**Transcripts of interview recordings**

**Please note that these recordings represent the views and opinions of interviewees, their ages and positions, at the time the interviews were conducted.**

**Some anglicised place names have also changed over recent years, reverting back to their native forms. Examples are Bombay officially changing to Mumbai, and Bangalore reverting to Bengaluru in 2014. You may find these city’s names used inter-changeably.**

**We have aimed at transcribing the interviews as correctly as possible, given the authenticity of the interviews.**

1. **Transcript of interview with Aishwarya, the older of two sisters, a 19-year-old student in Bangalore.**

Hi, I’m Aishwarya. I think you just met my sister Apeksha and, as she said, we live in a joint family. And parents, grandparents and us siblings, and of course my dog. And we spend a lot of time together – the family spends a lot of time together. We eat our meals together, we watch TV together, and we get a bond, so that we really know our parents and grandparents … what they like, what they dislike… everything.

So that way we learn to respect our family, and that inculcates a lot of culture to us. And things which my grandparents did, when they were younger, sometimes we do it now, and though it’s not relevant in the modern time, we still enjoy it, because it’s a part of India. It’s a part of our culture, and it’s part of the society. So I think living with my grandparents has made a huge difference to me, because my parents are pretty modern too, but because of them (my grandparents), I get to experience all the festivals of the Indian culture, and we celebrate most of the festivals.

So we learn about everything… India… the different gods that we have, the different religions that we have, the different practices that we follow, the superstitions that we follow. Everything, it’s a new thing every time…every year we learn something new if we really sit and observe our festivals.

Q: What is the superstition that you follow?

There are a lot of superstitions. It may sound very silly, but there was also a reason that it came about when it was formed. Some of the superstitions... One is that you should not cut your hair on a Tuesday … or you shouldn’t cut your nails after dark. We believe that every superstition that the olden people came up with had a reason. They had a scientific reason, and maybe it’s not completely relevant today, but they were very thoughtful when they came up with these thoughts.

Okay, so the superstition which …the reasoning for not cutting nails after dark is that in olden times there never used to be electricity and there never used to be tube-lights or bulbs or any such thing, so people did not want us to cut nails in the dark, so that other people wouldn’t hurt themselves by stepping on the nails. Though we have lights and everything now, we just follow the superstition, because that’s what our mums did, our grandmothers did, our great-grandmothers did, and then it’s the reason. There is a reason for every superstition.

And another superstition is that pregnant women aren’t allowed to go to the marketplace when…of course when they’re pregnant, it’s only because… the reason behind that is that the old people did not want a pregnant woman to go to the marketplace, because if there is any bacteria or anything that could harm the child, they wanted to prevent that. But that scientific reason has been turned and has become a superstition now.

From superstition I am going to modern India, modern Bangalore… Bangalore has made its mark on the map and Bangalore is… I think it is very well known in most countries of the world now, because we are outsourcing a lot of jobs here due to the IT industry. And we have areas in Bangalore which are meant for… they are called software parks. They have a lot of all the IT industries – the big IT industries are over there.

And we also have something called SEZs. They are the Special Economic Zones, and companies which are located in the SEZs are given concessions by the government, and they are allowed to pay lesser taxes because they provide employment for so many people, and they are doing good for the city also. And because of the IT industry the economy has gotten a lot better. The city has developed so much more, and we are attracting people all over the country. We are attracting people all over the world – to come and live in Bangalore and experience the city…

Q: In what other ways has it affected the city?

There is a term coined now, it’s called ‘Bangalord’. And this is actually for people outside of India who are losing their job, because there are…their companies prefer to outsource their jobs to people in Bangalore, who can probably do it better. Also I can say – I take pride in saying that because I am a Bangalorian – and also... it costs cheaper for them...it’s cheaper for the companies to outsource the jobs to Bangalore, because there’s a lot of employment opportunities here. There are a lot of people who are ready to do the work…

Q: What would you like to do?

I am actually already pursuing my career. I wanna become a chartered accountant. That’s also my grandfather’s profession, so I hope to make him proud one day. And I finished my 12th grade two years back. I’m also doing my graduate course right now. It’s called B Com. That’s Bachelor of Commerce, and I’m doing my Chartered Accountancy. My Chartered Accountancy involves me having to work seven hours a day in a chartered accountant firm, so that I get hands-on experience in the field, and I’ll be prepared to do it once I complete my exam. I have three exams to write in the course of the 3½ years that… that’s the duration of my course.

And so for these exams we have to take classes. So I go… my daily routine would be ... I get up in the morning, I go to class. Finish my classes. Go directly to work. Go work for seven hours and then go for class again, and then come back. So it’s a very hectic day but at the end of the day it’s worth it, ’cause I’m gonna reach my goal one day, and I’ll do my parents proud, I’ll do my grandfather proud. And I’ll do myself proud, most importantly.

Q: Will you be staying here?

I’m...not sure, but I think I want to stay in India, because this country has given me so much and it’s made me the person I am today. And also I’ve done my entire education… everything here, so I wanna be able to give back to my country, and if I’m gonna go work elsewhere, I’m contributing to their economy and not India’s economy. So I’d rather stay in India.

Q: Do you have big dreams for your future? What about a husband?

I don’t know. My grandmother is already planning my wedding. But I’ve told…my father supports me, and I think I’ll get married, when I’m ready to get married…When the time comes, It’ll come. I’ll get married. Sometime.

Q: Who chooses your husband?

Me. I choose my husband. My parents have given me the freedom to do that. But eh…my grandmother still wants to find a good boy from a good family, who’s studied well and what not.

Q: What do you tell her then?

I tell her to give me time…let me finish studying, because that’s very important to me right now. And it will be. So…I have told... explained to her and my father has also explained to her. And ultimately the decision is left up to me... Even if she finds a boy, she can’t force me to marry him, so… when the time comes, I’ll get married.

Q: Do you have boyfriends?

Actually, no. I haven’t had any boyfriends, ’cause I don’t have time for it. It may sound really cheesy and it may sound like a stupid excuse, but I don’t... I haven’t had any boyfriends. I have been really busy.

And other than my CA and my studies…a couple of friends and me, we have started an organisation. We work with under-privileged children on a monthly basis. We go more than a month and we work with different types of under-privileged children. And basically we started this because it was my friend’s dream. She wanted to do this, and she asked us to support her and contribute. And this is also my dream. It’s a passion. I like working with under-privileged people in general, like even old people or children who haven’t got the same opportunities that I have.

And also I love working with animals, but right now I am working with under-privileged children. And we work with dyslexic children, we work with orphaned kids, we work with kids from abusive families. So we go, we go... we have ... the organisation is called *Ranga.* And *Ranga* in Kannada (Kannada is a language which we speak here in Bangalore), and *Ranga* in Kannadameans ‘platform’, so basically we are trying to provide a platform for the children to be able to express themselves, because they don’t have parents they can talk to, or they may not necessarily have the right friends they can talk to, so we are trying to provide a platform for them to express themselves, and also know that there are other people – there are so many people who care about them.

And also *Ranga* is a platform for other kids my age, other people my age who want to contribute and give back to the society, but do not have a channel to do so – they don’t know where to go, how to do it, what they can do. So we are trying to bridge that gap and bring the people and the children together, so that we can make a difference to them, and we can impact their lives. And this is going to be a life-time-commitment – this is something I want to do for the rest of my life, ’cause it’s very fulfilling. And I feel so much gratitude for everything that I have... after meeting these children. I am very blessed – very privileged to be in such a good family.

And we also teach them life skills, and moreover we teach them things which they cannot learn from school, or which their wardens or people who take care of the orphanage cannot teach them. And all this we do through really fun activities. And the best thing about this is, though we are going there to teach them, there is so much that we learn ourselves… about them, and there is so much we learn from them – there are so many things... new things we learn from them, and I am very, very grateful to have the opportunity to do this.

Q: Is this something that a great number of your friends do?

Actually it’s a small group. We started with three of us – that’s three of my friends, and now our permanent team has extended to five people, so we’re on the permanent team, and our voluntary base has spread to around 25-30 students for these two months. They are working on a certain number of projects with us. So we meet with them – we tell them what *Ranga* is about – what our objectives are and what we aim at doing. And if they are interested, they can sign up for any of the projects that we have lined up for the near future, and if they are happy with their experience and if they want to continue doing it with us, they are more than welcome to continue – to stick to it, and if not, they can just walk away. It’s completely up to them.

And there are also so many of the volunteers who have their own projects – their own social projects that they want to start, but they never have got the help or the support to start it. So once they talk to us about it, and if it is something that aligns with *Ranga’s* objective, then we are helping them also to start their own social project, so that we create social entrepreneurs and impact the most number of people in the city. And things like this is what will make India more and more developed.

Q: Are you all women?

No, we are not all women. We are boys and girls of a similar age group. We are all around teenagers, and it is just so that we all think alike and our aims, like… match. And so that’s why we just get together. It’s nothing like you have to be a woman, or you have to be just only boys. Nothing like that, because both men and women have so much to give to the other people, so there is no differentiation that way.

Q: But have women become more active in this society?

Most definitely. Women have become very active in the society and they are very sensitive towards other people’s needs. That’s just how women are built.

Q: Do you have heroes? Someone you look up to? Great people?

Probably. There are so many things to learn from people like Nelson Mandela or Mother Teresa and our very own, the father of the nation, Gandhiji, because just by the way he lived, he taught us so much. And also I look up to my grandfathers – both my grandfathers are very socially active and they contribute so much to the society. And I’ve been brought up with my grandfather, so I think that’s where it has hit me, and it is within me that I wanna help the society, because my grandparents have influenced my life in so many ways.

Q: What did your grandfathers do in society?

One of my ... my father’s father, the grandfather I stay with, he saves money. He has a bank account, and he puts money into it every month, and that goes towards any social cause that he supports for that period of time. It could be anything. It could be encouraging cultural activities like dance or music, or it’s used to feed the poor children or any such thing. But it goes entirely to the society, to help the society in some way.

And my other grandfather, he is very involved in environmental issues. And this grandfather is my mother’s father. He is involved in environmental issues and he is involved in upliftment of the children, and poor children, and people from backward regions, and also he goes to an old-age home every day and he serves food there. He’s been doing this for more than five years now, and it’s very enjoyable to go with him, and all these old people are happy to see that my grandfather is able to bring his grandchildren with him, and it’s very nice to interact with them, because they are so happy after we’ve talked to them.

There are many perceived notions of India that… somehow...that there are snakes all around the place or there are bugs all around the place, and there are elephants and cows and camels walking all around the place. Jungles and what-not. But that’s not true. You come to India and experience the real India, experience the culture, the traditions, the society, the temples, the churches, the mosques, and the best thing is that there are so many religions. There are so many types of people all living together in harmony. Come to India and experience that!

1. **Transcript of interview with Apeksha, the younger of the two sisters in the same family. She was a 17-year-old student at Bishop Cotton Girls’ School, Bangalore.**

Hi. My name is Apeksha. I am from India and I live in Bangalore. I’m in the 12th standard right now and I live with my parents, my sister, my grandparents and I have a host sister from Germany.

We are a very close-knit family and I go to school every day and before school I go for basketball most of the time. And since I’m in the 12th standard it’s my year to write my Board exam, and it’s a big year for me. So I go for tuitions afterwards and come back and study, or watch TV and laze around for some time.

Q: Do you really get up early in the morning to go to basketball before going to school?

Yeah. I get up at 5.30. Have a bath, have my breakfast, get ready for school, go to school and my basketball practice is before school, at school. So practice starts at 6.50 in the morning. And I have practice ’til 8.15, and then, as soon as I finish basketball, I run up to my class, change my clothes, and then we have classes.

Q: Are you going to go on playing basketball? Are you a champion?

I am not so good, but I represent the school, and I love playing basketball. It’s a lot of fun, and I enjoy getting up in the morning and going for it. It’s my motivation to go to school. It’s a lot of fun. And we go for tournaments outside school. So we get to learn about other schools and meet other people, and it’s a really good experience.

Q: What else do you do – that’s before school, so what do you do in the afternoon?

Normally in the afternoons I have tuition sometimes, and I come home and help Mum around the house. And study… and because this is a very important year for me. And do chores. And watch TV, play on the computer and go out for a walk.

Q: Do you meet with your friends?

I meet with my friends mostly in the weekends, and we go out for a movie or lunch, or sometimes dinners, and we have sleep-overs once in a way.

Q: Where do you go for your dinners – lunches?

Normally we go to small restaurants, but because it is a large group, so we go to smaller places where we can make noise and have fun, because we can’t go to a big place and make a noise, because they will throw us out. And… or we go bowling sometimes. And if one person has to shop, the entire group goes out shopping for that one person.

Q: One goes out shopping?

If one person has to buy something all of us go out together.

Q: Where do you go to shop then?

Yeah, when one person has to shop, it’s just an excuse for all of us to tag along with them. We normally go to the famous street called Commercial Street or Brigade Road. There are a lot of shops and there are a lot of small shops, and all shops are not branded. And you get a lot of varieties of clothes. We also buy a lot of footwear, ’cause we have many varieties. And we wear bangles, and a lot of accessories. We wear ear-rings, and *bindis* (a red dot on the forehead) and chains, and we also wear shades. It’s a lot of fun. We just go out, and we have a lot of fun.

Q: What about the traditional clothes – do you wear that?

We wear a lot of traditional clothes. We… the normal traditional clothes are *saris,* and in the north they normally wear *ghagras*, which is a long skirt and an embroidered top – with it a *dupatta*, which is like a long piece of cloth, which you drape around yourself. We also wear *kurtas*, which are like a long shirt but they are made out of cloth and there are a lot of *kurtas* with lots of colours and lots of designs. And we normally wear our traditional clothes on festivals and weddings and functions like that.

Q: Are you good at IT? What about the computer? Do you use the computer?

I use the computer a lot. I download my music, I use my I-tunes, I chat, I have…I surf the net. I have friends abroad, so I’m always in touch with them with skype and hotmail and…well, I’m always online. And I use I-tunes for my I-board, and we share... my friends and me, we share music. Anything new that comes in we send each other through emails.

Apeksha tells us about her trip to Japan on a cultural exchange programme.

It was a two-week programme. And there were people from seven countries. We were 600 students and 60 teachers from seven countries, namely India, Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and New Zealand, and it was a really great experience. One of my friends from Australia came up to me and he goes: “Aren’t you Indian?” I said: “Yeah.” And then he says: “Do you go to school on an elephant?” And I was shocked that people think of Indians like that, and I don’t know what to say to him, so I asked him if he went to school on a kangaroo. And then he realised we are not a bunch of villagers here, and we are more developed than people think we are.

1. **Transcript of interview with Mr Babu Lal Sharma at the Gandhi Peace Foundation in Delhi. He did his Masters degree in Science and has been working in the Gandhi Peace Foundation for 43 years. He is now retired.**

**(please also see** [**http://www.gandhitopia.org/**](http://www.gandhitopia.org/)**)**

There is a need now for Gandhi, but we don’t practice him. We give our respects but we don’t follow him. That is the tragedy of every great person, you see. And I think Gandhi is one of the subjects of this tragedy.

So as far as the question of young people is concerned – young people know Gandhi. Who Gandhi was, but they do not know much about his work, about his ideas. They try to adopt simple lifestyle which is not full of comforts, but which is based on some dignity of labour.

So I do not know, but now there is a need to give some reinterpretation of Gandhi’s ideas and to bring those ideas into practice.

I think that when we discuss any problems we certainly bring in Gandhi’s ideas. We try to evaluate his ideas, and we feel that: *Oh, if this idea could be practiced?* But there were some certain circumstances with the individuals and the society that they could not follow.

