

A BAT for all Seasons



*The remarkable story of a Bat who
Ventured on a path less travelled,
... And thus made a difference!!*

Nikhil Pant

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This book is dedicated to the fond memory of my grandfather

‘babuji’

Who lived and breathed ‘maitreya’ – the art of friendliness –
each day of his life, and touched everybody who chanced to come his way

FROM THE AUTHOR

Every one of us seeks happiness, peace and contentment in life. The paths we choose and the journeys we travel are different. Each one is born unique – possessing different aptitudes, talents and bents of mind. Some are able to find vocations that match these inherent abilities. Others stumble into them by accident, while many are left searching. But whatever be the path and whatever be the journey, the life we live can be made a lot more meaningful, adventurous and worthwhile if we choose to embrace this world with an open mind and an attitude of tranquility. Tranquility means calm, stillness, silence and harmony. The ability to be at peace with oneself is the mission of all religions. I sincerely feel that each one of us can master the art of remaining ‘in harmony’ – both within and without – by providing a vent to the immense reservoir of compassion (‘karuna’) residing within us. This outpouring can happen only through ‘Maitreya’ or friendliness. If we adopt the ‘Religion of Maitreya,’ the flow of unconditional love and compassion in the world will make it heavenly. The result will be bliss and contentment all around.

I have chosen a BAT to share my Religion of Maitreya with all of you since bats are the only mammals that can fly. They also rest upside down in their roosts (homes). Thus, even though they are like us, they are also very different. And this is what makes them special. The Microbats communicate through echolocation (by using the reflection of sound vibrations) while Megabats have very sharp eyesight. My hero, Chim-Maitreya (Chim for Chingadar or bat) is able to echolocate as also see very well because he developed and mastered these skills through sheer hard work and practice under the guidance of his elders. He is a bat who lives his religion and experiences amazing outcomes. Against all odds he continues to be friendly. Finally, he wins over all his adversaries through unconditional love.

The book is in the form of a narration where Chim-Maitreya, as the aging Chim-Maharaj (the king of Bats), is telling his life story to the next generation of chims (bats) so that they can carry on living in the spirit of maitreya with all vigour and vitality.

BAT also implies ‘Basic Attitudes for Tranquility.’ I hope this book will encourage my readers to experiment with Maitreya in their daily lives. I have lived these principles to the best of my ability, and I promise you that results are assured if our efforts are sincere, selfless and genuine. These will be in the form of greater balance, peace and happiness in our lives.

I had never dreamt of writing a book for grown-up children, their parents and teachers and aspiring professional adults looking for a vocation, till about six months ago when Sri Vijay Batra, MD of Think Inc, whom I call 'Vijay Bhai', suddenly suggested to me to work on one. I cannot thank him enough for encouraging me and goading me on to it. The effort has been an exhilarating one and has filled me renewed confidence and energy to pursue my chosen vocation. I thank my wife Ruchi & son Mudit who have provided me lots of valuable insights for this book. Ruchi has been a pillar of strength for me over the last 10 years. She is also my best friend. Mudit is a divine experience. Every moment spent with him is elevating. I thank my brother Lalit who has read through the draft and has provided valuable suggestions. Lalit has always inspired me towards perfection in whatever I do. Often, we have taken long walks discussing about topics ranging from Cricket and Football to the definition of a 'successful' life.

My grateful thanks are to Capt Vishwa Kant Pandey, Director, Manava Bharati India International School, New Delhi who has always encouraged me in all my endeavors ever since I joined the Manava Bharati family in 1997 as a Counsellor.

Most importantly, I thank my parents. My father has been my mentor. I have learnt from him the entire philosophy of a balanced life. Throughout his service to the nation as an Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer, he made it a habit to do good to society through each and every Department/Ministry he worked for, despite all adversities. He treaded the path less traveled and kept designing, developing and implementing innovative programmes for the welfare of the people in society – irrespective of their caste, religion or creed. He suffered a massive heart attack in early 2003 as a result of the accumulated stresses that had developed within his system due to the tireless work he had been doing throughout his career (1961 to 1996). The discipline, simplicity and humbleness with which he conducts himself each day within the house as also outside it is quite amazing. He has contributed with great intensity in finalizing the text of my book. I cannot thank him enough.

My mother has been an epitome of dedication for the well being of the family. I cannot recall a single moment in my entire life when I have found her loose control and show disregard to my father. She has worshipped him and cared for him and the family day in and day out. And for this she has often suffered and sacrificed silently. I saw her nursing my father like a baby during the post-bypass heart surgery period. All these images have shaped my perceptions and ideologies in life. As a doctor, she worked tirelessly to implement programmes like the Pulse Polio Campaign. Her dedication for work was just as intense as it was for us in the family.

I hope and pray that every child could have parents like mine.

My friend Ish has printed this book in record time. Without his support the project could not have been completed by 21th March 2005.

