

Man on a tree saving mission



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Even for a social change agent, it is not easy to please every body. If one out of a thousand tree seeds that he scattered on the road side grew into a tree, he had planted about ten million trees by mid nineties. In addition, he also helped build thousands of mini check dams through what he called a cement scheme.

When Dr Kalam read about him in Honey Bee Newsletter, he could not resist meeting him. While meeting between both went off very well, but it also raised a question in our mind. Why is it that a person like Premji bhai about whom we first wrote in 1996 and who was honoured with

cristi sanman and NIF's presidential award for designing tree seed scatterer and innovative check dams, is not known to every young child in the country. Why do school text books not have a lesson about such contemporary social change agents in every state? Is it that educational administrators are worried that if the children were exposed to such ideas at young age, they might start seeing impossible dreams and society will turn around much faster than we ever can imagine.

May be then the mandarins in central and state departments will have to learn

much more from the ground, keep track of such social leaders and entrepreneurs and become accountable to them as well. Too much of a botheration, is not it?

But he did not bother only the policy makers, some of the people in the villages whose cycles were punctured by the thorns of prosopis

(ganda bawal) also complained. Women who did not have to go far for fuel wood however, blessed him. Premji bhai often saw only the tree in the eyes of the bird, just as arjun saw the target in Mahabharat. Such a devotion to a public cause deserves better. Should not we expose our children to such experiences every day or week and instill in them a desire to create public goods.

Today when the desire of many who have a lot already, is to have even more private gain, does not matter if the corners have to be cut (and the public interest has to suffer), such examples provide a happy contrast.

May be the text book boards at central and state level will wake up to the urgent need to imbue young minds with the ideal of the larger social good, an inclusive and imaginative India, a creative and compassionate India. May be.

**MINDS ON
THE MARGIN**