So still I mean Gandhi is considered one of the alternatives. Whether you are able to adopt or not, but it is considered as one of the alternatives. Whether it is communism, whether it is capitalism, whether it is a democracy or a dictatorship - whatever it is, Gandhi’s ideas are considered everywhere as an alternative.

Gandhi now is really to be practiced, not to be discussed. Not to be worshipped, he needs to be practiced. And how to do this is a big challenge to all of us.

I think Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, they drew lots of inspirations from Gandhi. They drew a lot of inspiration about peace and non-violence. But Nelson Mandela supported Gandhi’s ideas of peace, but he could not practice much of non-violence, as Martin Luther King did. He practiced non-violence. He was able to mobilise the people. So I think they are the great followers of Gandhi in this present scenario of the present generations. They are the true followers of Gandhi in that sense.

(I am thankful to Attenborough who made the film about Gandhi in 1982 – ’83.)

1. **Transcript of interview with Colonel John Ellis, Principal of Bishop Cottons Boys’ School, Bangalore.**

Q: So you're the Principal of Bishop Cotton Boys' School. Could you tell me something about yourself and your work here?

I'm a colonel from the armed forces. I spent about 27 years in the army, looking after the education department of the armed forces. I took premature retirement from the army to come out and head this school.

They were looking out for someone who could manage such a big school. And they gave me the offer and I thought yes, why not. I could make a little difference in the lives of young people. I thought that that would be a bigger winning than getting more ranks from the armed forces. I took premature retirement and came out.

I belong to a Christian family in the centre of India known as Jabalpur. I did my schooling there in a lovely Christian school by the name of Christ Church. And then my college. Then joined the armed forces. I’ve been all over with the armed forces. My last posting was Director for Army Education. I was looking after the entire education for the armed forces. From there I took premature retirement. I had about six more years to go in the army. I came out and I’ve been here for the last two years, enjoying myself, looking after the Cotton boys, giving my bit of myself.

Q: How many students do you have?

Nearly 6000. The youth school started in 1865 by Reverend Pettigrew. He’s the founder of the school. And it was started as a school meant for the European children who had come down. And slowly it grew and over the last 20 years it has really transformed itself. It is one of the leading schools in India today. In the recent survey carried out by some of these magazines, we've been placed as number one school in South of India and number five on the all-India level. They carried out the evaluation based on certain parameters.

Q: What are the parameters?

They had basic five or six parameters they had given themselves. The type of leadership, the type of alumni, the type of infrastructure, the type of teaching, the type of teaching facility, commitment of the people, the parents' response. Based on that they carried out this in the entire country, and we are placed number five in the country and number one in the South. That's a big achievement. Just in the month of September this magazine (*Education World*) came out with this review. We are India’s most respected school.

So the school has been doing extremely well. Most of the boys are toppers. They do exceptionally well in all fields of life. You see the IT and other industrious boys of Bishop Cottons are there at the helm of faith. So the school has done its normal job and continues to do.

That is why the pressure is so high on the educational way up. For one seat you will get nearly about 300 to 400 boys applying. And if you walk around Bangalore, and you say Bishop Cotton, everyone will know that you should come here. Because the quality of education is so good here.

Quality means quality *in* education, in every small thing we do, we take deep interest, whether it is conditioning the child to behave properly, looking after having their own set of rules and following them. We encourage them. We have a lot of good activities here which most schools don’t even think of offering. For example we are having an IT Fest from the 23rd to 24th. We are getting about 50-odd schools from Bangalore coming in. Now the school can do that. We have the infrastructure and we have the space, we invite people. And my boys don’t take part in that - my boys conduct it. It’s a sort of a sharing my boys are doing. It’s the type of leadership my boys are into. That’s why they do so well wherever they go. There’s a lot of demand from foreign universities for my boys. We have about 90-odd universities coming from the USA, the UK, Europe and Southeast Asia. They come in to ask our boys to come and join them. On the campus at the moment we’ve got the University coming in from Singapore. They are carrying out interviews of my boys. They want to give ten free scholarships at the undergraduate level at Singapore. Free scholarships.

And they had an interview yesterday. It was a full day interview. Forty boys have been selected, so they find it very difficult as to who they should actually select. They are all so good. So the interview is still on, so I hope ten scholarships will be taken out. The government of Singapore is giving. We even get people from Harvard and Princeton coming in here and taking our boys. There is a big demand, very big demand for our boys, because of the fact that the higher education sector in India hasn’t grown as fast a pace as school education has grown. So there is a mismatch between supply and demand. The demand is there for higher education, but there are no facilities in India. That’s why the boys do prefer to go out, take a degree and come back, and do well for the country.

Q: What about English?

English is the medium of instruction. It’s not a second language. You talk to any of my boys and they will talk to you in the best possible English that you can find. It’s an English that is accepted now all over the world. It is so clean and so clear that everyone understands it. American-English or the English-English, not many people across the world understand, but Indian English everyone understands. It’s so clear and so simple. So the Indianisation of this language is being done, and the people who come here are so impressed with my children. And demand grows. (And you’ve been an old Cottonian, so you know the history of these schools.)

Q: Do you have any get-togethers with the Girls’ School?

Yeah, we have an annual social on the 14th of August. But of course at your time it was hardly anything, just some eight-ten girls passing out of the girls’ school and eight-ten boys passing out of the boys’ school. Today it comes to about 8-900 boys and girls passing out. So it’s very difficult to have a clear-cut social. It becomes more of a jam-session where they all come to dance. It’s not a social in the true sense, it’s more a jam-session. People come together - eat, drink, dance and go away. So they contribute. Most of the functions they come. They support us. Most of their functions we go, we support them. There is a healthy interaction between us. It carries on.

Q: What are the other languages that you teach here?

We teach Hindi as a second language, Kannada as a second language, and for those children with a foreign passport we have French. Now there is a demand even for German as a foreign language coming up. But because I got some people coming in from the German Consulate in Delhi, saying that they wanted us to start German as a language, because they were looking at close interaction between Bangalore and Germany. Because a lot of people from there would be coming, joining the IT companies here. And they would like to preserve their own language. And we have given them, but so far we have got not many demands for students with German. So we are just waiting to see. Maybe in the next coming session, if demand grows, we will. Then we have our own Indian languages like Telugu, Tamil, Manipuri… all these languages here are being taught as a second language. We have a three-language formula here in the country.

Q: It’s hard to hear. Some of you say that you consider English the first language and some of you say you consider Hindi the first language. Is there any official way of thinking about it?

The official way of thinking is that Hindi is the national language. But the constitution of India provides provision for teaching in English. These are old schools. And the method and the philosophy of teaching in India has still not materialised to that level to make Hindi as the… there are schools where Hindi is the mother-tongue and the main language, but those are known as Hindi-medium schools. Ours is the English-medium school. So we teach the English language. But by and large, because of the demand for English, people are now coming over to English- medium schools. And that’s why the emphasis is on English. Even as far as China people are coming here to learn English. So they have realised that English is the global language, and if you want to be a global citizen, English is the only way out.

Q: So is it also a boarding school?

It is a boarding school and we have a boarding capacity of 200 boys. They stay here on the campus itself.

Q: Where do they come from?

They come from all over the country and all over the world. We’ve got Koreans. We’ve got Malaysians. We’ve got people from South Africa. We are getting children coming from all over. But you see the problem with us is that we don’t have the capacity to cater to those needs. We have only a limited capacity and we look forward to our own children, although we do share with some of them who come, but the demand from our own parents is so heavy that we can’t meet the demand of those.

Q: What traditions have been passed down from the British?

The educational system is the British system that we follow. This public school system, where the prefectorial system and the house system is so important. That is a big tradition that we have. This tradition of having a church and a chapel inside the school campus, it’s a very British system. We are maintaining that and following that. And we have been delivering to the society the last century and a half. And we continue to deliver to the society. That’s why people come to us.

Q: Uniforms?

Uniforms also continue to be the same. The same tie as when the school started - it was green, yellow, gold. It’s continuing.

(A little boy comes in)

Hello. What’s your name?

Boy: Suresh

Here is a gift for you. Have a beautiful birthday. What are you going to do today? What has mummy made for you? Something special? Here’s a gift for you. Thank you for the lovely chocolate. Give madam also a chocolate.

Q: Thank you very much. Happy birthday.

The system in this country emanated from the British system, and what was good we have maintained it, and what is really Indian we have imposed it, and it has evolved and mingled and this is what we are. There is much Indianisation and our students are so good because the Indian culture is so rich. We don’t have the problems that the West is facing, like children going on the rampage in school. You go to my classroom – in the senior classes also – the boys react properly and sit properly in a very conducive environment. The environment there is not aggressive, that the child is ready to get up to the teacher, take out a gun and shoot the teacher.

There are no drugs in this school. There is no smoking on this campus. So we have maintained the very Indian tradition. They have values for each other, there is respect for the teacher, respect for the parents, because that is part of the Indian culture. Of course the influence of the West is always there through the TV and through these various channels, but somehow the Indian culture is so deep, that it’s taking time to erode it.

Q: If you have disciplinary problems, what do you do?

We don’t go in for any corporal punishment. The only way out is we call the parents, talk to the child, motivate the child, and try to go about it the right way. We try to win back the child rather than throw him out of the school, and say “Ok, you’re out!” We try to do our best through teachers. That is why the stress level of the teachers is very high. Because, after all, the parents are part of society, and society out there is not as conducive as it used to be. People are more aware of their rights, no-one is aware of their duties! As a parent, if you have the right to send the child here you have a duty also to perform. That people are not aware of. So we have to keep apprising them of their duties and I always maintain that this is a 50-50 partnership – 50% you do and 50% we do, and then you see how beautifully the child grows.

Q: And the parents come for parents’ meetings?

Yes, we have regular PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) meetings. You come in the evening and you will find the place flooded with parents. It’s a very regular thing, PTA meetings. I normally address them at a joint meeting and tell them what my visions and my priorities are. And this way we go on.

1. **Transcript of interview with Father Dr Matthew Singampalli, Principal of Christ Nagar Secondary School, Trivandrum, Kerala.**

I have been here at this school for the last six years and this school is affiliated to CBSE in New Delhi – CBSE is Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi. In my school there are about 2000 students, about 100 teachers and about 60 supporting teachers. The students of my school belong to different religions, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and so on. This school has been started about 11 years back, primarily to educate the students belonging to this locality and from the inception of the school we were trying to give quality education to all students, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. We also try to see that good values are instilled in all those students who passed out from this school so that they may become good citizens of tomorrow.

The aim of Christ Nagar School is to make leaders who are intellectually, spiritually, culturally, psychologically, socially acceptable to the society – who will live for love, truth and justice.

From the inception of the school we tried to cater for those students who are coming from economically weaker sections. We will see that 10-15 % of the students get the scholarship or fee concession while they are here in this school. And the result, from what I can see, is that those students who are coming from economically weaker sections coming to the school, sitting with other students – they come out as the best or second best in the class, speak beautiful English, take all the extra-curricular activities and come out as good citizens of the country.

And the school has been in this short period of eleven years – this is the eleventh year – the school has been awarded with computer literacy by the State Government of Kerala, excellence of art by the Government of India and ISA Award, that is International Schools Award organised by the British Council, London. And the school always tried to hold the values of truth, love and justice. Our highest goal is the all-round excellence of every student of this school, and we try to give maximum personal care to all students of the school. We also actively take part in all the philanthropic, social activities of the school, like constructing houses for the homeless by the students. They organise different programmes in the school and raise funds, then good people will help us, and during the last ten years we have constructed five homes and handed over to the people who do not have homes in the near vicinity of the school.

Our students also take part in visiting general hospitals, interacting and mingling with patients there, and understand the feelings, the attitudes and, you know, to understand the real people’s reality and real life. We also take our students to visit orphanages, jails, cancer centres, so that these students of my school feel that they are also part of the society, and once they come out they have to do something for their brothers and sisters of the society. And this is what we are trying to do here in this school. Yes.

Q: Thank you. Is it expensive for pupils to go to the school?

This is a Catholic school. We are not getting any kind of financial benefits from the State Government. The school runs by the fees collected by the students, and maybe, if it is in US dollars, it is going to be about $250 for a year’s tuition expense, $250 for a single child.

Q: What about the poor children, can they pay this?

No, that is why we are taking care of those poor students. You know, 10-15% of the students enjoy the benefits of fee concessions, and it is the school that provides them. They don´t pay anything, some students 100%, some students 50%, some students 25%. That´s what we promised the people of this locality when we laid the foundation stones that we would do it, and we are doing it, and people are very happy by the kind of education that we impart to the students.

Q: Is it a mixed school?

It is a co-ed school, both boys and girls are studying here.

Q: Not in the same class?

Yes, in the same class. They sit together, boys and girls together.

Q: Is this unusual in India?

It has become common now, many of the schools are having both. Some schools are having either boys or girls, but I think it is more healthy that they come out as mature human beings, that is what we believe.

Q: We are told that Kerala State is something special concerning education.

Yes.

Q: How is that?

Kerala stands eminent in all of the States of India as highest literate State, maybe because we have a tradition started by the Christian missionaries, and imparting the wine of education to the people of Kerala. Even my congregation´s founder, blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who was an educationist in the 19th century and, when he was selected as the Vicar General of the Catholic church in Kerala, he made a declaration to the parishes (all parishes in Kerala), that all parishes must start a school near to the parish. Otherwise the parish will be closed down. So he was aware about the importance of education. That is why he had given an order to all of the churches and that is why he was the one who brought the idea where education is imparted, that was associated with the church. So every church must have a school in the vicinity or nearby, and it is responsible to the parish priest to look after the school. So he was an educationist, and he was a revolutionary to bring changes in the society…We, his followers, do the same.

And in my community, the CMI priest, has got about 200 – over 200 – schools across the country, and we value the importance of education – and that is why, because of the work done by the missionaries, that tradition still prevails, and that is why we have the highest literacy. It goes about 90, 93, 94%.

Q: And what about English? You said that you teach English here, or how is it? Is it the main language or what is the main language?

This school is an English medium school and all teaching takes place in English and all students come here, pass out (graduate), speak English, learn in English along with the mother tongue and the national language, Hindi. So three languages are taught here: they study English, mother tongue Malyalam, and national language Hindi. And we also introduced foreign languages like French, and we are planning to introduce German next year in the school.

Q: I heard that there could be rather a big strain on young people so that they commit suicide. We have that problem in my country too. What is the reason why young people commit suicide here?

Maybe what I see is, you know, our students have not learnt how to accept *No* to their life. When somebody says *No* they are not in a position to accept that, because nowadays the number of children at home are very less – one or two. From the very younger days onwards, whatever they are asked, they are provided by their parents, all their needs and wants are taken care of. But once they come to face the reality, the reality of failure, losing, they have not learnt how to cope with that. I think that is what makes these people go to other extremes.

Q: Have you had some (problem) students here?

We don´t have, I mean we teach them how to cope with *No* and with failures in life. This is what –every educationalist should try to do that. How to accept, how to face failures in life. Our children, our ancestors, you know, life is not always successful, not always colourful as we see in the movies, but there are failures – there will be failures and there must be failures. We must learn to face these failures and when somebody says no, accept it…We have to teach them.

Q: What would you do to students who opt out, or who don´t come?