My thanks are to Mrs. Abha Sharma, Mudit's art teacher at Manava Bharati, for encouraging and guiding Mudit to design the cover of the book. Shailja Thakur of Class X A at Manava Bharati drew the lovely sketches of bats in real quick time. My thanks to her, too.

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INTRODUCTION

A Purpose in Life

“The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself, which is best, and make it perfect for a noble cause.”

SRI AUROBINDO

A day with all my Chim-Chotus (The little Bats)

Dear Chims,

Once upon a time our entire nation ‘Chim-gaadar Bhoomi’ (The Land of the Bats) was in grave danger of extinction. The Two legged one – ‘Jhaam’ (or the Trouble-maker) had developed a strange box – the ‘dibba’ (cellphone), which prevented all our Chim-gaadars from telecommunicating with each other. It had become almost impossible to interact amongst us. We just couldn’t talk to each other. Jhaam kept using the dibba all the time. Our vibrations interfered with those from the dibbas, and were disrupted. All my fellow brothers and sisters became very depressed.

The Great Tribal Bat Leader ‘Chim-Gaadar Maharaj’ then called upon one and all to assemble at the royal den. “These are trying times,” he said. “We must find a way out or else we will all perish soon. Without communicating we cannot survive. Jhaam will destroy us.” Every Chim-gaadar stood still. They all knew what Chim-Maharaj was saying. Each passing day was becoming more and more difficult to bide. But none had a solution. Maharaj was exhorting all of us to present their views.

Then, the two of us came forward – Chim-Chaloo and myself. We both volunteered to venture out into the world outside the den, and explore to find a better place for the entire community – where the dibba would not interfere with our existence. Chim-Chaloo said, “Sir, I don’t see any reason for us to

waste any more time here. Let us all fly to a far off land. I am sure there exists a place in this world without the dibba. I will find it out soon, and get back to you.”

But I felt otherwise. My grandfather, Chim-Babu had said, “Never give up without a struggle. You must be prepared to experiment with Maitreya (friendliness) within the problem area first before thinking of moving out.” Chim-Babu had not only rubbed this into my psyche till the last day of his life, but on his death bed also, he sent for me and took a promise from me that I shall never give up. His last words were prophetic for me. I began to practise Maitreya in my daily life. The experience was elevating. In no time I began to develop synergies with other Chim-gaadars. The world around me opened up like never before. I began to be called Chim-Maitreya (the friendly one). I said, “Maharaj, I would like to remain in this region, but would venture out of this den. I will find a place to live, experiment with Maitreya, and see if a solution can be found.” Chim-Maharaj flapped his wings, took a deep breath, and closed his eyes. All Chim-gaadars stood with bated breath. What would be the pronouncement? There was hushed silence all around. And then Maharaj spoke. “Friends, I have decided to give a months time to both Chim-Chaloo and Chim-Maitreya to find a way out. The one who comes up with a better solution will become the next Chim-Maharaj. I am aging. My days are numbered. I am worried about the future. I cannot die without an assurance that the future of all Chim-gaadars is secure. Please support my decision.” All Chim-gaadars flapped their wings ten times together. That was our way of showing support. Maharaj had tears in his eyes.

Both of us went close to him. We flapped our wings, bowed our heads in salute and asked for his blessings. Maharaj was overwhelmed. He opened his majestic wings, and hugged us. For a minute we both remained wrapped

inside them. This was the ultimate blessing any Chim-gaadar could hope to receive from the Maharaj. We felt blessed and determined.

As we left the den the next night, all the Chim-gaadars stood there to bid us goodbye. We both flapped our wings and flew off in different directions.

CHAPTER ONE

Solutions within Problems

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

I knew that finding a new den to experiment what Chim-Babu had told me would not be easy. At night Jhaam shuts all the doors and windows. So how would I enter his house? Luckily for me, that night the dibbas did not seem to be working much. My ears did not catch any of their vibrations. This made my work a little easier. I said a small prayer and decided to explore my way through the maze of buildings in front of me. I thought I would do this till dawn. Then, I would try to enter into a new den in the house of Jhaam. And I did just that.

The whole night I flew. Just before dawn I felt very hungry. So I caught some insects in mid-air. I was adept at this right from my Chim-Chotu days. I loved catching prey for all my friends. They adored me for this, especially the Chim-Burhau (the oldies), who had lost their knack for catching prey due to old age. At times even the capable ones took advantage. But Chim-Babu was quick to pitch in. He made me understand that goodwill should only reach and touch the deserving ones – the ones who are prepared to reciprocate and show similar attributes.

As the first rays of the sun bounced off my wings, I saw a large house just in front of me. It had a huge lawn in front and a large backyard. The house had two floors. I decided to move upwards. Since it was very early in the morning, all was very quiet. Everyone appeared to be fast asleep.

