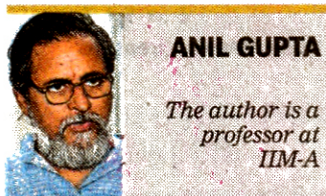


# A windmill to run a ceiling fan: A sanctuary of ideas

In context of the recent hooch tragedy, it would be worthwhile to divert the distillation skills of local people towards other income-generating alternatives



**ANIL GUPTA**

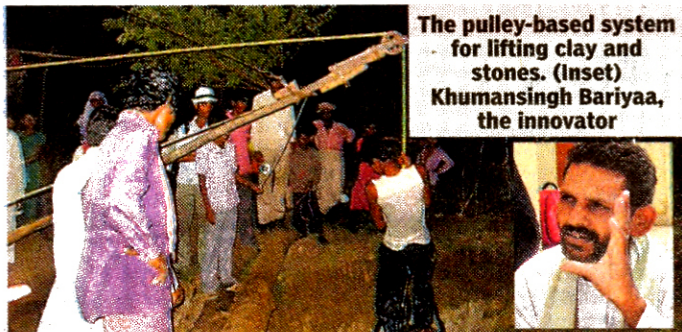
*The author is a professor at IIM-A*

**L**ast week, we learned about the artist who had made beautiful paintings on a wall of another tribal farmer, just to fulfil a wish, how fulfilment of creative urges did not await fulfilment of basic needs first. While walking further in the 23rd Shodh Yatra, from Dahod to Alirajpur, we came across a few very painful situations, though in one case, this very pain had triggered an innovation.

The condition of drinking water availability as well as quality was not very good. But wells were being dug in many villages, more on the Gujarat side than the MP side. Within about 15 km distance, we came across three time zones of technological change.

In one case, there were five women pulling a rope lifting the baskets full of clay, stones and mud from a well being dug by the men. This was indeed a most primitive method of digging a well — continuing for the last 2,000 years.

After a while, we met Khuman Singh Gulabhai Bariya in Tokarva village. He was an amazingly creative and innovative person. He designed a horizontal pulley-based system for lifting clay and stones from a well, costing hardly 1,500 rupees. Interestingly enough, when the basket came up after the rope was



**The pulley-based system for lifting clay and stones. (Inset) Khumansingh Bariyaa, the innovator**

pulled he would move the entire lifting arrangement over the ground on a side, so that it could be emptied easily without having to be pulled with difficulty.

And after another few kilometres, we found of course a motorised well-digging system costing more than Rs50,000. So, from completely primitive to semi-mechanical to completely motorised, we could see three different time zones of technology.

Khuman Singh was a Kabirpanthi, a traditional healer and also a man of ideas. He wanted to design a windmill to run a ceiling fan in his home.

Now there have been many experiments about the windmill around the world, but this was the first time we heard someone planning to use a windmill to run a ceiling fan.

The idea seems simple, but why hadn't anybody tried? This innovation will now be taken forward with the support of the Honey Bee Network through SRISTI. And he also had a simple distillation system for making herbal extracts for providing medicine to the neighbouring farmers.

In context of the recent, most unfortunate hooch tragedy, would it not be worthwhile to ex-

periment with diverting the distillation skills of local people towards more value addition and income-generating alternatives instead of liquor. I realise this practice is an outcome of a very complex set of factors.

Obviously everybody who was aware about it, the police, media, civil society and community leaders besides political activists, but did not do enough or anything, has a complicity in this tragedy. But then, those who earn a livelihood out of this practice can certainly be offered more remunerative options.

A lot of tribal people who make liquor as well as others in rural and urban areas can be enabled to distil herbal and spice extracts that can transform the local economies. Nutritional drinks can be developed and can be dispensed with as tonics under the supervision of medical advice. Just as the cultivation of poppy under the regulatory system is done legally in parts of the country so that it can be used for medicinal purposes, similarly a regulated zone for nutraceuticals, herbal drinks, medicines, vegetative colours etc can be developed in areas where people need to be diverted away from this unfortunate practice.

**IGNITING MINDS**