We don´t have that problem of students who are not regularly regular in the school because they like to come to the school. Because we have to create a kind of environment in which they must feel that this is a place they can feel is their second home, they can feel at ease, teachers are taking care of them, and they are very well taken care here. And this is a place where they love to be with their friends. So it is my responsibility to create a kind of good environment in this campus. And suppose some students who are not doing well academically, we call them, I talk to them personally, I give them guidance. I sometimes contact their parents, find out their routines at home, give directions to the parents as to the student’s remedy of steps they have to take and so on. We will follow the students. We will accompany the students and this is why we always produce results. We hardly try to keep the students out (i.e. don’t exclude them from school).

Q: What about new technology, IT have you got?

You know, our school is not that financially sound, but we try to provide all kinds of basic amenities to the students, like we teach computer education, we have got a computer lab, we have got an audio-visual lab, but I have got only one audio-visual lab, only one computer lab in which there are about 50 computers – but we need support from good people to make this school more technologically uplifted, so that facilities can be provided for the younger generations.

When I was in the US I found that every classroom is having a projector and the teachers are using this projector – the students see it. Maybe every classroom is having it, but you know in my school there is only one projector. But with that we try to manage and students are always eager to go to that audio-visual room and to see the different kinds of technologically advanced studies but, if we had, we could have done better. I know it, but yeah – God will find some means and ways, we believe in that, and ultimately the school is named after God Almighty, Christ Nagar, and it is His responsibility to take care of everything and we are trying to be His ambassadors on Earth.

Q: How many students are there in one class?

Average 35 to 40, that is about the average strength of every class.

Q: And all parents think that it´s nice that you have mixed classes?

Yes is the answer to that, yes.

Q: Is this new in India?

No not very new, not very new. Maybe only in those old English schools. Maybe 20 years, 25 years, but before that I studied in school where there were boys and girls, but not in the same class when I was a child in my local schools. But in cities many schools are co-ed (co-educational / mixed). I think that is more healthy, that is what I find.

Q: And they wear uniforms?

Yes, they wear uniforms, my children wear navy blue and white. You can see students assembled in the grounds for the preparation of their annual sports day which is going to be held on Saturday.

Q: What are the advantages of wearing uniforms?

They all feel that they are all equals and I think that that will give less strain for the parents because they will not go after fashions. And that also helps me to create a kind of discipline in the school too, you know. I mean everybody – whether they are socially rich or poor – no discriminations. And if some students feel that they are lesser than the other one, they will feel psychologically negative, I mean, this is great. This uniform makes them as proud Christ Nagarians. (from Christ Nagar Secondary School)

Q: Where does individuality come in then?

We trace and we follow each and every individual, we understand and learn and find out their qualities and inborn talents. We try to train them, we try to encourage, we have lots of opportunities. (….)

Everybody will get a chance to prove their talents.

1. **Transcript of interview with Mrs Hema Nadkarni in Goa – a lady with extensive experience of India who has also travelled widely abroad.**

Q: Hema, could you tell me something about India in general?

I’ll tell you about some of the things that are very unique to India or very distinctive of India. As everybody knows we are the largest democracy in the world. I think that is something that we don’t appreciate that much, but I think the rest of the world appreciates that because, in spite of all our problems (financial problems, economic, poverty, you know) we have contrasts in our country. You have very advanced, highly advanced, technologically advanced things, and you can still see things that are very primitive. And people who are very rich, and people who are still poor, but those are the differences… that is something that is very unique – the two co-exist. We are trying to level and equalize, but it will take a long time.

We have several different states – each with its own unique culture and language, and sometimes even climate. We have the northern states and the eastern states, where it can get very cold in the winter – snow in some parts of India, like in Kashmir, Himachal or even Uttarakhand – it snows in those states. And we have the other states in the south that are very, very hot in the summer – temperature going up to 40 /42. And then we have the states on the west coast that have high humidity in the monsoon, for example a humidity as high as 98 %.

And then apart from that, food – the cuisine – each state has its own cuisine, and within the state each area, each region, has its own distinct cuisine. So Indian food is very difficult to define, because we have different kinds of food that make up Indian food. Most often abroad people give you just Mughlai or the North Indian Punjabi cuisine or Delhi cuisine, and they say that is Indian food, but that is not Indian food. Each state has its own unique cuisine. That is one…

And then the caste system I think is something very unique to India. It still exists although people are not so open about it in many ways, but it still exists. We have the Brahmins that still consider themselves the highest caste. The Brahmins are basically not business people, although some are venturing into business and the industry nowadays, but basically a Brahmin is not business-minded. He is more into education, higher learning – that kind of thing. He would be happy teaching at the university or holding a nice post in a research organization or, not in government any more ... they are not in government so much, but they are mainly in higher learning ... encourage their children to study well, go for further studies, go for higher studies, excel in whatever they study. So that is, I think, one unique feature of Brahmins today.

All other aspects of the caste system are more or less under control. But I think it still prevails quite a bit where marriage is concerned. People are still a little conservative. They would like to marry within their own caste. But you do have these inter-caste marriages. Some well accepted, some not accepted. But a lot of things have been done away with, with the caste system, like we would not have lower caste people working in our kitchens, but today we do have that. We don’t mind them working in our kitchens. So that is one change people have seen.

And then the food. Well even like young people all over the world, even the young in India like to eat junk food, apart from when they come home it is always traditional cuisine. They do like to order for a pizza occasionally and have it at home. Like all young people all over, maybe you go out and have a pizza, they do have junk food, but that is mostly outside the home. But at home they still tend to eat traditional food. And our food is relatively healthy because we cook every day and we buy fresh ingredients every day and cook it - cook our food.

Q: Isn’t it nice and hot?

There again I said cuisine varies from region to region, but generally Indian food is hot, spicy, lot of spices… generally it’s hot, we use a lot of chilies, red peppers and green peppers. But it’s hot.

And same goes for the clothes, I guess. Young people in India wear all kinds of clothes these days. There was a time, when we were in school or maybe in college, we were just having… not much of an option, you know, but today children and young people in India wear all kinds of clothes. There’s western clothes, and then more eastern clothes and even in Indian clothes they’ve got modern, fresh, branded wear, designer wear. All that is there.

The *sari* is more or less…I mean people do wear saris quite a lot, but it is now slowly becoming more of a garment for an occasion, you know – for a wedding, a religious function, an evening out or something. The girls like to wear jeans, and you know, trousers and shorts. But to work they’d probably wear trousers and a nice western attire, some would like to wear *salvar kamizes*, some would like to wear skirts. The *sari* is still there, but it’s slowly becoming an occasional kind of a thing – very much like the Japanese kimono, I think. But not that much in the rural areas, the women still do wear *saris*. The younger people tend to wear *salvar kamizes*.

Q: And what is that?

A *salvar kamize* is a pair of pants with gathers…and you can have it either tapering with gathers – always with gathers – it gathers along the waist. Sometimes it’s a straight pant, sometimes it’s with gathers, so you have those pleats coming out at the front - that’s a *salvar*. Or you have a *churidar* which is tight like a drain pipe with gathers at the bottom. And then you pair it with a tunic – what you call a tunic, and what we would call a *kamize*.

Q: Which is a kind of a long blouse?

It’s a tunic, but could be varying in length…a little short, knee length or below the knees. Depends on what is in fashion. Apparently you can have a scarf around it or what we call a *duppata.* That is again worn in different style depending on the fashion - sometimes just around your neck, sometimes just over one shoulder, sometimes it’s over both shoulders. There are various ways of draping a scarf, that we call a *duppata.*

And then young people who like to wear jeans, shorts, pants - like young people all over the world. That has changed a lot. I mean in earlier days people would think twice about wearing those clothes. We considered them, you know, western. But today, because of globalization, young people have access… they see…they come into contact with people from other countries, because of studies or work, people travel to America or Europe for work, so then it becomes easier for them to interact with them if they are dressed like them. So it becomes easier…the communication is easier. And it’s the same when they come here, they feel more at ease if you’re dressed like them, at first encounter – then subsequently they know. But as I said, it’s because of the globalization. Young people dress here like a lot of young people the world over, other than the only unique thing they would have, something different for the girls would be the *salvar kamiz*e, otherwise boys… you couldn’t tell, they dress like boys abroad.

Q: Education – is it highly respected?

Yes, education is given a lot of importance. It’s a must for everybody and given a lot of importance. All right through India education is given a lot of importance, in fact people feel ashamed if they’ve been to college and dropped out, or they have been to school and dropped out. They think: Oh, I should… People feel these days that you should at least have a high school education.

Q: How many years is that then?

High school… what you call high school...what we call 11th and 12th, you would be around 17 years or nearly 18 when you finish that, and you go on to university for another three years, you would be around 20, 21 when you finish college…you would graduate.

Q: So how many years?

Totally it would be 10+2+3. 15 years of education. That’s the time you go to school from the 1st standard.

Q: And how many years should you do on an average?

On an average everybody these days…there was a time when people would just finish school…that’s the 10th, and they would find something else to do… train to be…I don’t know...a fitter, turner or lathe operator or whatever. But these days even those courses of study require a high school. You’ve got to finish 12th. That is, you’ve got to be about 17 years of age. And then these days there are lots of career opportunities, you know. So people – and then this is a must –you finish 10 years and the 2 years of high school, then they think of their future, you know whether they are going into engineering college or going in for a medical degree... or going in for some other…or architecture…I don’t know…commerce...become accountants… or whatever. For any further education the minimum requirement is the 12th. You have to do 12 years of study. Then you’re eligible.

Q: And what’s the last exam called then, after the 12th?

That’s the 12th. That is called the Pre-degree. PUC. Pre University Course it is called.

Q: What is the most popular education right now, do you think?

What do you mean? What do people like to do? I think Information Technology is very popular these days. Information Technology – not necessarily an engineer, but software…they go into software development, everything connected with information technology. Especially software development. There is a big market for that. A lot of engineers who have done hardware branch off into software. Or you know they start their computer sciences...basically they call it, I think there is a degree called Bachelor of Computer Arts or something like that...Computer Sciences. That would be very popular now. And also a degree in Management – Business Management. That is also very popular with the young people, because very often they find jobs when they’re still studying to become Business Managers. So they have what they call campus interviews.

Q: What is that?

A campus interview…say you’re in your last year of your college…last year of Business Management Studies…and these big companies that are in India (the multinational companies) or can be any company, they have what they call a campus. They come to the campus, and they interview a lot of students. If they like some of them, they select them as trainees. And they are selected as trainees to work with them. And then they work with them, and then have a contract with them. They probably work with them for some years and then move on, if they are not interested. Some stay on in the same company. So that’s a way they get the best, and you know, from the talent pool.

And young people also have hope, you know. They don’t have to go looking for jobs. And I think these two are very popular: Business Management and Information Technology. It’s very, very popular. And that’s both girls and boys. Both want to do Information Technology or Business Management. Because then they get these fancy jobs and fancy salaries. So I think a lot of young people want to do that. Apart from the regular...you know, those who don’t go that far. Say they feel they can’t go to University after the 12th, they then go out to what is known as Polytechnic, where they train to be maybe an AC Mechanic, or a Fitter or a Lathe Operator, or a Turner ... something to do with industry. So then that as well.

And then in places like Goa a lot of people like to go into the hospitality trade – hotels, airlines, travel, tourism. Today there are more opportunities for young people in those sectors. Tourism in the big way...so they all like to go into that. Hospitality sector, hotels… And also the big attraction for people who are not interested in doing…you know, all those three years of graduate studies, they feel they cannot handle that. They like to diversify into these courses.

1. **Transcript of Interview with Ilke Bruhn, a 16-year-old schoolgirl in Bangalore, on an international exchange scheme from Germany.**

Ok! I'm Ilke Bruhn. I'm from Germany. I go on a Danish school in Germany close to Denmark in the border. I'm in India for ten months.  I'm an exchange student. I came here to experience the Indian life…the Indian schools…the Indian families. I go to an Indian school here. I live in an Indian family. I go to Bishop Cotton’s. I go to 11th Arts.

Q: What a choice, to go to India for ten months after your 10th class in Denmark! Well, in a Danish school…

Yes, I finished my 10th class in Germany in the Danish school. I wanted to experience something more. I wanted to see some other countries. I wanted to learn. That's what I'm doing here right now. I'm learning a lot. I'm going out...When I come home I will be maybe more mature than others. Since when I have come here I have learned more than in about five years in my whole life. That's why I came here. I wanted to open my mind. I wanted to hear other opinions. I wanted to maybe also think about my opinion about life. And I wanted to think about my life. That's also what I'm doing.

Q: But it must be hard to attend an English school here?

Yeah, it's also because it’s English – the language is different. That's not the big problem. The school is very different. It's the opposite from our system what we have at home. It's very strict. It's not free at all, the guard's (prefect’s) system. We have our uniform, what you will see tomorrow. You have to tie your hair and I think it's very strict.

Then class is different – how they teach. The way they teach is different. You sit in class and listen to the teacher. The teacher will tell you what to learn. The teacher will tell you the opinion what he has. You have to write the teacher's opinion down. You have to write everything down what the teacher says, so when you come home, you can study what the teacher said. You will know that for your exams. In your exams you will write that. And that's all what you do.

In Denmark we do a lot of exercises. We work a lot on the topic. We do some projects, so that we not only study it, we understand and we think about what we are learning. And that's a really good thing. As soon as you understand something you will not forget it so fast again. If you only study it, you will forget it after your exams again.

For me this way of learning is very difficult, because I'm used to doing exercise work with the topic. I cannot just study and write it down. And I am used to saying my own opinion about something. If we analyse any book and story, we have a discussion about it, we talk about it and have an opinion about it, so we think on our own about what the story may be about. Here it is only about what the teacher thinks, and so we have to write down what the teacher thinks the story is about.

Q: Is anything more strict than you are used to?

Yes, we have to be very formal to our teachers. We have to say 'mam' to a teacher. When a teacher comes into our class, we get up and we say good-morning and the name.  And then as soon as the teacher says you can sit down, then you can sit down. And when the teacher goes again after class we'll say good-morning again and we'll say thank you, even if the teacher came for one minute and didn't teach us anything, we still have to say thank you to the teacher.

Otherwise we have an assembly in the morning. We have to line up. We have to sing together, we have to pray together, we have to sing the national anthem, we have to sing the school song. We have to stand straight for that, we are not allowed to talk for that. We are also not allowed to talk so much at all at school. If we have a free period we are not allowed to go anywhere around the school. We have to sit in class or we have to sit in the library, and it's not allowed to talk in the library.

OK, and then it's not allowed to be lesbian or be homosexual in the school. There was a girl in my class, she was called to the Principal. The Principal said: "I saw you sitting on a girl's lap. I think you are a lesbian. I'm gonna call your mother now." If she would say that she was really a lesbian, she would be kicked out of school. She said that she is not a lesbian so it was OK, so they called her mother, and the mother actually said: "It's ok for me. I know my daughter is not a lesbian, so I don't have any problems with that."

There you can see how society here is. It is not accepted to be homosexual here in the society in India, so it's not accepted in the school.

We have to wear a uniform. My uniform is green and white. We are not allowed to wear bangles. We are not allowed to wear a chain or to wear earrings. We are not allowed to have mehndi[[1]](#footnote-1) on the hands.

We are not allowed to have our hair open. Colouring is also not allowed. You have to tie your hair if you have long hair. You have to plat (plait) your hair. Year, for you it sounds not nice, but there is something nice about it, because as soon as you wear the same as everybody else, you feel like you are part of the group. You feel that you are part of the Indian school. You will still be a German, but you are also an Indian because you are wearing the same as everybody else.