I found a small crack in the terrace facing the backyard. For some time I rested there. As the sun rose further, gradually, some activities began in the house. I saw a young Jhaam-Raani get up first. She was very swift and economical in her movements. She entered the kitchen and began with some task there. Within no time a smart Jhaam-Raaja got up, too. He went into another small room. From there he came out nice and fresh. He then went inside and started shouting. Soon, a crying Jhaam-Chotu, rubbing his eyes, came out. He was being dragged by Jhaam-Raaja into the small room. From there he came out, well dressed in a school uniform. In the meantime, I saw an elderly Jhaam-Babu get up and enter the same small room. He came out, properly dressed, and took a stick hanging from the wall. He then went out of the house. In the end, Jhaam-Raani, too, went inside the small room. She came out looking very beautiful. She and Jhaam-Raaja then sat on a table and began eating something. Jhaam-Chotu joined them. He reluctantly ate with them. And then a horn sounded from the front; Jhaam-Chotu picked up his bag and ran out.

After about an hour, Jhaam-Babu entered the house. As soon as he came in, Jhaam-Raani began shouting at him. He muttered something in reply, but was made to shut up. Jhaam-Raaja tried to intervene, but could not.

Jhaam-Raani picked up her bag, a bunch of keys, and a dibba that was plugged on to the wall. She got into her car and drove off. After she left, Jhaam-Raaja sat down with Jhaam-Babu and began explaining something to him. After sometime he, too, got up picked up his dibba and keys, and drove off in his car.

Once everyone had left, Jhaam-Babu took off his shoes and slowly reclined into his easy chair. He also had a dibba, which he now put to his ear and started speaking. The moment this happened, my ears started exploding with vibrations. I just could not stand it. But he appeared to feel relaxed after his talk. Soon he ended his conversation and began reading a book.

After a few hours, the bell rang and Jhaam-Chotu trotted in. He took his bag off his back and went straight into the arms of Jhaam-Babu. The latter appeared mighty pleased to see him again. This brought tears in my eyes, as I, too, remembered my Chim-Babu, and how much he had loved me. Jhaam-Babu then opened Chotu's bag and began to look at each book very carefully. While he did this, the little one kept on talking and gesturing about his work. After going through each book, Jhaam-Babu gave a pat on the back of the little kid. Each pat made him jump with excitement.

Both then had their food together. This again was a process of great joy to them. At times, Jhaam-Babu would feed Chotu with his own hands. After lunch, Jhaam-Babu went off to his room to rest while Chotu changed his clothes and went out of the house to play.

Till late in the evening neither Jhaam-Raaja nor Jhaam-Raani had returned. I, too, was feeling very groggy, as somehow I had managed to remain awake the whole day.

Both parents returned quite late. By that time Chotu had already gone to bed after his dinner. Jhaam-Babu was still awake. He appeared to be waiting for the two to return. Both came back at different times. They were very tired. After spending some time together, all three went off to sleep, but not before talking again on their dibbas! This again put me off. The same old problem...

I kept wondering if ever I would be able to catch on to these vibrations. I was very keen to listen to their conversations. Only then would I be able to

properly understand what was happening. And then I remembered - Chim-Babu had told me that when things don't happen the way you want them to, the best way is to initially try to calm down and relax. "This is the time to think and contemplate. Often, solutions lie within problems. If your mind has been trained and conditioned, and is in proper fitness, it should provide you with reasonable options. Some of these could even be solutions," he would say. So I decided not to struggle, but to let go! I closed my eyes and let my mind wander. I had confidence in its ability.

From my observations of the day, I could clearly make out that all was not well in this Jhaam family. Something was amiss! I remembered very well how my Chim-Papa was always there for me. Right from the time I was born, he was by my side – participating in all the important events of my life. He believed in teaching by showing me how things were done. How to fly; how to echolocate (find my way); how to develop a map of all the objects in my mind through visualisation before deciding on a course of action, and how to eventually catch prey! And each time I made a mistake, he ensured that I got it right the next time round by helping me analyse my mistakes. He never scolded me for getting it wrong the first time. And because of this attitude of his, I was never scared of trying and experimenting since my childhood. I kept experimenting for my own development, and that of others around me, analysed my mistakes and kept moving forward. The same enthusiasm gave me the strength and motivation to implement the 'Principles of Maitreya' evolved by my grandfather Chim-Babu. Success in this endeavour helped me evolve great synergy and networking with other Chim-gaadars. And this networking led to astonishing results – for each one of our families, our neighbours, and the whole community. Even different species and communities of Chim-gaadars began to integrate their strategies for attaining their common goals, started echolocating in tandem, and began assisting each other in all spheres of life.

But this was a totally new challenge for me. I had three important agendas in front of me. Firstly, to befriend the Jhaam family, secondly, to try and instill

the 'Principles of Maitreya' in the members of this family, and thirdly, extend this friendship to a higher plane – getting Chim-gaadars and Jhaams to co-exist peacefully.

