


[bitsaa.org](http://bitsaa.org)
[Submit Nominations](#)
[Submit Class Notes](#)
[Sandpa](#)

## General Interest

[Home](#)
[Editorial](#)
[Letters & Opinions](#)
[News](#)
[Notes from Pilani](#)
[General Interest](#)
[Nostalgia & History](#)
[Creative & Humor](#)
[Cartoons](#)
[Research & Innovation](#)
[Education & Academics](#)
[Business Leaders](#)
[Mera Bharat Mahaan](#)
[In Memoriam](#)
[Alumni Corner](#)
[BITSAA Initiatives](#)
[Most Read](#)
[Highest Rated](#)
[Cover Stories](#)

BY ANURADHA GUPTA ('86 MMS) WITH THANKS TO RAJ GILDA

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Despite our considerable progress in commerce, technology and the liberal arts, key challenges continue to plague our world. Poverty, lack of basic health care services and a few of the day to day challenges that we rarely stop to think about, yet they form so many people's lives. In this article, Anu and Raj discuss the issues and also highlighting being undertaken by **Lend A Hand India** an institute which that aspires to empower vocational training leading to jobs, self-employment and community enhancement.*

**PHILOSOPHERS** (many of who are scientists too) muse over the path we live from day to day often, enjoying our personal ambitions, chugging through life. Some of us ask the question, "What is my purpose?" and seek to know, "What can I give back to my community, to society..."

If life were equal and socialist, it may have been dull but when it is so unequal GDP of 48 countries is less than the assets of 3 of the richest people in the world. I wonder that some of us are moved into thinking beyond our daily, mundane lives.

At least one child below the age of 5 has died in the world while you read this article. Malnourishment – hunger, or diseases that could have been prevented but for the lack of resources.

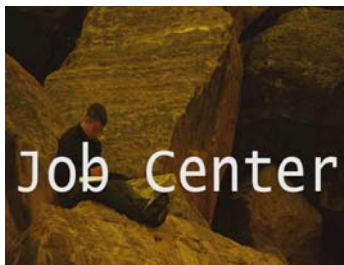
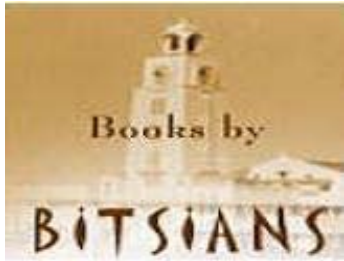


One third of the world is near starvation, there are 200 million malnourished children; can we just stop and ask ourselves some soul-searching questions?

At primary school, in Gwalior when I was just 11 there was a boy who wore slippers and tattered clothes. Everybody laughed at him. He was married (!), could speak English and therefore the door to higher education and eventually, employment, was slowly shutting. It is hard to thank my father for showing me poor people on television (there are enough), talking of deprivation and malnourishment.

My father was doing the rounds of hospitals with my scared housemaid who wanted to quit but was frightened of doctors and the lack of after care facilities that eventually killed her and left her kids bereft of the sole earner in the family.

Many of us have seen our parents deprive themselves of something or their lives to be where we are. When my mother asked me in an awed voice about the hotel I stayed in during my trip to Grand Canyon had bedding and towels.



## Important Links

to tears. To ensure that we afford this quality of life, our parents have made sacrifices. But not all parents are as lucky, parents in slums and villages prepared to spend around 40 % of their income on educating their children that does not assure employment despite their dreams, hopes and aspirations. Thousands join the pool of 'educated unemployed' and are left to their own devices. Often the disconnect between education and job skills required implies that the degree or diploma obtained proves useless in getting a job. These energetic and ambitious people take longer and longer to achieve their expectations of leading a life of dignity and esteem. They are prone to becoming their own victims and are likely fall victims to the cracks of hopelessness and short cuts. This predicament and its outcome affect not only their immediate family members, but also the community, nations and the world as a whole. 44% people in India will sleep tonight having earned less than they were paid about that.

My personal journey after studying involved observing suffering, feeling sad and wondering whether I could do anything about it. At Hindustan Lever, while working for the IRD (integrated rural development) program, it was a real eye-opening experience. Our chairman then was Mr. S M Dutta, a very good man, a real visionary who thought that to sell soap (and end of the day that's what all of us are doing) we should think about how people will become capable of buying it. At Etah, I felt I could see how many blessings we have that we don't count and how much we have been granted, from water to electricity, to basic necessities, forget luxuries.

