending on the need of the group. At any given training 3-4 alumni may be involved.

The training topics will be a combination of practical skills, and perspective building such as: Basics of social justice and development, Community intervention strategies, The skills for conflict management, Negotiation skills, Change management, Identifying injustice and means of tackling, Methods of organising and inspiring, Pros and cons of cooperation, Effective public speaking, Communication skills, Skills for conducting meeting, Issues in taking pro-poor stand, Dealing with power structure of society etc. These sessions will be presented through games as well as with stories from exemplary leaders' cases and videos.

Do leaders need mentoring?

After the one week training, the leaders go back to their community. They will be assisted by a mentor – if

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required - (most likely the person who has recommended the leader) to ensure the learning gained through academy will be nurtured. It is expected that since IFPIANs work closely with communities, they will be acting as mentors as well. The details of mentoring duty will be provided through a primer later.

An army of leaders is the outcome

This is expected to be created rippling effect from the IFPIANs, who are recognised for their leadership abilities in the social sector. By identifying and mentoring next generation leaders, we are reproducing the ideals we already possess, namely the passion for social justice. It is hoped that the lacuna for trained leaders will be bridged through this. A system will be created to report the success stories of these leaders, and each success story would generate further energy for success.

What should I do?

If you believe you have energy to motivate future leaders, make a move right now, and shoot a mail to lasj.ifpian@gmail.com as soon as possible. Also drop wonderful ideas you may have to strengthen this initiative. INSPIRING A LEADER A DAY KEEPS THE SOCIETY HEALTHY.

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The Shakespeare of Dalit

Abhishek Kumar



Having written 35 plays, he is known as Shakespeare. However, the only similarity is the same number of plays what Shakespeare has in account. He has written special things about common mass whereas Shakespeare wrote common things about special people. Mahendra Malangia is one of the milestones of modern theatre of Mithila, a cultural region depicting the sensibilities of people from Bihar and South Nepal. A farmer and teacher from a small multi-caste village, Malangia is devoted for theatre as to advocate the oppressed and disadvantaged wings of society.

Like other parts of India, Mithila is also a highly cast-ridden society where ruthless differences can be seen in every walk of life; not only among people and customs but also in language as Maithili being the mother-tongue is categorised according to particular caste. If talking about arts, the region has witnessed the evolution of Mithila (Madhubani) painting and the development or degradation of various arts & crafts forms such as Sujni, Siki, Khatwa, Manjusha, folk music & dance, Vidyapati Sangeet etc. Mithila too had the rich classical theatre in Sanskrit & Maithili before 15th century, which was later, replaced by the lively folk theatre practiced by untouchables.

The early modern Maithili theatre practitioners initiated a theatre for upper casts mostly influenced by the classical theatre where the subjects discuss the life of either gods, positioned at the top of the god's hierarchy or the people belong to the upper levels of the society. Side-by-side, the lower casts carried on with folk theatre, their own gods (Dalit gods), people and language. Ironically, there was no way of mingling the two streams of theatre as the intellectuals (almost all belong to the upper casts) always believed in either the former group or in 'no theatre for civilised society'.

Here came few daring and pioneering men, who took the oath to change the discourse by creating dialogues between the two opposite sections of society, Malangia was one of them. Now it is possible for one to observe the 5, 000 to 10, 000 couple of eyes watching some painted moving characters in a remote village of Bihar when the dark night stares at a lighted stage and enjoys 'the saga of untold and the voices of unheard'. Malangia has crafted this magic in which the sons of oppressors portray the sons of oppressed with the genuine feelings and in their alleged crude or uncivilised language.

This new form of theatre is a tribute to ever-neglected, downtrodden wing of society; well written and well performed by groups consisting members from diverse castes, religions and nationalities. The effective combination of realistic themes & styles with indigenous taste illustrate the untouched subjects such as the life of underprivileged, human relationship, contemporary picture of rural and semi-urban life, outstanding story design & dialogue and a theatre of all three generation in terms of aesthetics, thought and presentation style. The standard of creation & entertainment at the least resources develop low cost theatre, a demand of time and situation.