But I still did not have the tools to communicate – the essential pre-requisite for making new friends!

With these thoughts lingering in my mind, I closed my eyes and began to contemplate and ponder. I did not realize when I went off to sleep.

CHAPTER TWO

Getting the Right Perspective

“Remember, that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.”

THE DALAI LAMA

A shrill vibration suddenly woke me up! For a moment I did not realize what it was. I thought I may be dreaming, and so went off to sleep again. But after a little while, or so I thought, the same sound bombarded my ears again. This time I heard people talking. Yes, it was real! People talking! It was no dream. I could clearly hear Jhaam-Raaja talking to someone. As I opened my eyes, I could see him right there in front of me. My prayers had been answered. Meditation had worked! My ears were now able to tune into the frequency of the dibba. Infact, I could even understand what they were talking. I then sent a small vibration in Raaja’s direction and saw him react. I was thrilled to bits. I, too, could send them messages through the dibba! And I was the first Chim-gadar to achieve this! I wondered for a moment where Chim-Chaloo might be at this moment. But immediately something clicked in my mind – “Never let initial success cloud your mind and break your concentration,” Chim-Babu would say.

Soon I was able to clearly hear all the conversations taking place in the house. The Jhaam family was in deep turmoil. I could make out that Jhaam-Raaja was a big corporate honcho - CEO of ‘www.Lage_Raho.com’ a

multinational company that prided itself on extracting even the last ounce of effort from its employees in order to give the best possible service to its clients - in the field of telecommunications. The company made crores of rupees in profits, but had the dubious distinction of being unable to retain its employees for more than a couple of years. But Raaja was a freak. He had survived for 25 years in this organisation, and the philosophy of this company to ensure '100% output from 100% employees' was his brainchild. He never settled for anything less than the best, and he possessed the confidence to ensure the implementation of this principle. So much so that he wanted his wife, Jhaam-Raani, to be the best - most beautiful, most caring and most loyal!

Raani worked in the best and most prestigious school in town - Success Academy - from 10am to 2pm, part-time, and then served in an NGO (Non Government Organisation) from 3pm to 8pm. She prided herself on the results her students were able to secure in Xth and XIIth Board Exams. 100% success rate! 100% pass! 100% distinctions! Parents would queue up just to have a word with her during the school PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings. They just wanted to hear from her how good their children were, and how 'successful' they would be in the exams.

After school, she went to serve the slum children through the NGO supported by international donors. Chotu would board a van and head for his home while she drove to the NGO office. The NGO had set the record during the previous year for the highest number of slum children 'enrolled' in their mobile classes. No other NGO even came close to the standards set by them. And the salary they gave was also the highest. So it could not but be doing excellent social work!

Jhaam-Chotu was a cute little kid. He was about 4 years old. Everybody in the house was eager to see him get an admission in the best school in town – Success Academy. Both parents were getting nightmares about his admission prospects. What would happen if Chotu did not make it? How

would they move around amongst their friends whose kids had already been selected? All these thoughts were really stressing them out. This was one problem neither of them knew how to handle.

Raaja's corporate instincts made him realise that this was one issue he could not drive home. On occasions he would shout loudly at Chotu when he stopped mugging up phrases for the interview. How to get him to speak the right answers at the right moments? How he wished it were one of his employees whom he could work overtime! Little Chotu's admission pangs were proving to be life's worst crisis for Raaja.

Raani was busy buying all the best books from the market on child counselling, child psychology and guides to 'Success in Admissions.' She was clinical in her approach. After all, her success rate was 100%! Who would dare fail her child?

Amongst all this tension, Jhaam-Babu was one person who was least affected. He was a picture of poise and composure. His morning walks, marathon reading habits and daily play-sessions with Chotu kept him hale and hearty. At times he would send SMS to both Raaja and Raani. His main emphasis was -

“Don't measure success with just money, fame and status. Have a purpose that goes a little beyond your ego (you and your family). And then measure each of your thoughts and actions against this higher purpose. If a thought or action takes you a step closer to this purpose, then go ahead. The closer you reach your self-defined purpose, the more successful you are in life.”

Jhaam-Babu was so much like Chim-Babu, my grandfather, I thought. But I felt that he was unable to communicate this wisdom to Chotu's parents. And this is where the 'Principles of Maitreya' could play a major role, I felt.

So, my course of action was defined. I had to first establish communication with Jhaam-Babu, prove my worth and then see how we could move forward together. And I had a gut feeling that Jhaam-Babu would not disappoint me!

CHAPTER THREE

Discovering Common Goals

*“Be very careful what you set your heart upon,
For you will surely have it.”*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

After a weeks stay, I began to enjoy the adventure. Chim-Babu had always said, “Any change or challenge, though initially painful, that takes you closer to your purpose, should always be taken up with great spirit.”