School is very about discipline, so if you are a disciplined person, if you are very formal, if you wear your school uniform nice(ly), and if you don't talk so much, and if you sit a lot in the library, then the teacher will like you because as soon as you have discipline, you will be a good person. If you do not have good discipline, they will tell you you're a bad person. And marks are very important. If you get good marks, you will maybe become the school captain. The teachers will talk more nicely to you, because you are getting good marks. They think you are very smart. If you are not getting good marks, maybe it's only because you are not very good at learning by heart. Then teachers will not be nice to you. They will say you are not a good person.

Q: Well, you are an exchange student here. You've got an Indian home. Could you tell us about that?

I live in an Indian family. It's a very proper Indian family. Their family has grown up here. I live together with my host parents, with my two hostesses who are 17 and 19, and I also live together with my grandparents. That's an old Indian thing that there are joint families, where the whole family lives together. Also more than one generation. Sometimes also the family from one brother and another brother they all live together under one roof. So there is a lot of adjustment to each other. And you have to respect each other, especially the elders. If the grandparents don't like anything then you can't do that, because they are something like the chef(s) of the house. And what they say we have to listen to. And since I am living in that family even I have to do that. My parents they treat me like their daughter, so I have to do what my host parents say even if my own mother at home wouldn't say the same.

Q: So you are treated like…?

I am treated like an Indian girl, and Indian girls are treated a little different from European girls. They take care a lot. They want to become/make their child a perfect child. So they also tell them if they do something wrong. And mostly they are not only telling them, they are also scolding them quite a lot more than we do. That's a really different thing, because I am not used to live like that. I have more my freedom at home and I can do whatever I want whenever I want.

Q: What do you like about India?

There's a lot about India that I like.  It's mostly all the old, traditional things. India is a very old, colourful country. When we go out you will see a lot of colours. People are very colourful the way they dress. The Indian clothes are nice and colourful. The Indian people are very friendly. They smile at you and you are always invited that you can come home to their houses. They are very open.

I like temples. I like to go to temples. I like to experience the religion even if I don't believe in the religion. I like to experience what they are doing. Temples are so very nice and colourful with all the goddesses!! That's a thing I like. I like to go to Indian weddings. It's again very colourful. People are nicely dressed. There's nice food.

And one thing I also like here is to eat with my hand. It's something I wouldn't be allowed to do in Germany at home. Here I'm allowed to do that as everybody does that. And it's such a nice thing to eat with the hand.

Q: Rules at the table... or on the floor?

I sit at the table, I don't sit on the floor. I eat with my fingers and there are lots of rules at the table. The rules are again different from every family, from every caste, from every community. At home with my family I can only use my right hand. That's in every family: the same, only the right hand will be used and the left hand will not be used.

Q: The left hand is used for something else!?

Yes, the left hand is also used for something else.

Q: For when you go to the toilet?

Ok, I don't know that. But in most Indian families they don’t use tissue after they used the toilet. They use water and their hands, that's why you shouldn't use the left hand. But at the table you use only the left hand for serving. If you serve someone or yourself, you will only use the left hand and not the right hand. Because if you start eating with the right hand, the right hand will be dirty and may come into the other one’s food, if you serve them.

In my family you cannot move your plates. It's not allowed to touch the spoon that you serve with your plate. It shouldn't touch. It's not allowed to eat from another one's plate. It's not allowed to touch the plate of another person who has started eating.

So there are lots of rules and sometimes even my family doesn't know the reason for some rules. It's just they follow the rule because their parents have taught them to follow the rule, so they will have to follow the rule again. And maybe their children will follow the rules again. That I don't know yet.

1. **Transcript of interview with a lady who attended a Bollywood conference in Mumbai.**

Well, the Indian film industry is big, quite big, in fact just like we spoke in the conference. There are lots and lots of films produced every year. In fact there would be at least four to five new releases every Friday, what we consider the day when new films are released. Every Friday. And there are at least four to five new film releases every Friday.

So you can say 52 weeks and four to five new film releases ... about 200 A-class films. Okay? Now there are different categories of films also. There is an A-category of films, a B, a C.

C-grade films which are not really widely seen in the metros… in the metro cities. It’s the urban-rural cities where people actually watch those kinds of films. But if you see urban India, there will be 4 or 5 film releases every week. Every Friday.

Right! What makes a good Indian film could be various things, okay! What really, really, really matters is a good script, as you know. Yeah, I’m sure it is the same in Hollywood as well. It’s a very, very good script that matters. It does not matter whether the stars are superstars and icons. In fact Indian audiences are changing over the years. There was a time in the 1980s, for example 1980s and early 90s as well, where star power was very important. You needed people who were huge stars to make films huge successes. But today that’s not true, today the Indian audiences have evolved, which is why even a low budget film with not very well-known stars really makes it big, if the script is nice, if the script is modern, if the script is about youth… that is what clicks. And of course the director also.

It is. Love is the central, most important thing in any film. We Indians are suckers for romance, emotions and happy endings. We do not like films with bad endings. So if the hero or the main deal of the film dies in the end, we are really upset, and if the film does not do very well. We really like happy movies, because Indians actually go and watch a movie to divert their minds. It’s like a form of relaxation, it’s a form of entertainment, which is why movies which are happy-go-lucky, huge families, lot of colour, lot of songs and lot of humour – that clicks with the audience.

And we prefer to go with our families, so happy endings, goodie-goodie...love, romance, and full of emotions that Indians prefer.

Q: What about all the dancing? There is a lot of singing and a lot of dancing. Why is that important?

Well, actually we love music. You see a lot of music across India... it’s known for music. There is a different kind of music in the north which is called North Indian music or *Bhangra*, where there are people tying turbans, they beat drums – huge drums – and there is a kind of folk music over there. There is a different kind of folk music down south which is Karnatak music, which is again very popular across the globe. There is the music from East India, West India. So people who go to the theatres to watch these movies actually start connecting to their roots. They go back to their roots, and they kind of reminisce all these old times when they have grown up listening to these traditional songs from their grandparents, which they have kind of missed out in their everyday life. So that’s the reason why there is a lot of music, and of course when you hear music, there is a lot of inclination to dance, to move to the tune, and that is why there is a lot of song and dance. A complete Hindi movie would mean that there would be a lot of songs. At least five or six songs in a movie with a lot of dance happening. And that’s what kind of re-energises and re-vitalises.

Q: I have also seen on the internet that a lot of people like to dress like the stars in the movies. That you can buy copies of the clothes they wear. How come?

Well, because again we do idolise these people, the stars. We love to watch the kind of clothes they wear, and obviously that’s an aspiration. So for everybody, like people in the metros or people even in the rural areas, it’s an aspiration to look like the stars. Now everybody wants to look beautiful, so that’s the reason why we go on the internet and watch what the stars are wearing and then it becomes a trend. Stars are actually trend-setters and we follow the trend.

Q: Do you think there will be a fusion between Indian movies and Hollywood movies? That they will start doing projects together?

Sure, I think it’s going to happen very soon. I mean there are a lot of reports in the newspapers and... we’ve only read them so I am really not the right authority to talk about those. But we’ve heard about a lot of projects in the newspapers that there are producers, directors from Hollywood, stars from Hollywood who have been tied up and getting into an acquisition by the Indian companies, so in future I guess we will see the Western stars in Indian movies or vice versa.

We already have Aishwarya Rai who’s a global Indian. We see Aishwarya Rai in a lot of movies in Hollywood. There’s already Shilpa Shetty moving there. There’s versions over there. So since the Indian actors are also spreading their wings and going abroad and working in English films, I am sure we will also see a lot of English actors coming and working in Hindi films.

1. **Transcript of interview with the leader of an art *chawl* in the suburbs of Delhi.**

(*Chawl* is a name for a type of building found in India.)

We are a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) working with low-income traditional artists in Delhi and around, so we have four programmes for them: one is the education sector, we look after education sector, health care, community management and income generation. All these four programmes are running. We have a school of a total of 445 students, artists’ children, they all are artists, they are all from artist families from class KG (kindergarten) ’till class six. So we have different shifts for boys and for girls, so in the morning shift the boys come, in the afternoon shift the girls come.

So the school curriculum is according to the Indian Government standard, and we have lots of other activities also, like art activities because they are artists. They need to practice more and more, so if they do not practice they will forget their art. So we have art activity classes also, we have a computer centre where they come to internet and to get connected with the rest of the world. So, and fourth one is that we have library centre where schoolchildren come and study different kinds of books, and the books are related to the chapters, to their syllabus. Also few educational games. So the school shift starts from 9:30 ’till 5 o’clock in the evening. So this is the education part.

We have in the school, we teach these children about health topics also. So different diseases, we have a list of different diseases in the year from January till December. So every time, every month, once in a month they used to do skits related to the diseases to spread awareness of the diseases. They first do this in the school, and after that they go outside to the community to create awareness of these diseases to the public. And on these same diseases we have a health department also, so the same diseases, both the health department and the school works on the particular diseases. So the students spread awareness through their skits, and in our health department we have health workers who go inside the community. They have all the points, like the awareness of how to prevent these diseases, and they used to visit the houses of the artists.

So in the health section we have the OPD (outpatient department) section also. People come for illness. For a very minimum price – we take a very minimum low cost – we take money from them because they should not feel that it’s for free. It’s a very low cost. And the diseases which can be cured in our OPD we take care of them, and if it is out of our control we refer to other hospitals, and we provide vans – our own vans for the transportation also. So in this way we are looking at the health sector of the traditional artists.

The third part is the community management. So there are different groups. Our men’s group, there is a bank for our men – different leaders run the bank, some of them. Because the artists sometimes they have money, they get money from their performances, sometimes there is no season, so they get help from the bank. They used to take loan from the bank to run their house.

And the second part is, there is a youth club, *Kalakar Tarang* – it’s a club of youth artists from the community and they used to... a hundred members of that club – so all the youths they come together. It’s a form of unity among the youth, and they work together to see the market, how to go to the market, how to market themselves, and a different type of fighting (legal) cases, and all the community problems are solved first by the youth club.

And so there is another we have, there is a gymnasium for the community also. I think you have seen there is gymnasium there, the health, body building and all. And we have a costume library for the artists also, because artists look good when the costumes are good, when they go to perform inside the market. So, what we do, we have a beautiful costume library, and they used to come and give us a very small rent for the maintenance charge. We take the maintenance charge because, once they take the costume and they give it back, we have to wash it. So for that we take a very small rent for the costumes, and now the artists who wear our costumes look very good in their stage shows and all.

So we have the instrument library also, because there are lots of people who don’t have good instruments... so they come to us to hire the musical instruments and they go for performances.

The overall idea is uplift – upliftment of the traditional artist like through education (they should know the world through education) health care (they should be fit), and community management (they should rest in peace in their community).

So overall management we look after, and the fourth one is the income generation part. The groups, there are lots of groups from the community who go abroad for performances, and we help them to raise the organisation in *Kalakar Tarang*. And in the name of that organisation they used to market the shows in the market, because they are all foreign-returned (returned from a trip abroad). They perform internationally. After that we told them they should market themselves in the Indian market also. So the name of the group is *Kalakar Tarang* and it’s an independent group. And we trained – even managers were hired for that organisation. What experience we have, we used to train them.

Q: We were talking about training?

How to manage their organisation – so like they used to go to market their shows with photographs of them, which shows videos, so they used to approach the marriage parties, local shows and all, so in a more professional way, with good costume, with good choreography. So in this way we are raising (helping to raise) the status in the society also. So these are two main things, like we are working to raise the status in the society and to prevent the dying art they have... We have different training sessions also for them, like we do workshops with international artists who come from all over the world, and we have a big hall for them to practice, because the main problem is if you do not practice you forget your art. So we have a hall for them, they can fix up a time and they can practice. Practice makes a man perfect.

So this is the overall activity we are doing for traditional artists from the last sixteen years. The organisation was started in 1991 by Sterre Sharma. She is an artist, and from the last sixteen years we are working for the upliftment. And we also have different volunteers come from around the world. And the children from the school get an opportunity to know the world from the different culture, different people come to exchange their culture. So in that way (we get some) grants.

Q: You didn’t say so much about what kind of a community it is, you’re talking about the artists, but who has started this community?

Actually they are traditional Indian artists from different parts of India who came to Delhi for income generation, because Delhi is the capital. And they are from different parts of India, and so they stay here in the slum. There are two or three slums where they can stay, and so there was no proper management before inside the slum, at first when they came. But now in the slum we have started our school, we have taught them regarding their health, how to take care of their health, and how to educate their child for income generation purpose. So we are working with them for the last sixteen years to raise the standards. The overall thing I told you, they are artists from different parts of India.

Q: What do you think of the results that you are getting out of it?

Yes, they are good results. Before, you see, when artists go to perform they cannot speak English. So what happens is, the middle man takes all the money. Now the students from our school they speak good English, they contact directly with the client in a more professional way, so that saves money – one point I am telling you**.**

Yes, the computer centre is mainly because now in today’s e-world you have to contact people through emails also, so they know how to write an email, they know English. They write email so the fast communication is not just inside India but all over the world. Wherever they go they have contacts with people, clients. They used to get in touch with those clients, and what happens in future is, when somebody is in touch with you, if you need an artist you will first remember him - just for example. So they are in touch with the whole world. That is a central point for them, a communication central point, so they get in touch with all other people they know.

Find *Kalakar Tarang* on the internet. You can see them participating with puppets in a show entitled *Entertainment ke liye kuch bhi karega* (meaning ‘For the sake of entertainment we will do anything’).

1. **Transcript of interview with Mrs Leela Chandrasekhar, a very knowledgeable 80-year-old lady with extensive experience of working in villages.**

Yes, we call India ‘shining’ now. With all the new information technology. All the breakthrough we have made. And the space-science. Whatever it is, we have had our scientists like C.V. Raman, a Nobel Laureate. And then we have had Amartya Sen from Bengal. He got a Nobel prize in Economics. Like that we have got our share. Just now we had the Booker prize that Aravind Adiga, a young man – he has won a Booker Prize. Like that we are shining in certain areas but struggling in many more areas.

So that is what is hurting me, I told you, because I have seen a little life here and there, and in the course of my interaction with people, and whenever I have been connected with an NGO (non-government organisation) trying to help people, I have come across that, because the need is, as I told you, 3 basic needs: *Roti, Kapda, Makaan* (food, clothing, shelter). *Roti* is food to eat. Everybody must have food to eat. Everybody must have decent clothing. See it is not as bad as it was before. Then you will have something for the waist and down, and the men would walk bare. And the women will have a *sari*. One or two *saris.* But you want some decent clothing. Clothing for winter, clothing for the rain. Like that then. And the children...you want to dress them very good. You cannot afford to let them go bare-bodied. That’s what they were doing in those days. They didn’t mind, they didn’t care. It’s not so now.

And then a house. A place to call your own, even if it is a small, little place. You must have everything that you need. Comfortable. And I would rather go forward, because people say the villagers come over looking for employment and they create the slums. You see, if you give them the same accommodation they have in the village, what do they have? They have one room and the little place where they can tie their cow, and goats and chicken or whatever it is, and a few banana trees, they might have, and some little guava, some curry *pata* (leaves), something like that. A little yard in front for the children to play, for the women to winnow their rice or whatever it is. That’s all they want. You cannot put them in small, small holes and say this is your home and you live there. And then you say they create slums!

So we must give them all these three things. Of course now they have food, they earn well, because in a slum in one small, little place there are four or five people. All of them earn. It’s not in the other classes like the upper-middle class and the rich families where only the husband goes for work, the women just sit around playing cards, having parties like that. Everybody has to earn, and so there is a lot of money coming in. They can eat well, they can dress well, but they want to live well also. That’s what I am trying to tell you.