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A Moment of Realisation

Usha Prajapati



There are always in a moment of obligation our lives, which becomes an important milestone for our existence. I am thankful to my confused state of mind after coming back to India completing my master's study from United States. I was looking for the answer for the ongoing question what is next? I must say it was not easy and still it is not easy but it has been a journey of self-reflection for me, people and country as whole.

After studying about the deeper aspects of the world development new doors had opened for me. I felt that I was looking at the world from a new perspective. I am thankful to those phases of uncertainty because this phase helped me finding my new self.

During my family visit to south of India and Bihar I felt that I am close to the answer of my question what is next? One evening while discussing with my sister, a common urge to give back to our roots was getting more and more powerful. It was for our own hometown, Gaya in Bihar, which has been neglected for years.

It made me realize the need of change at that place always existed but I could never recognize that. After travelling and working around the country and studying abroad I had gathered those tools which made me confident and capable to take this initiative for socio-economic and environmental development for the place and people where I come from.

I know this is not an easy task but my biggest strength is my family who extended their hands to support this work. Our journey has just begun in November 2008, we are taking little steps to awaken the people and society for their better life and future under the umbrella of **"Samoolam" Awakening Gaia**.

"Gaia" is at once the whole earth and also symbolizes the little town Gaya. The greatest strength of Gaya is the ancient spiritual heritage; it is the land of the bodhi tree under which Gautam Buddha attained enlightenment, it is the land of Vishnu where Hindu pilgrimages come once in their life to thank their

ancestors for their existence. It is this presence that makes Gaya deeply meaningful and symbolic to India and the whole world.

Our strength comes from our ancient roots, the roots that are accessible to us from the depths of our heart; the source of all that is True, Good and Beautiful; it is the perennial source of our creative power. By nourishing our roots we can bring forth a greater flowering - hence the name 'Samoolam' which means 'including the roots' or 'as a whole'.

Our vision "Aspire to awaken the people to envision and build a better future". Samoolam envisions empowering community in Gaya and neighbouring regions by developing an integrated sustainable socio-economic and environment friendly system to help improve the lives of people and society.

About Gaya

Gaya is historically known for its religious and spiritual destinations such as Vishnupad and Bodhi Gaya the UNESCO designated world heritage place known for its Buddhist pilgrimage. But under this glory of spiritual power, Gaya has also been neglected for decades due to an ill political system in the state of Bihar. There is not much development that has happened in the people's life and infrastructure.

The slow development rate and bad infrastructure has done enormous damage to this place by increasing unemployment, economic crisis, bad civic system, and increase in crime rate. We believe that the time has come when we as the citizens of this place can give back to our roots with our expertise. Samoolam is our first initiative in this direction. We look forward to contribute to creating a sustainable system to handle these development issues so that the local community takes the ownership and empowers themselves economically, socially and environmentally.

Currently Samoolam has begun to work in two fields.

1. Prosperity

Focus of this project is the socio economic development of the weaker section of the society, women in particular. We are working towards craft heritage revival and capacity building working with women with non-traditional economic skills. Our goal is focus on entrepreneurship development by training them in professional skills, marketing and providing financial support through Micro-finance.

2. Harita

Focus of this project is on 'Green Gaya' to bring about environmental awareness among the residents. Our focus areas are waste recycling, plantation, and plastic waste reduction. We want to reach school children first and through them the adults.

Our ongoing projects are:

1. **Bodhi-leaf craft support:** A pilot project is going on in the *Miabigha* village Bodhgaya where auspicious Bodhi leaf based craft is struggling to survive. This unique craft is sustained by only 250 families from *Mushar* also known as untouchable community according to Hindu caste system. We aim to empower this community economically as well socially. This craft is solely unable to feed these families due very low profit,



lack of product diversification, middlemen and market exploitation. Results of those families are leaving this work to get daily wage work outside their village.

2. **Capacity building:** In the suburbs of Gaya town training programs has been started to provide craft trainings to the women with non-traditional economic skills. Due to high rate of illiteracy and unemployment people are living on the meagre income such as Rs 300/month. Samoolam is working towards training these women with new craft skills and marketing to empower them as new workforce who could be further interpreters or linked with the commercial markets to secure the sustainable source of livelihoods.