I now decided to start communicating with Jhaam-Babu. I was very excited about this. There was also some itching on my wings, a sure sign of nervousness. What if he ignored me?

But still I ventured. I wrote in the first SMS -

“You remind me of my grandfather.”

I immediately shut my eyes in anticipation. But there was no response. Jhaam-Babu had taken the dibba with him for his morning walk. I could not see him. So I waited, and waited, and waited...

Just when I was losing hope, I received a reply. “Who are you?” asked Jhaam-Babu. I jumped up in excitement. But then I calmed myself down. I took a deep breath and told myself not to lose it right at the start. I replied,

“Will you be my friend, Sir?” “I sure will. But first I must know who you are, and what do you want?” came the prompt response. “I am a friendly bat. At this moment I am residing in a wall crack in your terrace. I want to be your friend as you remind me of my loving grandfather Chim-Babu,” I replied. After a brief pause, he replied, “Ok. But don’t tell my son and his wife about yourself. They don’t welcome uninvited guests. They have little time to make friends. However, Chotu is very friendly. I will introduce you to him when he comes back from his pre-school.”

Now that the link had been established, it was time to understand Jhaam-Babu a little more. I wrote, “Sir, please tell me more about yourself. I want to learn so much from you?” He replied promptly, “Well, you are the first one to show so much interest in my life. So I will speak in some detail. My life is a story of many ups and downs. My father was a very poor man in the Himalayan town of Naini Tal. He worked in a bakery. He worked very hard to feed his wife and two children. Despite his financial problems, my father provided me with the best possible education. And I did not let him down. I qualified to become a government doctor at a very early age. This, I felt was a very powerful means to serve the poor and needy masses of my country. I worked tirelessly in every department and ministry where I was posted. I have an extremely supportive wife. She is a Chartered Accountant. Presently, she has gone to England to help my elder son and daughter-in-law in the delivery of their first child. Without her co-operation I would not have been able to raise my two sons, and also reach the highest level in my career. But I think we both made a mistake in rearing our kids. We were unable to spend much time with them.” He paused for a while.

I could sense him getting a little emotional. But he carried on. “This had a major impact on their psyche. The elder one was never attached to us right from his school days. The younger one, though a little more emotional, was always after a highflying career. His wife, too, is a careerist. They both are perfectionists – perhaps like my wife and me. And now Chotu is at the receiving end. They hardly spend any time with him. Work pressure gets to

them daily. At times they are so late from work that Chotu is already asleep. Infact, my wife and I decided to be with our sons so that our grandchildren can somehow get our time during their crucial growing-up phase. And during this time, we also intend to show our sons that unless this vicious cycle of ‘parents-in-the-rat-race; kids-in-the-home-alone’ is broken, each successive generation will continue to burn itself out much before it fulfils its larger purpose in life.”

I now understood Jhaam-Babu’s struggle. He was prepared to keep taking up challenges even in old age. That is precisely what Chim-Babu did. He once said to me, “When I die, I will die a young bat.” Right till his last breath, he kept himself busy - not just for us in the family, but also for the other bats who came in contact with him.”

He possessed the uncanny ability to enable other bats to see what lay beyond. And this was the secret of his physical and mental fitness even in old age.

I replied, “Sir, I feel your thoughts are not reaching your children. They are just too busy in their own lives and careers. You need to somehow connect with them first. Be their friend. And the occasion seems ripe. Chotu’s admission crisis! Become part of their mission to get him into Success Academy.”

“What?” he exclaimed. “You mean to say that I, too, should join this endless race. Nothing doing. No school is good enough unless you have the time to play a complementary role as a responsible parent. And that means spending time with him. Which they don’t seem to have at all!”

I could understand his frustration. But I thought I knew the way forward. I replied, “Sir, how do you propose to steer a ship unless you are on-board? Join them in the effort, and as you all move along, try to help them visualise different destinations. Provide them food for thought - options for different schools.”

Something seemed to click. There was a pause. And then came his response. “I think you have a point. I will make an effort. Hopefully they will take me on-board.” “Sure they will. When they see an ally in you, they are bound to appreciate it,” I replied.

I thanked God, and Chim-Babu, for this start. A good rapport with Jhaam-Babu was essential at the onset.

It was early afternoon already. Our interaction had been going on for almost an hour. We were both enjoying it. He then asked, “I have not even asked your name. Tell me about yourself, too?” I felt happy. His interest in me showed that he, too, was keen to start a relationship. I said, “My name is Chim-Maitreya. There is a history behind this name. Right from my childhood, my family looked after me really well. My Chim-Papa and Chim-Babu were there to show me, and teach me, all the basic fundamentals of life. They taught me that each one of us is filled with compassion. But often this emotion remains restrained. Compassion can flow out and touch others around us only through friendliness.”