So we must assure them. They want education, just as we want our children to go to good schools. They don’t have to be put to any school, where there is no teacher. Sometimes there is no blackboard. Sometimes there are no books. No seating arrangement. Even if it is under a tree, let them be comfortable. Let the teacher be a good teacher, really interested in teaching. And then the children will be happy. Give them the books and whatever they want.

And today education is going at fastest pace. The pace is so fast. You have computers, you have this and this and then our children also, they must have access to all these things. That’s what I am trying to say. It will start, because everybody we talk to, they are saying India is a vast country, so many people, so where do you start, how can we...before we start, you know, trying to balance development, population has gone up. So how many more schools to build, how many more buses, how many more roads, how many more houses?

That’s where my family planning work came in. You see, if you tell the people, create an awareness amongst them, if you want good education, if you want good jobs for your children, if you want them to be healthy, if you want to have a proper family life, please plan your family. Marry your girls later, so that they don’t give birth immediately they marry. You see, in the West it might be the unwed mother’s problem. Here it is the wed. She is already married but she is marrying too young and she has babies. Same problem. There they are not marrying very young and you say they have sex before marriage and all that. Here they marry, and they have sex and they have children who they cannot look after.

There at least the government looks after them, here no government looks after them. So if the man gets jaded and he leaves the family and runs away, and this girl has to work and look after all the three or four children she would have already had, by the time she is twenty. And where is the time for her education? How is her health? How is she going to look after her children? Where is she going to work?

And even pay and all that, hasn’t been.. you see the pay commission and all these people.. they’ve done a lot of labour reforms. Everything is there, the rules are there. A woman must be paid so much, the man must be paid so much. Equal pay for equal work. But that is not the practice. Because the people who are in charge must really follow the rules, isn’t it so? And who is to monitor them? You see I won’t be able to go around talking to people... how much are they getting? I can ask just casually, but I cannot go to the contractor, the building contractor and say: “You pay the women just as you pay the men”, because he must obey the law. And there must be people who are going to see that he implements it. Then she will have better food even if the husband is not around. Doesn’t matter. She can see that her children go to the proper school and feed them well, clothe them well, because women are capable.

You see another thing: Always people feel that the woman is useless, she’s not able to. But in the village they may not have had education, but they know farming, most of the work is done by them, dairying, looking after chickens, all these things... All that is done by women only. Fields also... most of the work is done by women. Hard work might be done by men, and they take the produce to the market, sell it and bring the money. Drink it off. Do whatever they want, and the woman will be given a little. That’s all.

So the woman has the capacity but you must give her an opportunity. We just talk and make big projects and have meetings and talk about them, but nobody knows what exactly is happening at the ground level. That is what is important. That’s where the struggling is at. India is shining on one side and struggling at the main (level).

And who are these people? 80% are such people. 80% in our country. And who are the rich? About three to five %. The middle class is there. And then these struggling people are so many there. Because below the poverty line, we still have so many people struggling. The payments might have gone up, but the living conditions have to improve. It doesn’t mean that only money will give you everything. It won’t. Because if you have money, and your child is sick, unless the medicine is there, what will you do? Money is there to buy the medicine. The doctor may not be there to look after you. Because there will be rows and rows of people, and he might not have time to look at your child, isn’t that so?

Q: So you have too few doctors?

No, the *ratio* is very low here. Also policemen. Like you say, robberies and crime and we must control this and that. Proportion is very low. For a huge population you want more of them, and they will come and work for you if you pay them well. If you don’t pay them well, they will take money from poor people to make themselves, you know. That’s why there are a lot of these wrong things: you have to pay for this, you have to pay for that. If you want to see the doctor, you have to pay the watchman. If you want an interview with a school principal for your child’s admission, you have to pay something for the other man too. Like that, that is coming because they are not paid well. If you pay the policeman well – that’s what I always feel – you pay the teacher well, then the teacher will teach better. The better people will come and teach. Now because the payment is not good, people who don’t get any other job, they come. So they are not interested in that. That’s also important, isn’t it? Like the policemen also.

See you expect them to do all this, so you must really pay them well. And choose the right type of people. In sports! We’ve got so many crores and crores, and we’ve just got only one gold medal at the Olympics. A very sad year. Yes, I know. But the sportsmen, they need coaching. They need good food. They need proper places. Just before the Olympics we just train them for a week or so and then you give them some food. That’s not enough. So everything should be from the bottom-up. That’s what I am trying to tell you. Whatever you do, whether it’s education, it’s health, it’s sports, whatever it is, just start again.

Then see that all the children are immunised. Because we have had this project to prevent this polio. One day, say in January, they give you three days in successive weeks. Say it will be 11th, then it will be 18th, and then it will be 28th. So those three days all the children have to be immunised. So they do it, so that they don’t have (this situation) that if you leave out even one child, or two or three children in the community, this may develop. So they do it. They say it is in a ‘war-footing’. They’re trying to control that.

Like that you have to do for everything. Immunisation for these killer diseases, we are doing. For every child born in the hospital, you give these shots – to prevent TB (tuberculosis), to prevent tetanus, and to prevent – for the measles they give at nine months. And like this the three killer diseases and the six injections are given. So that happens only in the hospitals. But what about the children who are delivered at home? So the service that reaches the outreach must be better. There are people. There are good schemes. The government has come out with such a beautiful thing. You know the Blue Print (Peter) is there. The map is there. As they say the roadmap is all there, but the reach... you see the spoon should be really active, and the food that’s ready must reach the mouth of the hungry person. That’s where I don’t think… often we fail, I feel. Because the intentions are good. Somehow, somewhere, I don’t know where, we fall down. So that has to be done really well, because the government this time has earmarked a lot of money in our plan – the five year plan. A lot of money for education, for health and all that. But the money is not enough. We want devoted persons. I’d like to say: duty, discipline and devotion. These three are very important. Otherwise nothing get’s done.

Q: I think that you yourself have these three characteristics.

Otherwise…how will you…You see, the planning is ok. Planning we all put our heads together. Later on, however, we lose that with each other. We feel it’s over. That’s not over, I think. We have to go on re-hashing it, re-doing it, because what we plan might not be suitable for that reason, for that community, because each community is different. Each village is different. Each household is different. All of us don’t think the same way, so it has to be re-done and always tailored to suit the person who is the recipient…You say one thing, it doesn’t apply to everybody.

That’s what I found, when I went to the States. You see all the roads, all the shops they were all made standard way. So any type can go anywhere. Any shop you go, you know. You go to Kmart, you know where the undies are. You know where the shirts are. You know where the ladies’ clothes are. Same way. So it’s easy. But here it is not so. It’s different, different, different. One alley is different, one place is different. You go there and then the tastes are different. The making is different. So a lot more of a... you might say variety, but a lot more confusion, because you cannot have a simple, easy method.

And then the judgment is also difficult, because like this lady who came here…she prepares her food in a much different way, because she comes from Mangalore. That’s the west coast. I have been here, so Bangalore food is different. So that’s why we have made friends and we exchange and all that. But for the other things it is not that easy. It is not easy like exchanging recipes. Say about education. We want something for our children, in the North they might want something else. In Punjab they might want something else. You know like that, everything has to be…there’ll be uniform things that some of them have to be, and some of them have to be tailored to their needs.

Health again. You see our problems are different from say people living in Maharashtra. Their problems are different. In Orissa it’s different, has different needs. You see like when I say the North, you see Punjab is North West. Haryana is in the North West. But when I say North, I was referring to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa… those places. When you say East, you think of Bengal. And when you say South, you come down to Maharashtra, Andhra and all of them.

*Madhya* means ‘centre’. So these we call it the *bimar* states. *Bimar* means sick, sick states. That is Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These places, they have the highest infant mortality. And then maternal mortality rate, and then poverty, illiteracy. All these things are rampant there, so our government is concentrating on those, and from there also they have picked few districts, like 80 districts I think, they have picked to give special help, so that they will come up. But we cannot neglect the other areas also. We have to, because otherwise it will again be 50%.

We had this complex problem of reservation, you must have heard of that. Because of caste discrimination, some of our people have been kept away from most of the things for years and years and years. For nearly 4000 years. Now the government is trying to bring them up, whether it’s education, employment, whatever it is. So they are giving this reservation – that is if you are in a school, if there are 60 students from all the other castes, right, there must be 40 seats for these children who have been denied things like that. They are doing it. In every sphere they are doing it. From IIT, from IIM to the lowest school, they are seeing that they integrate them.

But what is happening is – and then even in jobs, they are given reservations. Such percentage must be given to the people who are being denied the work they haven’t had. But they haven’t been trained for that, so they find it hard. They are taken to the schools, but they don’t have the background of education, because at home nobody is there, but here I can help my children. So they cannot compete with the others. So they find it very hard... All of them have the same material, but you give them extra coaching, extra special help like people with special needs. Children who need, like that. And then bring them up to a level and then let them compete for jobs and for everything on merit basis. That stands to reason.

(One gentleman) has taken it as a challenge. In one or two years he has taken about 85 or 86 students like this, who are very backward who have not had any chance at all, from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the communities which were kept away. Now he has proved they are equal to all the others and merit-wise, they are trained so well, they have been absorbed by all multinational companies which all the others were going in. And they have done well. So special help is necessary, before you press them into these places and say they are no good.

Q: As far as I can see you are very good at breaking patterns. You have broken the patterns from one generation to the next very quickly.

I don’t know if it is quick. I feel it should be quicker.

Q: Yeah, maybe it should be quicker. But I told you about the two girls we saw in the slum. The mother had never gone to school. And she didn’t know really when she had her baby, how old she was.

Some of them are like that.

Q: And the daughter was very bright.

Now the brightness is there, the brain is there, but the opportunities are not there. That’s what I want to say. You must give the equal opportunities. That’s what everybody needs. Same thing. You must. The background is different but the opportunities must be the same, and some extra special (help) we must give them, because they don’t have the facility that others have at home. The parents are illiterate. Like the parents don’t know how to say, even when the daughter asks, the mother may not be able to answer. So go and ask your teacher. And we say: come, come, come, I’ll read, I’ll tell you. That help must come. Because once this generation goes, it will be better. Because next generation she’ll be able to help her children. She has to go step by step, but when you start, you have to give them some special extra tutoring everywhere then. Give them a lot more courage and self-confidence. That is what is lacking, because they feel they have not had the opportunity. They cannot compete with others. Self-confidence is lacking. So they start fighting.

And another thing about jobs, because there is so much unemployment. Now of course, with this global recession, there will be more and more and more. But at an ordinary level, people that are capable of doing things on their own, like a cart-man, he buys things and puts them on the cart and goes, and like the man who picks up the rags. He’s making money. He goes and sorts it out, and the paper, the old paper, he sells it to the old-paper man, bottles he sells to the bottle-man. Some money he’s making, so they have got that idea that they can, so help them. It’s small, small, small amounts…organized. They will repay. This we did in our experiment that we were doing in the villages. I will tell you just a little about one experiment.

Like in Bangladesh that gentleman, he got a Nobel prize for that. He started this Grameen Bank. That is small, little loans for women. And they have come up very well there. This one he started long back, because my experience is 30 years ago, what we tried. We were given the experiment in 1976, it was over by 1979 and it was proved okay.

After that we have continued for 15 years, but then what we thought was, we saw in the village that the women have time, they are willing, they want to have a few more things for the children. Say they want to buy a few more vegetables, a new dress, whatever it is. So we said, all right, we will give you 50 rupees each. 50 rupees is how much – $1 it might be. Almost. A little more than $1. So we said the ten women – 50 rupees each – so that’s 500 rupees. That is not much for us. And then you do whatever you want and then let us know what is happening.

You know one woman with that 50 rupees bought a few vegetables, and had a little place, and said: “Whoever wants, I have already bought those, so you can buy”. Then another one started making these *idlis.* 50 rupees she could make about a hundred *idlis* she could make. She ground the flour. Then she said to the men going for the fields: “Breakfast is ready. I sell you the *idlis*. You take.” Like that they had small, small things, and they found at least the money was coming. So 50 rupees became 55. They were happy. Then another ten rupees came. They were really happy, and so, you know, at the end of the year, they all came back and paid five rupees each. We said that you don’t have to pay back, it’s okay. But they said: “No, no, no, no, we want to pay. You have helped us. Let one more lady get the help from this.” They had repaid that money of 50, along with it they gave 5 rupees. They said: “One more lady can be helped like this.”

So you see how it works, because too much of money they cannot handle. Little, little sums they can handle. And they got this idea of repayment, you see! “I have taken the money, I must give back.” Then we told the banks they should come and open a branch. They said: “No, no, no, we cannot trust these people. They have no money, there’s no guarantee. It won’t come back.” We said: “Now look at this. The women have paid. We are going to open bank accounts in the women’s name, and you loan the money. They will repay”.

Then one bank came forward. They said yes. And it worked. They said: “The women repay”. Because they are better that way. They feel: “Oh, I must repay because I am going to tell my children this honesty, truth and all that.” But men somehow they say: “Oh, that doesn’t matter.” Like that. So all these women repaid. So now they have started more branches because of that. So one experiment, and they find it good and then they do it more.

Little things I think makes a *lot* of difference. Even that I told you about the childcare. I see now it is coming in a big way all over India, but those days we didn’t have that. The women had to leave their children with the older children and go away to the fields. So the oldest children couldn’t go to school, had to mind the baby at home. And they wanted daughters to look after the house, do the housework and all. Till she gets married, she will be there. Later on they wanted some help, and we also insisted the child should go to school. They should make them. They wondered, then what will our babies do? How can we look after them?

Then we started this. We called it the *Balwadi*. It’s a free kindergarten. We chose a woman from the village itself to come and sit, have these babies and look after them. So we thought we would start giving them nutritious meals, if the baby is about three years old or so. And to cook in this way we can teach them, and then we had a cook to cook the meals and serve the children. So the women will come back, and then they will be happy that their children have been fed, they have been taught some nursery rhymes, something like that. So they were all happy. So we caught up.

And the government also has got many like that now-a-days. Started a huge… There is one friend of mine who wrote a book on that, and she had done experiments with the nutrition level going up and this proper food and things. On the ways of women. They feed the babies, they breastfeed, but the supplemented diet some people give, some people don’t and it’s not always proper. So the babies are born healthy, and as long as they’re fed, they are healthy. Then, when they start having the teeth and taking food, solid food, by that time there is another baby in the house. So this baby doesn’t get proper nutrition, and you have many infant mortalities, under-five children dying and all these problems, you have.

So we thought we would have this. So that is also a good thing. But it hasn’t reached all villages. The state has got some programme and the center has got programmes. So they have a kind of way in the village, where 60 children will have this. Above that we can have, but under that we cannot have. So those children are getting left off. You see, in the programme, in the village if there are more than 60 children, they have this facility. The government runs it. Otherwise they don’t, so what will the under 60 do? So that’s why we thought, the NGOs, we organize the women into groups in villages. So they do that themselves. They don’t have to wait for the government to do, because it is another wrong notion, whatever… if the road is not right, we want the government to do, if something else should be done, we want the government to do. So the women also should be self-sufficient. They should know how to take care of themselves.

And then now we have got this Panchayat system. I don’t know if you know about the Panchayat system. That is village self-government. This is one of Gandhiji’s dreams. You shouldn’t look to the centre for everything. The villagers… it’s their own village. Their own children. So they should see that they have a school, they should see that they police themselves. They should see whatever they want and if they want a small, little check done, they should be able to do it. Roads…they should be able to do it. Self-help. That’s what we say. So that we said we would do it through women. We organised small, small women’s groups. Now that’s also in a big way. You have many women’s groups all over India. And then you train them in nutrition, in child care, in family planning, cleanliness, and this latrine (toilet), because they just had these open fields to go. Now it is good to have a latrine.