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Micro Finance Helps Women Get More Economic Power and Social Acceptance

Sanjay Kumar

Meet Rajani from village Nagla Dulhe Khan, a landless woman living along with her husband and two children. She has been a member of a Self Help Group for last two years saving Rs 80 each month. She happily informs the interviewer, "I have more than Rs 2000 as my own saving, isn't it amazing"?

She mentioned one case in which her group decided even to extend helping hand to one of the non-members when that woman was having delivery complications at mid-night but did not have any source to get money

from. The group immediately called up the meeting and provided Rs 1000 so that she could go to the hospital and see the doctor.

Her face beamed with confidence when she said "group hamara ghar ka bank hai, isse hum kabhi bhi paisa le sakte hai". (Group is like our bank at home, we can get loans any time we want). She took three small loans from the group, Rs 3000 for buying the diesel



for the purpose of irrigation, Rs 2000 for purchasing bajra for home consumption and other Rs 2500 for fodder. She has been able to repay all her loans.

This was not the case three years ago when she and her husband had to run pillar to post to get loans from the local money lender that too at 3 to 5 percent per month depending upon the urgency of the situation and the availability of collateral.

Munni- a widow from the same village but a different group shares the same experience from her group. She has been the member of this group for last six years; she took back her savings Rs 3800 and invested that amount in getting an insurance policy for herself.

"We are not rich, but you can not call us poor either," she proudly says.

Suresh of Bheelgavan says, "Ab humein bohare se paise lena nahi padhte". (I don't need to go to money-lender now). She has Rs 4300 as her own saving in the group. She took Rs 15000 as a loan and invested in leasing a stone mine for her husband for one year. From this mine, she was able to earn more than Rs 70000 last year, which she used to construct a new cemented house for her family, took insurance worth Rs 10000 for herself and again got a new lease of stone mine for next year.

Kamlesh Parmar has been a member of SHG for last 6 years, last month i.e. December 2008, the group decided to distribute all savings i.e. Rs 57000 among themselves. They used to save Rs 10 each week before but now they save Rs 20 each week.

She says "*bohare ke paas jane ki zaroorat nahi padhti, ghar ke bank se kaam chalte hai*," (Now we do not need to beg with our hands folded before the money-lender, we are able to manage from our own bank). This group was linked to bank twice, first time 4 years back for Rs 26000 and for Rs 120000, both loans

For the women benefiting from the project's initiatives, acquiring assets and the ability to run small businesses have made all the difference to their self-esteem and autonomy. "My shop and buffaloes are my assets, just like my gold jewellery," says Kamlesh who purchased two buffaloes through the project. "My husband cannot sell it because it belongs to me."

have been repaid. She took Rs 8000 from this loan and started a new grocery store in village itself for herself, which is helping her earn around Rs 100 each day.

She also runs dairy milk collection center for Mother dairy, and earns about Rs 500 to Rs 1200 per 10 days from that center. For the women benefiting from the project's initiatives, acquiring assets and the ability to run small businesses have made all the difference to their self-esteem and autonomy. "My shop and buffaloes are my assets, just like my gold jewellery," says Kamlesh who purchased two buffaloes through the project.

"My husband cannot sell it because it belongs to me."

Being a thakur woman, it is not well accepted for a woman to go outside even to fetch water, leave alone, going by herself to the market or other places, even her husband was quite wary of her going to Dholpur to attend meetings or talking to officers. However, her participation opened several avenues of income generation for the family, that's why she can make decisions on her own.

She used not to have single penny in her hand but now at least has Rs 5000 savings on her name in the group, her body language and confidence level was quite positive and strong when she was sharing her experience after having involved in all the programs.

When I first reached at her house, she immediately asked her husband to prepare tea for us and told him that she is going to be interviewed; this reflected how women are becoming more assertive and realizing their role in family matters as crucial one.

She says, "Now I have more control over my sons and husband".

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