I continued, “They helped me to discover my true self. Through keen observation they found that I was happiest when I was helping other bats around me. Their conclusions were based on analysis of my behaviour and attitude under different situations. Gradually, they encouraged me to convert my passion into a function within our colony of bats. Initially, I volunteered to become a trouble-shooter bat in the office of Chim-Gaadar Maharaj, our great bat leader. There, I did well in guiding and assisting different bats that came to Maharaj with their problems. My attitude at work was to always reach out and take that extra step to solve a problem, or finish a project. This endeared me to all. But Chim-Babu cautioned me to be extremely careful while helping others. He told me not to allow anyone to exploit my goodwill. He would say that I should first assess that there existed a genuine need before committing myself, because it is better to deny than be

exploited. I always chose an attitude of optimism, cheerfulness and dedication for my work as I enjoyed it very much.”

“And so, over a period of time, I began to be called Chim-Maitreya. I was able to develop a network of bats that were always keen to protect the interest of the community. We all shared remarkable synergy and understanding amongst ourselves, and began to share our sorrows as well as joys. Often, one of us would help some of the other Chim-Chotus when their parents were away on duty. Thus, we began sharing our duties and responsibilities - at work as well as at home.”

“Our compassion found a way to express itself - through friendliness! And this brought bliss and happiness to everyone it touched. These were the best of times for our community of bats.”

“But good things don’t last forever. Just as our network of goodwill was spreading, another rival network began spreading its evil wings. It was spearheaded by another bat - Chim-Chaloo - who preached that the only way forward was to defeat your rivals and competitors - by hook or by crook. For him success was fame and status in the community, even if it meant undoing all good that was happening around him. For him, conflict was a means to get to the next level. And he won most conflicts, as he had all the right connections - the powerful bats in the Maharaj’s office would be constantly aiding him as he gifted them his prized collection of insect and fruit catches. He was able to control the entire Bhoomi through deceit.”

“Infact, this very moment he is on his way to find a solution to the problem of co-existence with Jhaams, our enemies, just like me.”

“What? Are you here on a mission?” exclaimed Jhaam-Babu. “Yes I am. Your dibbas are not letting us communicate with each other. This has caused great trouble for all bats. We will die if we don’t find a way out. I have promised my chief that I will surely find a solution to this problem. That is why I am here.”

“Oh! So we have the common goal of achieving something good for our families – both immediate as well as the larger ones. I am trying to make an effort to bring my family together. You see, in cities, families are falling apart. The desire to make money, and attain fame in the shortest possible time is making people go mad. They have started compromising on family values, parenting and work ethics to attain their goals. I think we will do better together.”

“Great! I will love it. We are friends from today,” I replied with great excitement.

CHAPTER FOUR

A School of Thought

*“Anyone can count the seeds in an apple,
No one can count the apples in a seed.”*

ANONYMOUS

The next day was a holiday. Everybody was at home. Jhaam-Babu was playing with Chotu. He had told me that I should first make friends with him. We decided that I should befriend him in the park, where he often went to fly a kite. As the kite went up, with Jhaam-Babu at the string, I began to fly along with it. This fascinated Chotu. He began to jump and shout. I flew down and perched on Jhaam-Babu’s arm. He stroked me gently with his hand, and said to Chotu, “Will you make friends with Chim-Maitreya, my new friend?” Chotu loved the idea. Kids are instinctively friendly, just like our Chim-chotus. If only elders could learn from them.

Chotu lifted his left arm, opened his palm, and welcomed me. I felt so much at home - as if I was with my Chim-Chotu. As I sat on his hand, he gave me a loving kiss. I had made another friend in no time.

Jhaam-Babu asked me, “Why don’t you visit his pre-school at Success Academy. I am sure you will enjoy the day?” “Not a bad idea. I think I will go with him tomorrow,” I replied with excitement.

So, the next morning I made myself comfortable in Chotu’s bag. Jhaam-Babu had told him to look after me, and not to tell anybody about me. As

Chotu trotted out of the house, and into his school van, he put his hand inside the side pocket of the bag - just to ensure I was there. I pecked at his hand gently, lovingly, to let him know that I, too, was very keen to accompany him.

As we entered the campus, I flapped my wings and flew out. On the way, I made sure Chotu had seen me. He smiled and waved me goodbye. I could see the glee in his eyes.

Success Academy had a massive campus. The pre-school was on one side. There was a childrens park in front of it. The building was full of vibrant colours. The flowers, too, were in full bloom. I flew over the building and entered another block that appeared to be the main senior school. I flew inside, and into the corridors. I could see lots of children running here and there. Most were sitting inside classrooms, books open in front of them. The scene reminded me of my childhood. All of us Chim-chotus were taught by the elders about various aspects of life - catching prey, learning how to locate each other and how to communicate. But, here I found that in most classes the teachers were standing and chotus sitting. Books appeared to be more in use for learning than actual activity.