We had a big scheme. These SIDA people, some women from SIDA, the Swedish International Development Agency. The men were helping in a big way, because it was a big programme, government to government. So the women had collected some money, and I got to know of them, and then I took them over to one of the villages, and I said: “Let’s have a small latrine here.” Latrine is the bathroom. So then it will be kind of a showpiece for all the villagers to come and learn. They said “We will be able to help you with money.” They helped me with money.

Then there is one gentleman called Bindeshwar Pathak, who brought in this *Sulabh Shauchalia* Movement. Now you see them everywhere. That is, you have these community toilets, where people pay… they pay for toilets, and then that goes to the upkeep, maintenance, cleanliness and all that, so that people don’t just use the roads, use the fields or anything. So we said, we want one like that in the village. He got us all the help, and we built five for men, five for women, five bathing rooms and five washing places for the *dhobi* (a man who takes in and washes clothes). They had to wash their clothes also.

And then we said we want to connect this bio-gas plant… then ourselves we had that idea. Now of course it is coming up. So all these latrines were connected to a big pit where we had this bio-gas, and along with that we would put this cows’ dung and all these things also. So that this will come. The gas was used to pump water for the toilets. And then that gas was used to light one little stove. So we said, there is nothing wrong in this. You can have tea here after you have washed yourself and done everything. So we just wanted to tell them it’s nothing wrong… the dung and the faeces and all, it’s all one. And with that manure we had a rose garden there, so the women will know, this is nice.

But this of course, this I am telling you, is 30 years ago, we did it. I don’t know what shape it is. I suppose everything is going on well. This is just one village, and in another village we did a bank. In another village something else we did. So that it was spread, because we had so many villages, we couldn’t cover all villages just with our little money, with our little time, and a few hands only. About three, four that’s all.

Q: Don’t you think it is exploding right now?

No, it doesn’t catch so fast, because that’s the problem here, because some person from outside has to come and get them inspired, because they on their own are not able to. Because you have to run up and down for this help and that help. And so some of them are able to, some of them are not. They are so busy with their own families and all, so they just keep quiet. It doesn’t explode. If it had exploded it would have done.

And then in another village we trained these diets, I told you yesterday. The women who delivered the babies. We gave them cakes (of soap) and showed them the simple way of washing with soap. We kept the soap and a plate, and then something to tie the cord and cotton wool and some little analgesic. So that they feel important at whatever they are doing, and we told them that you must use a mat, wash it and then have clean curtains, and things like that, when the baby is going to be born. Use hot water and little, little things like that.

So everything done in a little way it will spread, but it’ll take a long time. It’s not so easy. As I told you the young people we had in youth groups and we women’s groups, somebody asked me: Are you going to tackle the men? I said: Men we cannot. They are busy. They have their own ideas.

Youth are still hopeful. They have hope and they are ready, and they come and listen to you. They have just finished their schooling, or some of them don’t go to school, or they are out of school, doesn’t matter. They have some spare time.

Women, they will, because when we talk about their children and homes and all, they will welcome us. But to go into the village, you want to get the permission of the big people there first. Like that man wouldn’t let you in. And they wouldn’t let us in. Who are these city people coming and spoiling our women? So you have to make friends with him and say you are this, you are that, we just want to meet your ladies, and then the big man in the house should let us in.

Then you must go… to go to the daughter you have to go to the kitchen. It takes a long time. So you have to meet the gentleman, then the mother-in-law, the son, and last will be the daughter. At last we have reached our target, whom we want to speak to really.

So, but when they organise these women’s groups, then the women will bring their daughters, daughters-in-law, so we thought that is our forum. We would have few, 30 to 40, and sit under a tree. We would give them talks, give them things. Show them pictures. Just let them have the idea, that there is a better world. It’s not their own world, because not all of them get a chance to go here and there. They might have gone to the fair. They might have gone to a temple. They might have gone to the next village to visit some friends. That’s all. Their world is very small, so you open the world to them. Then they want to learn. Then they’ve got literacy classes. They started the adult literacy for the older people, because they say: “Oh no, what is the use of it?” (So we reply) “No, no, no, even if you want to go on a bus, you have got to read this sign. If your husband writes a postcard, you must be able to read. Can you take it to a neighbour and say: ‘Now read the letter of my husband?’ ” So like that we have to induce them and give them lessons.

Then, when the older women started, the younger women also liked (it) – the people who hadn’t gone to school. When they knew this, they understood the value of education. See, it first starts with literacy. Just reading. Because if you asked them, they’d say: “Yes, yes, yes, I know. I know how to write my name.” But that doesn’t stop there. So you have to go a little further.

And then the young men, they were willing to do whatever we wanted of them. If we asked them to plant trees, if we give them a talk they understood. If they said we want water... don’t wait for big dams, big projects. You can have small dams. That we have done – they will do that. And if we told them: “Look, you plant more trees, because there is so much of space here, and then your fruits, the other people will have”, they will do it. And literacy classes and music classes. Whatever it is, they will do. And they were quite willing to go out and do voluntary service. Like for immunisation we had a programme. We will say: “Round up all the children here. Just list them up. Bring them over.” They will do that.

If we had a healthcare (clinic), we took some doctors from here (the city). Specialists and all that, because they (the villagers) don’t have a chance to go into cities. So we will take a team from here. I used to do that. Some doctors. It was a picnic for them. We will give them good food and with the village atmosphere, and these people will come and they will examine them, and give them whatever it is. And if there was any special treatment, they will write their chits and send them. That way. So that is the best way to make friends with them. Health, you see.

And some we collected plants and things from them. We had a big programme then, growing the trees and all that, so they gave us free. They said if you are going to do it, we’ll give you. So they gave us truck loads, and we took them and gave them. The villagers were very happy, because they like to see things grow. That’s what they had been doing all the time. So some special plants and things.

And then we took from this dairy industry, because my husband was in the dairy industry. They’re all fond of cows, so we said: “Why don’t we do it in a better way?” So from here I used to take those people. They would give them talks and show films. That’s when they said they joined hands with us on behalf of family planning, so they will go and say: “See, this year your wife shouldn’t have a baby – your cow should have a calf. Then you’ll have more income. Then your wife might have a baby two years later. Then you will get plenty of money and milk and good life.” Like that they used to do. That was really good, and good strategy.

The silk people, because in those areas most of them are rare, the silk worms and then cocoons and then the leaves also. So we told our silk department to come. Beautiful department, beautiful education, extension programmes. They have film. But when they go to the village, they don’t know whom to contact. Everybody is away. When we had a forum organised, like the women’s group, the youth group, they could get hold of them, and they’ll have a definite day and they were happy coming. Then they started coming for agriculture, for dairying, for whatever it was, whatever new programme like rodent control – pest control. So we chose one village and we said, will you please teach them how to keep the rats away, because they all had their bins and they’d bring them. But the rats would eat away, and then the diseases would come, and they wouldn’t have anything, so you see, so one whole village will be controlled. Rodent control.

Like that we had different programmes for different villages. We hope other people will come and see. But as I told you it will take some time. Unless they themselves know it is of value it’s difficult to change them. They won’t just do things because you tell them. They have to think and they have to understand. That is a little difficult, but they are doing it.

Q: You were saying about the cow. They could have a cow. But if the cow here is holy?

Yes, you don’t cut and eat it. We don’t kill it, that’s what. But you use the milk. Milk is…I believe in India we have the highest number of cows, and then milk of course, milk production is second to none. And we consume more dairy products than anybody else, because we are a huge population. Dairy products is milk, ghee, butter and curds. Cheese is very little. Just a little here and there. Not everybody. So for that the dairy people who gave me this special grass from Australia. They came and planted it, whenever I asked them. So people have been helping us.

Then from Mental Health Institute, because I was there on the board of the National Institute for Mental Health, so they started their rural programme also, because I used to take them there from here – a psychiatric nurse, a psychiatrist, the doctor. All of them, because there they have no idea. If somebody is not well, somebody is depressed, if somebody has suicidal tendencies, they just go to the temple and pray. Sometimes it helps because the faith is there. But that’s not enough. So these people will go and talk to them and then they will encourage too. Awareness-creation. So that they all helped. Whoever we asked, they’d come and help.

But you know, you must ask. As they say: “Ask, the door will be opened.” So that we want to prepare them. They must ask, and people will give. If they’re not ready, whatever you say, they won’t take it. You must prepare them first. This is this, this is this.

Once I remember in my zeal, I thought: “Oh, we have got this opportunity, we must transform everything.” So I said: “You see this radish, this Japanese radish, this long white radish. You must grow.” And so one villager said, “Aww!”. Some of them really grew them. Then they said: “There is no market. You wanted us to grow them, but when we take them to the market, nobody eats it.” They say it doesn’t have the tang, it doesn’t have the taste that our... So everything is spoilt. I felt sad. Then I told somebody: “Soya, soya, soya. Look at the Chinese, the Japanese. Soya is so good. So they said okay, soya, soya. They said: “Nobody is ready.” But now everybody is in it, so that must come. Now if they grow, they will feel happy. You cannot push anything.

Same thing with something else I remember. They all laughed at me. Papaya. Because that company was starting here, and they said they were going to experiment with papaya seeds and things like that. So they came and gave a talk and said: “You grow papayas. We’ll take all the papayas they grow, they have got.” But poor farmers they grew, thinking these people will do. But they had changed the… I don’t know. Some other programme came in, so they had to sell all the papayas in the market only. So you cannot force the pace. You can just give all the… Can you force a plant to grow? You can only dig and see that the manure is there, the soil is there, the water is there and put the seed. But we have to watch, and watch and watch and wait. We cannot pull it and make it grow fast.

Q: What about the caste system?

I’ll tell you! You see, the caste system has become rigid, but it was not so, when it was thought of ages ago, 4,000 – 5,000 years ago. In there is the wisdom, they felt every man doesn’t have the same capacity. And doesn’t have the same calling. Each one can be proficient in something he wants to do and he can do it. So they said: Some people are good for fighting, so we will develop them to guard our country. Some people are good in the thoughts and the thinking process, and so we will have them for studies and intellectual development. Then some people are good in communication. They can go out and they can mix with people, so they can be good in our business – wise, buying and selling things, bringing new things, taking odd things, products, like that.

And some people who are not happy with any of this, who don’t want to be fighters, who don’t want to be the intelligentsia, who don’t want to go out, we have the land here, they can till the soil. They can be carpenters, they can be blacksmiths… whatever they want to do, they can do. Like that. So they are serving the whole community. Ourselves and all. Each group is serving the community.

So the Brahmins, so called Brahmins (I’m a Brahmin), they had to devote all the time to studies. They need not concern themselves in growing food, fighting or going out of the country, because they have to study, study, study, so they have good plans. They have good ideas. They teach the people to lead a good life. They help the king with whatever he wants, counseling. All those things. So the community will support them. They don’t have to earn their living by these ways. They will devote their entire time to studies.

And like in Sparta, you must have read about that Plato’s set of plays, he also thought like that. Socrates also thought like that. And the fighters, we must see that we feed them well. They are really given good places to live. And they must have a good life, so that they fight for the country. They have that good physique, and they develop their physique well.

And the other people who like to go out and come, they are free to do that. So they must build the ships and go out on maritime missions and like that. That’s how trade developed. These are the traders. They’ll do it. The other people they are like our younger brothers. So they are doing all these things to help us. So when you look at it, it was a kind of inter-related brotherhood, you can say. One big brother to just study, one second brother to see that everybody is kept safe. The other brother to go out and come, and the other brother to fix and carry and do what has to be done. That’s how it developed.

But it was not rigid. If you felt you liked that, you could. It was just a calling. You could do that. Later on, over the years, over ages, it became rigid. Say a child born to me will only go for studies. He won’t go to the army. He won’t go for this. A child born to that man will only train for the army. He won’t do any other thing. And these people who are doing the streets, they won’t take up studies, they won’t go on this and all this. Like that rigidity came. That was the wrong thing. That should not have happened.

And then those days… they wouldn’t eat together. They had their different kinds of food. That was understood, because a person in the army, he will eat meat, he will drink, smoke, because everybody counted on him. They said okay, he has to be strong, he has to… okay, he can do that. But a Brahmin was not supposed to do that. He said: No, no, no, because if you eat all that, your mind is spoiled, and then you won’ be able to concentrate on your studies. And it has been proved: a vegetarian diet, and a simple diet, will make the brain work better.

Like if you have a fighting spirit and all that will come, if you have a different kind of diet. It has been proved like that. And a working person he needs more calories. Because a person sitting and reading, he doesn’t need more calories. But a hardworking person working in the field, he needs more. So he has to eat good, rich, strong food. Like that. Food was different. And then some religious practices were different. And the living ways were different. Educational qualifications became different, he needn’t do much, but this man has to. So there is a kind of a blocking. Each one was expected to do a different thing.

People born in that house, will be brought up like that. And they’ll marry only into families like that. Not other families. That might have been good, because it was a kind of going forward. The same kind of food, the same kind of life and all that. But again it made it rigid. You see that’s why the freedom is narrowed. Literally it might be the same. But in the caste, you see, all of us are Hindus, but the caste is different. So that the easy mixing didn’t come.

But now it is going. Inter-caste marriages are there. People marry as people feel. Now some marriages break up. Some marriages are going like any other marriage. But it’s not going fast enough.

Q: So the caste system is not a religious system then?

No, it’s not religion. No, no, they put it down to religion, but in religion everybody is the same. You see, we all of us have the same *atma* (soul), we say. We all have the same being, like the cell. All of us are born from the same person. All of us are similar in everything, so it’s not it. You see, there is a confusion. People put it down to religion, because it was said in Hinduism, in Hindu scriptures, one of the scriptures it is said: Some people were born for this, some for this, some for this. These people let them do it well, let them do it well. So they said, it’s religion. It is in Hinduism. But it’s not true spirit of religion. What was said then, wasn’t understood. It was sort of misinterpreted.

Like they say amongst Muslims, you can have many wives, many, you know, things like that. But that’s not true. One of the Muslim women who has studied the Koran, she said no, it’s not like that. What they say in the Koran is misinterpreted. You see, if you can treat all your wives properly, the same way, you can even afford to marry four wives. But you must keep them all the similar way. Is that possible?

And then children also they say: If you can say that all your children are educated, you can have any number. But can you educate every child? Forget that and say this. That’s what that lady told me. You see the misinterpretation is there, and they don’t say the proper spirit. Spirit is different, what you say. And any religion is like that. The great people are the same. They have the same thing. You mustn’t covet other people’s things, you must be truthful, you must have a good character. And all these things every religion says. But later on people they colour it and say, this is not right, and that is not right. Way of life is different. That’s all.

Hinduism is not a religion, it’s just a way of life, because what is believed is: People are born, everybody born has the freedom to think, to think of God as he wants to or she wants to. The conception might be different, but the way of life has to be proper. That’s the ethical part. You see, all the tenets that you have in all religions, the same thing: that you must be truthful. All these good things, that is the positive qualities, have to be developed. The negative qualities have to be done away with. Not even suppressed, just done away with.

And there are many schools of thought. When you say Hinduism – in this way of thinking, there are many schools of thought. And one school says there is no word at all. Doesn’t matter, there is no word. If you think so, well that’s good. That is all. Buddhism came from that, because they don’t attribute any god or anything. They just set the wheel. As you were born you go your round, so as long as you are here, you must do your proper job and be correct. That’s what they say.