Corporate Strategy is an interesting subject, if we were to write one for ourselves, we might not feel like robots living from day to day and it could give us some perspective. Drop everything else, ever pondered about your mission? As long as one is committed that one was selling soap and detergents, it was not that great a feeling to be appraised of our mission, "Meeting the everyday needs of people everywhere" absolutely revolutionizes how you define your business or your life. A frustrated housewife could redefine herself as House proud, involved in nutrition, social and psychological comfort and make her feel more valued by herself to society.

Even if we go by the Gita philosophy of us as evolving human beings, (or there is some such thing), a strategic vision helps. And if one were to put things in perspective and redefine our values and our mission, (rather than seek a solution outside which often breeds discontent), respecting work ethics, believing in the value of labor and enhancing our lives through a social purpose are all options available.

My personal journey meant that the annual donation to CRY was not sufficient. Today, I have left the corporate world to find meaning. It started with my daughter's drawing room has a corner called the recycling corner – a different bin for cardboard, one for magazines and so on...which her son very proudly showed me. This inspired my research and subsequent book on the environment to improve the lives of children amongst children in India and when I studied the subject, I was aghast at the implications – sustainable development sounds good in theory but to this day, it destroys future civilizations, jeopardize the lives of our children, it is scary. Empowered by taking little steps, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Mine started with my book, "The Green Dragon".

I think of my child and whether she will ever experience the pain of seeing her parents or the poor in USA. And at the risk of sounding strange, part of my child's education will involve being sensitized to this. I see materialism and I feel that if one is not given up a few indulgences, one might be able to fund a child's education.

immunization.

My journey has led me to **Sunanda Mane** and **Raj Gilda** and that was t in my life. Sunanda was Regional Director with CARE in India and her sir vision are moving. She set up Lend a Hand India ([www.lend-a-hand-india.org](http://www.lend-a-hand-india.org)) now work which deals with issues of empowering students through vocal that will lead to jobs, self-employment and community enhancement pro

Working with them has been an eye opener. Sunanda for instance told n recent research on Indian philanthropy, the glaring findings of which are donations that Indians make go to temples and as little as 10-15% goes projects. Can you imagine, at the cost of the poor, ill, illiterate and hung Hindutva and pundits who scare people into submission with superstior themselves.

I feel that for each of us, whether we are in the corporate sector, or aca anywhere, there are options to make a difference. I would welcome you NGO's mission and programs but everybody has a different agenda, som moves them. Whether they are related to technology or gender issues o education or employment or the environment or health or what have you involve research, getting involved with an NGO that one is convinced ab are many doing a commendable job, and doing anything from volunteeri to writing for them to donating, whatever. When I was involved in the te about how one could contribute to LAHI, we thought of number of differ fund raising team, people involved in creative, website design and devel (see [http://www.lend-a-hand-india.org/Getting\\_Involved.htm](http://www.lend-a-hand-india.org/Getting_Involved.htm)). There ar amongst NGO's. This is bound to exist, just like it does in the private se competition is always good for the consumer – providing choices and im efficiency, keeping us on our toes.



One won and wher critical m involved activities. there will each one make a d program it snowba partner o Pune was implemer Swadhee vocational training t and a Do their ben everythin to his vill

implement the Project. Four other alumni have joined him. There are en of inspiring people from **Manmohan Singh**, moved by poverty into becc economist, **MS Swaminathan** (Green Revolution and now, 'Every villag center'), **Ela Bhatt** (SEWA) and so many of our BITSians who are engag activities.

There are people who consider this a second career option, some feel that they are giving something back to their parents, their community, or whatever the motive might be, a person somewhere could benefit, or an somebody hungry, dying or destitute. Let's make the world a better place.

As a girl involved in one of our programs said, very simply and eloquently, "I am flying a kite and I want to touch the sky."

*Photograph courtesy © Nadine Sloan (Glenaire). Source - [www.ncdoi.com](http://www.ncdoi.com)*

(c) Copyright 2004 BITSAA International Inc.  
Website by [jPeople](#), [YonEarth](#) and BITSAA Technology