At the end of a corridor I found a small room. As I entered I saw many ladies sitting around a big table. Many were talking on their dibbas. Chotu's mother, Raani, too, was sitting there. I was able to catch on to one of the conversations. The school chief - the Principal - had called an urgent meeting. The Class X and XII results this time were not good. She was angry that this had happened despite the fee hike, extra classes, bonuses for teachers, compulsory extra-curricular activities for students and special parent workshops. All the senior teachers were scared. On whom would the axe fall? That was the prime question. Each had prepared a detailed paper on how in her subject the results were better than the previous years. But, still, it was all adding up towards a collective decline. There seemed no answers.

The situation appeared interesting to me. I waited just above the tube light. And then a man came in, said something, and suddenly everyone got up, rearranged their dresses and hair, and marched out. There was hushed silence. I decided to follow suit.

At the other end of the same corridor was the Principal's room. All the ladies entered it one by one. Just as the door was about to be shut, I squeezed in. And what a room it was! There was a large table, behind which sat a matronly lady. All the teachers wished her and sat down. No smiles were exchanged. There appeared to be a lot of tension in the air.

The Principal was in no mood to listen to anybody. She was shouting at everybody. I could see her reasons to feel that way. What would the parents think? Success Academy was no longer a sure success. Something had suddenly happened. How would the school increase the fee this year? The latest poor results had raised so many awkward questions. And she would have to answer to the Board of Trustees, too!

And then I heard her talk with a friend during the meeting on the dibba. She said, "Jyoti, this situation is beyond my comprehension. We are giving our students all the facilities. Even the classrooms have ACs! I just don't know how I will explain this to our Trustees!"

It was time to intervene. I sent an SMS to the Principal -

"Were the students consulted in their own growth? Have you invested in the school or the students?"

The principal was shocked! Where did this SMS come from? And so I wrote again -

"I am a friend, ma'am. I can see your plight. Children learn only when we enable them to develop the capacity to listen to their inner voice on the path

to growth. The best way to do this is to invest in the child as well, and not just the school.”

“What do you mean, friend? When I spend on the school, it is all for the students.”

“Are you sure about that, ma’am?” I asked. “What investments have you made in teaching them the art of self-awareness? Have you taught them how to nurture dreams? Excellence and mastery in any activity is possible only through intense practice that is motivated by self-assessment, inter-personal intelligence, clarity of goal and the freedom to experiment and communicate.”

These words had some impact. She pondered for a while, and then said, “Fine. But how do you explain our success in previous years? We have not changed our policy one bit.” I replied, “Investment in a child may not be in terms of money only, ma’am. When you spend more on comfort, you divert and distract the young mind. Practice requires both physical and mental discipline, and comfort dilutes it. Have you been able to break barriers in communication between children, teachers and parents? Are your parents playing a supportive role? Also, time spent with kids is very crucial - by both teachers and parents. It is possible that your previous success was more imaginary than real. Good results might have been obtained despite your policies. There might have been more high achievers than the low and average ones. This year, many of your good students and dissatisfied teachers might have left you and joined other schools that have come up, and are laying more emphasis on developing each child, and not just the class as a whole.”

By now the principal was a little more convinced. She asked all the teachers to leave, on the note that they would be called on again for a discussion later.

My intervention had helped to save the skin of many of the tense teachers - at least for the time being. None could

understand this sudden turn-around. Why did ma'am end the meeting so abruptly? This remained a mystery till I sent an SMS to Raani.

“I know you well, ma'am. I am Chim-Maitreya, a bat who lives in your house. I just gave your Principal a few things to think about. And that is why you all got this respite.” She, too, was surprised, but was also impressed. Anyone who could get her Principal thinking had to be intelligent! “Will you be my friend? I love animals and birds. I am sure your ideas will be useful to me, too.” “Sure, ma'am. My pleasure, too! Your Chotu is a very sweet child. We are already friends. And your Babu is very wise and friendly. You are lucky to have such a wonderful family,” I said, returning the compliment.

She, too, appeared excited, “I never thought a bat could have so much wisdom. What's the secret?” “My late grand-father Chim-Babu was my mentor. He taught me that if I practiced certain basic principles of life each day, I would soon be able to reach out and touch others around me and nurture friendliness in our community. Once this happened, life's experiences taught me important lessons - and these added up to make me what I am today.”

“Your Chim-Babu sure seems to have known quite a lot. But we live in a very selfish world. Each one craves to be the best. And few are willing to invest in good will without reason. Our Principal and parents only want results. So we drill the students, make them sweat it out, and ensure that results truly make us a Success Academy,” she said thoughtfully. “But, have you ever realised that by doing this you are only leading these children through a blind alley with a dead end,” I probed. She paused for a while, and then replied, “We hardly get the time to think beyond our immediate duties - in school or at home. Infact, in our race for perfection, we have been blinded. Your thought provoking ideas are quite invigorating. I wish I, too, had the time to think.”