Jainism again, they say they have great men, but there’s no god. But all these gods are there, but you don’t have to have any god like that and worship. So they worship only the saints, the people who have been really good and have taught them the way of life. And in amongst the so-called Hindus also, there are many, many who think in different ways. There’s no quarrel about that. Because they can do what they want, but still they are a Hindu. But these main things we must have in mind. The positive qualities. Developing the positive virtues. That’s what is important. That’s why it’s only called a way of life.

And then the main thing we say: It’s a global village now. But in the ancient… that’s one of our teachers, Shiv Shankar, said (a quote in Hindi) – he says: “Who is my mother? Mother Nature! And who is my father? That is the immanent reality. The universal presence. Mother is the primeval energy. Mother Earth you can call it. Then who are my brothers and sisters? All who have noble thoughts and do good things. Which is my country? Because the whole world is my family, he says.

The concept is that. So everybody is welcome. That is why you will remember in India so many people came. First Christians came, then the Parsis came, the Buddhists have come. Like that there are so many religions here. Everybody is thriving well. The Muslims came.

But now the politicians. They are sort of putting people up and creating jealousy and helping one side, because they wanted votes and pressing the other side, because they don’t want their votes like that. So it has become old-time politics.

Otherwise in India we had so many kinds of people. We were all living in harmony. Now we hear people are going and throwing stones at churches and things like that. It really horrifies me, because we feel – I feel for that matter – all the great people have to be respected. Jesus Christ is an incarnation of Krishna, I think, because Krishna, we believe, the greatest god – you call him by any name – comes whenever we need him. When people need, he comes and helps us and goes. So you might be… I don’t know, we don’t know, when they are with us. We don’t know who is god and who is not god. But the potential is there in each one of us.

So if you grow and if you expand, you even expand your heart and mind to include everybody, and if you think of everybody as the same, then there is no quarrel at all. There is no heartburn, there is no jealousy. Nothing like that. But now people were so simple, people were believing, say: You must treat the guest well. You must treat your mother and father well. You must look after children well. Like that, all those family ties and tendencies and group mentality, all that was there. But slowly the breakup is coming. Like the family is breaking up, the religions are breaking up, countries are breaking up. I think more of competition, more of jealousy. All the bad qualities are coming in. And it should not be, so we have to do our best to send away the bad qualities and really improve ourselves.

One gentleman told me – I had taken him to a village to talk about family-planning – he said: “*Amma* (mother), you make your family small and you expand your heart. Think of other people as your family – other children. You don’t have to have your own family, more and more children. What about all the other children. You look after them also.” That appealed to me. I think that is really correct, no?

1. **Transcript of interviews with Nikhil Ravichandar, 17-year-old student and captain of Bishop Cotton Boys’ School, Bangalore.**

**11a) First interview with Nikhil**

Well, the English came to India quite a while back in the 1600s. And when the English actually came in, in the form of Sir Thomas Roe, they came in as a trading company who just wanted to deal with the various kingdoms and the various empires. But due to the mere fact that the Indian rulers tend to fight amongst themselves, the English were able to use divide and rule quite effectively when it came to India. And hence what was once a trading company went on to become a very formidable political force, which then went on to become India - the English colony.

We actually owe the British a lot. There are pros and cons. There are always two sides of the coin to this. But I will talk about the advantages first. Without the English there wouldn’t be an India, because before the English came there were just independent princely states that were not unified and did not have a unified spirit, and were in effect independent. They really did not require any other state for their own wellbeing. But with the advent of the English, what actually happened was that all these states had to come together in order to put up a formidable force against the British, and in doing so the entire patriotic spirit of what is India, started.

Secondly, and I think most importantly, the English gave us cricket. And if it wasn’t for this we wouldn’t have beaten Australia yesterday.

Thirdly, many of the communication systems, many of the railways, all of the initial lines that the British set up, are still very much in use today. And when they set it up initially, most of the Indians, they had a very superstitious view of it. In the sense they used to imagine that the telegraph poles and the telegraph wires were put up to hang people on. So, you know, of course the British were doing it just to help India as a colony grow. However, due to the slightly superstitious minds of the Indians at that point of time, it didn’t really work out the way they had planned.

Also the English gave us the English language, which I feel right now in today’s world is the most important language to know. Because in many countries I understand they will not speak English and they will not understand English, but in most countries they do.

Also in a platform like the United Nations, English is one of the better languages to use; though, of course, the official languages of the United Nations extend to about five. I also feel that that’s the small edge India has over China, because in China a lot of people are actually trying to learn English, while in India most of the primary education and secondary education happens in English. So that helps us.

Talking about the cons, the British did harm India in a small or rather large way. India was a thriving nation with textile growth. We were an agricultural land even then. And we had huge farms of wheat and rice and barley. We also had some of the best silk that was made in India.

I am not sure whether you have seen a *sari*, but a *sari* is a traditional Indian costume or rather ethnic wear that most Indians wear. They used to say that you could take the entire *sari* and put it right through a small ring, the silk *sari* that was used, and you could pull it right through. That was the texture of the silk that was used, and this silk was woven only by certain Indian weavers.

However with the advent of the English...they weren’t really looking for us weaving this, they weren’t really looking for thriving agricultural land. India was to be their industrial colony. This was where they made the raw products and they took it back to England to sell. So most of the fields were removed and indigo was planted instead. Also a lot of silk manufacturers lost their job because of the high tax that was imposed on them to sell it in England. Hence in England it was easier to buy something that was made off the machine than made by a weaver sitting in India. Even though the quality might differ.

Our education today still revolves a lot around what the British left for us. We follow the Cambridge Board which is now the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education Board, which is modelled around the entire English syllabus. The ICSE Board is very challenging in its English specifically. We do quite a few Shakespearian plays in its original text. We also have quite a few poems, poetry, and our English language, that is our English grammar segment, is separated into comprehension, report writing and then your general grammar, compositions, essays and what-not.

To put it simply, the English did a lot for us and the English also did a lot of good for us and a lot of harm for us, but I would have it no other way, because I personally want to do Law. And the legal system that is left behind by the English is still in use today. And I am actually a great admirer of that legal system. So it makes my life easier to study Law once. You actually like it and love it. Like for example I don’t think I would ever be able to study about the United State’s constitution and the fourth amendment and the fifth amendment and what-not.

Q: What do you think of Mahatma Gandhi?

I personally think he was one of the greatest men that ever walked this planet. Mahatma Gandhi is a force unto himself without really being a force. At a time where basically violence sparked off only violence, he was the man who said that he would fight violence with non-violence himself.

About that time in the revolution, the entire nature of the revolution was very violent. You had forces like Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose who were in itself very aggressive. They felt that the only way India could win its freedom was by basically pushing the English off. Physically, violently, by whatever means necessary. Subhash Chandra Bose also went off to form the INA – the Indian National Army. But Mahatma Gandhi realised the force of India lay in the Indians. Not in the fact that the Indians should take up arms, but rather in the fact that they shouldn’t.

When you have two enemies going off against each other, I think the best thing to do is to figure out what the other person does not know. Because knowledge is power. And absence of knowledge is fear. I think the English have never faced a force as non-violent as that of the force that Mahatma Gandhi brought about. Hence they did not know how to go about tackling it. And because of that lack of knowledge, fear, a small amount of fear arose. And I think that Mahatma Gandhi was very happy every time he was put in jail, because it just showed that it was working. That his method was working and he was really getting under the skins of the British. Because they were not really able to tackle the non-violent forces yet.

Of course today the situation has changed a bit. If you look at Myanmar, the monks were a very non-violent force, but they were absolutely crushed by the junta in Myanmar. So, I mean, the world changes. But at that time Mahatma Gandhi was an absolute revolutionary. But to look at it in the Indian context, not everyone praises Mahatma Gandhi as much as they should. For example there are quite a few people who will go on to say that Mahatma Gandhi was not the right man for India. What he did was wrong. Though he might have given us our freedom, it was because of him that so many people lost their lives, when India and Pakistan were divided, because they felt that India and Pakistan should have been divided a long time before, so that loss of lives and that collateral damage shouldn’t have occurred at all.

But I honestly feel that those are biases. The fact is that if you can give a hundred votes to a person, 99 may be for and one might be against, and people tend to focus on the one against because it is unique in nature. But I believe that the strength lies in the 99. Mahatma Gandhi was a very, very great man. It is indeed sad that he wasn’t awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Because I believe he deserved it. And also Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister. Both of whom did so much for India. And Mahatma Gandhi is truly a great man.

**11b) Second interview with Nikhil**

Q: What do you do in your spare time?

Well, in my spare time I actually do a lot of gaming. I love computer gaming, and it is almost a borderline addiction. But of late what me and a few of my friends have been doing is that we have actually gone ahead to try and start a company. We are 17 right now, but the minute we hit 18 we can register a company under a name. So what we are doing right now is that we are forming the base work of what we are going to do. Ah well, this is free advertisement, so I might as well tell you what we are planning to do.

We looked at the scenario, and right now what knowledge do we have that is unique to people who are already there on the market? And we realised that in organising events for competitions, in organising events targeted for the youth below the age of 20, about eight of us – not all from our school, about four from our school and four from different schools – we realised that the eight of us each possess a very unique characteristic which contributes to an event.

And hence what we are really doing is event-management. And we actually have a very formal

business portfolio, wherein it’s split into what we are going to be doing in the first quarter and what we want to do in the second quarter, and where we want to be a year from now.

Partnerships are always difficult, especially when it is eight people, so ... and all eight people are our friends as in… no-one was allowed to join if they weren’t in the inner circle of our friends, and so that makes the partnership so much harder and so much more at stake, because if something goes wrong you have not only lost your business, but you have also lost your friendship.

So that is one thing we are focussing on. I am focussing on as well.

After my 12th standard I want to do Law. So Law in India requires you to write a Common Entry Exam or a Common Law Admission Test. So for now I have been doing a lot of preparation for that. For that you need to study a lot about the cases that were… that have been recently conducted... you have to study about… you have to study a lot of GK. And my GK quotient is not as high as I want it to be.

Q: GK. What is that?

Ah.. general knowledge. Also you need to read the papers, because what generally happens is...the day before the exams there might be breaking news, and in the exam they will ask you details for that very specific breaking news, and if you’re not able to give the details and someone else can give you details a little bit better, well then, he’s beating you.

Ah.. the thing in India is that there is huge competition for every seat. If you look at it from the IIT perspective, which is the Indian Institute of Technology, which is engineering, there are about 20,000 seats and there are about 4 lakh applicants or something along the lines for that. Four lakh would roughly be about 400,000. So 400,000 people for 20,000 seats… so one mistake, one percentage and that’s the difference between getting into IIT and not getting into IIT. IIT also happens to be one of the most prestigious Institutes in India. I have friends who have been studying for the IIT exams since 10th standard, and who are still studying for it fervently, and who will do anything to get that high rank.

So in the same way, Law has about 60 seats... the college I want to go to has about 60 seats open, and they have about 20 to 30,000 applicants for those 60 seats.

Another thing which I don’t really approve of is reservation, and there is quite a lot of reservation in India. So of the sixty seats, 33% of the seats are reserved for women, another 33% of the seats is reserved for the OBC’s, that is Other Backward Castes, and scheduled castes.

Basically long ago during…very, very long ago in fact… in the entire Indian culture, the Hindu culture was split into four very distinct castes, which is the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Shudras and the Vaishyas. And in these four castes... it was actually a very novel concept… it was actually very noble in character and in structure, but over time the system degenerated as most systems do. And as such one caste was really, really badly treated – they were actually called the ‘untouchables’, because of the tasks they were made to do, as in their jobs they were those of street cleaners. They were the more menial workers, and hence they were the untouchables.

Q: So they are below the other four?

They were below the other four a long time ago. Today of course castes really don’t matter to most students… to youths … generally nobody really looks into castes except the government.

And hence keeping that in mind, they have reserved seats for castes that had been deprived of opportunity earlier.. today. Somehow I feel two wrongs don’t make a right. So I don’t particularly agree with this reservation. However I mean… it depends… you can’t really say. In 20 years if India is doing better for it, then fine. India is losing a lot of talent purely because of this, because when they don’t get seats in the IITs they decide to go to the MIT.

Q: What’s that?

Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US.

Q: In the US?

Yes. That’s just crap, ah.

Q: And they stay there?

Yes, they stay there. Because they get better jobs there. They get a higher salary. They get better job benefits and the governments there are a lot smoother than the ones in India.

Also my free time… coming back to the point. I actually do a lot of school work at home. By school work I don’t necessarily mean studying. But we are organising a model United Nations in an inter-house level so that more students get a chance to participate. We have about 6,000 students in our school right from kindergarten to the 12th standard. And in the 8th standard and 9th standard itself we have, I think, a total of about 950-odd students. Hence we want to give these students exposure to what the actual UN is, and how to go about representing your country at the UN. Because you never know, one of these 950 might be the next Indian delegate to the United Nations.

So we are bringing it to an inter-house level. Our school is divided into basically 5 houses:

Thomas House, Elphick House, Packenham-Walsh House, Pettigrew House and Pope House – each house is named after one of the founders of our school. We believe that it makes our life simpler, because if you would look at 6,000 students, it would be just too much. But instead to look at, you know, about 1,500, 1,500, 1,500, it would be a lot easier. So most events in school are inter-house, which also proves to have a very, very competitive house spirit. Actually just about two days ago there was the Pettigrew house captain and the Thomas house captain both wanting to do the same play for Dramatics and having quite heated arguments, saying “No, I want to do the play.” Because at the House Dramatics this year you have to do one scene from a Shakespearean play, so both of them wanted to do *The Merchant of Venice* court scene with Shylock’s monologue and Portia’s monologue.

So with putting all of that together you have very little time left. However I do like spending quite a lot of time on messaging ...sms. Sending phone text-messages to another, because in India it’s very popular. It’s the easiest way to keep in touch without actually losing too much of your time. Because, while you are doing something else, it is just about sending a message to say hi to about four of your friends. So you’ve kept in touch and you haven’t really been deviated. It’s not like picking up the phone and talking to someone and actually getting deviated from your work.

And that’s basically about what I do.

Q: Girls. Have you thought of getting married someday? How long will you wait for that?

I think the youth are a little more progressive in their thinking, however the parents and the latter generation isn’t quite there as yet... So girls is always a very subjective topic, depending on the family. Some families are progressive and they don’t mind boys having girlfriends even. However other families are very, very, very restrictive, and it is an absolute ‘no’ to even talk to girls. So there is this absolute mix.

In India quite a few marriages used to be arranged. In essence what they do is… they find a suitable wife that would fit all the characteristics they wanted, like Brahmin caste, she’s sitting with a Phd (a doctorate qualification), she’s earning quite a hefty sum of money, and what not. All the characteristics that the parents want. And then the parents will ask…arrange for a meeting between the two, and if they are happy, they will get married and if they are not, they don’t.

But thankfully that’s a fading culture right now. That isn’t as prevalent as it used to be, and marriages look easier now and much… and it is easily accepted. When my mother married my father, they were both Hindus, but my mother was Malyali and my father Tamilian, and that in itself was a huge barrier to overcome. However today you see many cross-cultural marriages in itself, like it’s not restricted to one religion, which is a lot better than what it used to be.

Quite a few marriages today extend between religions. It’s not confined to one religion. About fifty years ago that would be forbidden, for a marriage to extend between two religions, but today society is a lot more open. My family for instance is very open-minded. They …my mother wants to pick my wife, because she is very protective in that sense, but my father has told me very clearly that I have to do my own searching. They are not going to take any responsibility and any liability for anything that happens afterwards. So in that context I mean, that is marriage for boys.

Q: So have you had a girl friend?

That’s confidential!

1. **Transcript of interview with Rahul at the Bangalore Club, 16-year-old student.**

My name is Rahul, and I am studying in the 11th standard in Bishop Cotton’s, and I have not been here in Cotton’s for a long time. I’ve previously been in St. Joseph’s, another school here in Bangalore. I play a lot of tennis. Go to the Bangalore Club a lot.

Q: So we’re in the Bangalore Club right now! Are you a member?

Yes, I am a member. My parents are members and my grandparents also are members.

Q: What kind of a club is it?

It has a lot of colonial touch to it. It started off a really long time ago, I think. In 1868, if I’m not mistaken. It has a lot of British influence. A lot of British traditions are still carried on here. Judging by the architecture, you could tell.

Q: Is it popular to be a member here?

Yes, it would be popular. There are a lot of clubs here in Bangalore, and this is also a good club.

It’s nice actually to be a member here.

Q: Are you good at tennis?

Yes, I am pretty good, I would say. Wouldn’t be very good, but definitely I do play a considerable amount of tennis.

Q: Are there matches and things like that?

There are matches. They have it twice a year. In fact there is a match next week. So a lot of enthusiasm goes into these matches.

Q: Will you be taking part?

I will be taking part, yeah.

Q: What other arrangements are there here?

Ah, you have a lot of sports here. You have your squash courts, badminton courts, tennis courts, a good gym and of course a nice pool over here. And there is also the library, a department store, also a theatre room. A lot of facilities.

Q: Are women allowed in?

Yes, they are.

Q: Why are you laughing?

Because women are allowed in.

Q: Were they always allowed in?

Ah, I’m not too sure, but there is a bar over here that women are not allowed in. There are two bars. One where only men are allowed, and another bar where only women are allowed. And there is a tradition, I think, once a year the other one goes to the other bar for just one night, or something like that. So interesting.

Q: What other things do you do in your spare time?

I like to play on the computer…a bit. And I don’t like reading very much. I think really nothing much.

Q: What do you think of the Mumbai bombing – has it affected your life?

Ah, in a way it has. Because specially as an Indian, every Indian really gets affected by such a thing, specially an act by terrorists. So it is a sad thing and it shouldn’t have happened. There are a lot of checks these days, especially even in front of my house. I live next to a hotel and there are stringent checks … your cars, your driver. Everything is thoroughly checked. The whole quality of life has really gone down, and you just can’t walk into a hotel just like that. You’ll have to pass through a lot of security checks, and a lot of people are avoiding public areas now, especially malls and all the restaurants because of the threat of bombs. Another attack maybe. So the whole quality of life has gone down. You really can’t walk on the streets feeling safe any more.. go on a train for that matter. There have been a lot of incidents, this is just a big one. Through the years there have been a number of incidents related to bombs. Especially here in India with the creation of Pakistan.

**13) Transcript of interview with Shashank Abraham, 18-year-old university student in Bangalore.**

I am Shashank Abraham and I'm 18 years old. I'm a resident of Bangalore city. And I'm studying business management in Christ University, Bangalore.

Q: How many years have you studied?

About 16 years.

Q: What are you aiming at?

After I finish my degree course, I am gonna do my Masters in Business Administration, and after that I'll start working.

Q: What would you like to do?

Probably become a travel agent like my father.

Q: So you can go into his business?

Yes.

Q: He wants you to do that?

Yea.

Q: What kind of a travel agency is it?

It handles everything – tours, travels, vacations, plane tickets, ship, train, everything.

Q: Do you do a lot of homework?

We don't get very much homework now, but we used to get in previous grades. The degree course we don't get very much homework to do.

Q: Then what about your spare time?

I am very involved in sports, which is... I mainly use up all my time playing basketball. I'm in the college team, and very often we are taken on trips outside the city to participate in tournaments.

Q: Are you a winning group?

Yes, we are a good team. We are not the best, but we are a good group.

Q: What about going out at night. Do you often go out at night?

Recently they put restrictions on that issue due to some different reasons. And now they have imposed a rule that all pubs will be closed by 11.30 pm, and by then the cops come and they force anybody who is left to leave. So it's not very... people have stopped going to pubs. I mean not altogether, but quite a lot. So whenever I want to go for a party, I go to my friends' house. We have house parties, and even then if we make too much noise, the cops come and they tell us to put down the music. Yea, that's about it.

Q: Do you sleep over at their place?

Sometimes. Not very often. Yeah, but sometimes I do.

Q: Are girls allowed to sleep over?

Yes, but not very often. On special occasions like New Year's, Christmas. Maybe sometimes birthday parties, we are, but not very often.

Q: What do you do at the parties?

I myself don't drink alcohol. I may have a very small amount sometimes, but I usually don't drink. But others we… they drink, and we just chat, and dance, listen to music. That's what we do.

Q: Are there nightclubs?

Yes, there are, but because of the 11.30 deadline, they haven't been doing much business lately. People don't go there very often.

Q: What do the tourists do then? You are into that business.

Yeah, the tourists have that... That's why the travel agencies have been affected in a big way because of this ban, and terrorism and the recession of course. But tourists … I am not very sure what they do.

Q: Do you like to watch movies?

Yes, I do. We go quite often. I go with my friends. On holidays usually, and yeah, we usually watch comedies or adventure movies. Depending on who I am going with.

Q: And are they Indian movies?

I myself, I don't like to watch Indian movies very much. I like… I prefer the Hollywood movies.

Q: What's wrong with Bollywood movies?

There's nothing wrong, but since childhood I've been watching English movies on TV, so I'm more used to watching them. I do watch Hindi movies, but not as often as English.

Q: What's the difference?

Oh, the English movies are much more mature and believable.

Q: Oh, what's unbelievable about the Indian films?

Well, now the Indian movies are catching up to the Hollywood movies, but they still… before they used to run around trees and I don't know… make a fool of themselves.

Q: Do you have any names of any of these realistic Indian films that you support?

*Rang de Basanti, Lagaan.*

Q: The new film? *Slumdog Millionaire*?

Yea, *Slumdog Millionaire*.

Q: Did you see it?

I haven't seen it, no. I plan to watch it.

Q: You think this comes into the same group of films that you like to see, of Indian films?

Yea. Because it's like a Hollywood movie. It's not a …there is a lot of English in that movie, so...

Q: Do you think that is something new? The mix.

It's happened within the last three or four years, I think. Before it used to be completely the Indian language, but now it is a mixture of English and Indian language.

Q: Animated films… do you have that in India?

Yea, they do.

Q: What do you think of those?

I like to watch them once in a while. I don't watch them very often. But usually my friends, my girl friends, they like to watch animated movies, 'cause they're funny and they're entertaining.

Q: What about IT (information technology)? Do you use your computer, and what do you use it for?

Yeah. I use my computer for checking emails, and social networking sites, facebook etc. And I also like to play games on it.

Q: Which ones?

*Need for speed, NBA* because I'm a basket-ball fan, *Counter Strike*.

Q: Now I'd like to ask you about what you and your friends say about the latest terrorism in Mumbai.

No-one's happy about it. They are very... we are all deeply concerned about how things are gonna turn out, because the people of Mumbai are very angry about what's happened. And first Pakistan was denying that they had anything to do with the terrorist attacks. But now they have...some of the terrorists have been caught, and they have admitted that they have been sent from Pakistan. But India hasn't really retaliated yet. Yeah, that's what my friends and I think.

Q: Does it affect you in your daily life now in any way?

Yes, when we go to malls, there is very tight security. We can't enter without them thoroughly checking bags and vehicles.

Q: But that's all? Anything else?

No, not really.

Q: There are not places that you don't go to? You still go to the same places as you used to?

Well, as soon as the attack happened, people tried to stay at home as much as possible. They didn't want to go out, but after about one or two weeks, everything came back to normal.

Q: Then another thing. What about the traffic, isn't it hard to get through?

Yeah, it is very hard, and… every day I spend about 2½ to 3 hours in traffic, going and coming. Specially at the peak hours, 5.30 – 6 when people are coming back from work, I mean, the traffic doesn't move sometimes… we're just stuck in the same spot for about 15-20 minutes at a time.

Q: How do you get around?

Em... right now I travel by auto-rickshaw, but that's because I don't have my driver’s licence yet, but as soon as I do, my father has promised me a car.

Q: So you're not going on motorbike?

No, I don't. My parents feel that it's too dangerous to travel by bike. Every day you hear about road accidents and bikers being killed.

Q: We've heard that there's going to be a small car made by Tata.

Yea.

Q: Has it come out … has it started?

It has not yet come out, but it's going to come out very soon, and that will affect the traffic even more, because people will be able to buy this car, because it's so cheap. It's only one lakh or so.

Q: Then what?

The traffic will probably increase tenfold.

Q: How do you feel about terrorism in a country where Gandhi had a great influence once?

Yeah, we seem to have forgotten Gandhi's principles, and all his ideals. He always promoted peace and *ahimsa* (‘cause no injury’) all his life, but this Hindu-Muslim rivalry and… we seem to have forgotten the main point … we aren't united. Gandhi's vision was that we would all be united, and be, I mean… be brothers – one country, but we don't seem to be doing that.

Q: Can it be changed?

It can be changed through cooperation, and if we all strive to achieve that goal. It would take a lot of hard work and determination, but it can be achieved.

Q: Would you achieve it? Would you try to achieve it?

I could try, but it would take a lot more than just one person. Everyone would have to work together.

Q: Do you play the guitar?

Yes...

(Q: What do you play?)

All English songs… Mostly American bands, rock bands and some of the Beatles. Some old music.

Q: Mostly old music?

Recently I have been playing old music, but before I used to focus on the newer music.

Q: What would that be?

Em.. one band is “Green Day”, the American punk-rock band.

Q: What kind of food do you like?

I love Indian food, and I do enjoy foreign cuisines, but I can't survive more than one day without Indian food.

Q: Do you like it nice and hot?

Yes, I do.

1. **Transcript of Interview with Mr Vivek Chandrasekhar**

The interesting part was how the British really ruled in India. They basically brought about little frictions among small little groups, so they fought among themselves, so they could be powerful. So that's basically how they remained in power for so long. By weakening different kingdoms around and playing them one versus the other, and so on and so on. And so it was rather interesting in those days, but they did the job rather well.

Q: And then now?

Well, now of course the change has been ... Indians are grappling with politics today, and I think it's going to evolve, and it is evolving and it will evolve, I think the situation is slowly coming up to a point where people are getting fed up with corruption, fed up with the kind of quality of politicians we have. So I think we are going to see a change now. A change that will seep into politics, where people are going to demand better and better politicians. Better quality of life. And I think that's sooner or later going to happen. And I think that we are all very confident and really hopeful that it will happen.

Q: At that time you used to have rulers who put their sons and daughters in their place. Is it like that now?

Sure. It still remains. The family line or lineage still remains. It remains in politics, it remains in business. It's a very Asian trend. You come across the same thing if you go to Hong Kong, if you go to Singapore, Malaysia, China, Japan. The same lineage always works. And I think even right across The Middle East you'll have the same lineage kind of route.

Well, many parts of Europe you had kings who passed on to their sons or daughters and so on and so forth. So the same trend continues here. Eh, unlike the American system, where lineage was … it didn't play such a large role, but it did play like Kennedy's family and so on. I think lineage does work in... I mean sons and daughters normally get, you know, part of what the parents have worked for. It puts them in a position where it's easy to get into whatever the parents were doing, whether it's politics or industry or whatever they did, so it kind of gives them more credibility.

Q: As for the terrorists in Mumbai. Has it affected your everyday life?

It definitely does affect people's lives, because it's just like you have 9/11, I think it was a very serious issue that really took place. Not just political, but I think it was... something that was psychologically … I would say negative in the minds of lots of people. Trust becomes the biggest issue here. When something of that kind happens, if you lose trust in a certain section of people, and you wonder whether you can really trust them or not. So I think it has hurt a section of people, 'cause a lot of people don't want to do business with you. Just like the rest of the world. Once you lose trust then you lose everything else that goes with it. And it takes a very long time for people to build trust, to build credibility. And I think that's the sad part that happened in Mumbai, I think the section of people might have created a lot of terror there, but at the same time a huge amount of trust has been lost in a section.

Q: And wasn't it their aim to do that?

Well I think that their aim was to create a problem, but I don't think they realised that they have broken the golden rule of breaking trust. I think that breaking trust is something beyond. It takes... it's sometimes irreparable, sometimes it takes a long time to heal and repair, but I think trust is very, very important. I think, sadly I'd say that's the biggest thing that Mumbai has really created in the minds of the people

Q: Do you stand together? I remember London saying: “London stands united”. Do you have something here too – that you want to unite more after this, or...?

Definitely. I mean this terrorism in any part of the world is an act that is absolutely evil. It's evil because people lose faith in the system, there is unnecessary instability that you bring into a system. Ah…when you have wheels of an engine that are moving smoothly and suddenly you drop a couple of pebbles in then it causes some kind of friction there, which creates an instability in the system. So I think that’s what London is trying to do, or what Washington is trying to do, or what New Delhi is trying to do… that they are trying to eradicate and to remove terrorism is a great thing. And I think the world is getting polarized in that direction. We want to make sure that there is no terrorism in the world, so I think from that point of view I think that is a good thing. The world is coming together. So you don't really have two worlds or three worlds now, but you have a world that is anti-terrorism, and you have a small section that is trying to create terrorism. So I think that the anti-terrorism part of the globe is only becoming larger.

I think we were talking about women and India. And it's important to separate the social problems within the country from the fabric, or the social fabric of India. And I think those two are very important points here.

And like I was saying I was just explaining to a few people about glass-ceilings in India. India has never had a glass ceiling when it has come to women. Women have been on the top from… say for centuries. Even in the recent past we have had Indira Gandhi who was the Prime Minister of India, we've had Phoolan Baby who was India's largest, biggest and most feared dacoit or bandit. We've also had some extremely brave warriors, soldiers like Rani Jhansi, who was an incredible warrior. So we've had women in all aspects of society in India, leading the nation. So, of course, in the case like Phoolan Baby some of the worst roles, but Rani Jhansi and Indira Gandhi and so on and so forth – some very leading roles in the country.

Q: Can you tell me about Phoolan Baby?

Phoolan Baby was actually a dacoit, also known as a bandit. And she was very feared in a very large section of ...I think she was in Rajasthan, in Gujarat – some parts in that area. And I'm not sure exactly where she comes from, could be UP (Uttar Pradesh) too, but basically she made her name as a very feared dacoit, sort of madly. So she was an extremely dangerous person to deal with – so people feared her.

So you've had a number of people in India with lead roles. The point I'm really trying to make is that women have had lead roles in India and if you are a woman it doesn't mean that you can't come up. India is a place that'll encourage you to come up provided you have leadership qualities. Anybody in this country who has leadership qualities can come up. Sonia Gandhi is a woman and she is not even Indian, but people are willing to rally behind her, because she has got some leadership qualities. So India is a country that is willing to go with anybody who has got leadership qualities.

So that's the nice and interesting thing about India – you can be a man, you can be a woman, you can be from any part of the world, if you want... if you're interested in leading India, sure you can rally for people's support behind you. You can become a Mahatma Gandhi. It's just qualities that India really looks for. Doesn’t matter if it’s a man or a woman. It really doesn’t matter.

1. Mehndi is henna, a vegetable dye used to paint various temporary designs on the skin. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)