“Well, ma’am, you can always take out time for anything if you really want to. Don’t you do that every evening in front of the television, watching those endless serials? It is a question of your desire to have an aim, a dream in life. This desire, and the passion behind it, automatically propels you forward. And when you are in that ‘zone,’ time is never a constraint. You can think while you are in the washroom, driving your car or standing in a queue at the movies. Today, you have this great opportunity to redefine the meaning of success in your school. Your Principal is thinking, for a change, of ways to explain the failure of the school to her management. It is time for you to act,” I suggested to her. “You mean, I can win her over through some reasoning, and gain her favour,” she asked, with a tinge of guile. “Yes you can. But the reason for gaining her favour should be selfless. Only then will it have the eternal power to move forward. The individuals ultimate intention behind doing some good is very important for its sustainability. Forces of goodwill lend their support to only those efforts that have the betterment of others at heart. And you cannot deceive these forces! So, make up your mind first.”

Raani went quiet for sometime. It appeared I had struck a raw chord somewhere. It was obvious she needed more time for self-assessment. But, on the other hand, there was no time. The Principal was breathing down their neck. All her colleagues looked up to her to get them out of tricky situations like this one. Seeing her in this dilemma, I suggested to her, “Ma’am, I am sure your job is just as important as your morals. You have an opportunity to win over your Principal by only modifying your approach a little for the good of the entire school. And if you do that, you will be doing yourself the biggest favour.” She gathered herself, took a deep breath, and spoke, “Fine. I will change if it means welfare for everyone. But what do I have to do?”

“I am happy for you. I will now show you a way out of this difficulty. But you must promise me that you will be prepared to take up any additional responsibility that may come your way”. Raani was a lady who kept her words. She could not backtrack. She responded promptly, “I promise.”

I felt very encouraged. After Jhaam-Babu and Chotu, Raani, too, was getting bitten by the Maitreya bug. And not without reason. As Chim-Babu had said, “Always be prepared to share your good will, wisdom and friendliness for acts and thoughts that will do good for the community. Help them, if they are willing to help others, and not just you,” he used to tell me, as I would hang upside down on my favourite branch of the banyan tree. “Ma’am, I want you to define success for me?” I asked her.

She paused, and then replied, “Success for me is the attainment of wealth, a good job and a good name in society.” “Are you implying that possession of all these things means that one is automatically happy and at peace with oneself?” I asked. “Why not? What more can an individual desire?” she replied with a tinge of irritation at my repeated probing.

I now decided to go straight to the point. “Are you happy with the amount of time you spend with your son every day? You are rich, have a good job and people respect you a lot. Ask your son today how much he loves you. Also, ask him how much he would like you to be back home early after school to spend more time with him.”

Raani liked the idea. So that day she went straight back home, and reached there at 3pm. As she entered the drawing room, she saw Chotu on Babu’s lap; both were singing a melodious Hindi song together. Chotu saw her and then ran towards her. They hugged each other. Raani had tears in her eyes. But Chotu was in a hurry. He was playing a singing game with Babu, and wanted to continue with it. She thought he would ask her to join, but that did not happen. Somehow, Chotu did not see her as a friend! Babu, too, did not know how to react. It was quite a surprise for him to see Raani home at this hour.

Raani felt a bit left out. She went into her room and sank into a chair. She closed her eyes and began thinking.

All this while I was perched up quietly on the tube-light. But I had to intervene now. I sent an SMS to her. “Ma’am, you will have to win Chotu’s friendship by spending more time with him, by participating in games and activities that give him joy. You will also have to pleasantly surprise him more often, like you did today. Then he will desire your company and start enjoying it, too. At present, he is so used to not having you at home when he needs you that your sudden appearance today did not elicit a great welcome from him. Babu fulfills this need with great joy and consistency. So, you will have to balance your daily chores in such a way that Chotu’s time gets a prime slot.”

She was crying by now. Babu, too, had come into the room, and was standing close to her. He put his hand on her head, as if blessing her. He said, “My child, don’t cry. Find a balance between your career and your parenting. Don’t delay, or you will lose Chotu’s childhood.” He then went away. I prayed to God and hoped that she would have learnt something by now. “You see ma’am, Chotu loves you very much. But you have chosen to become unfamiliar for him as you have little time to spend with him. Often, you would be trying to overcome your guilt by buying him expensive gifts. For him, you then become a source of material supply - gifts, junk food, chocolates etc. He will not see much in you beyond these. I am sure you would not like him to grow up without your care and affection. There is no substitute for time – both in quality as well as quantity. Similarly, I am sure you would not like your school students to grow up, have families and then miss out on the joys of parenting!” I said.

Raani was beginning to understand me better. She said, “I think you have a point. But how does this help me sort out the problem that we are school?” “You are now ready for the solution, ma’am. Listen carefully. So far, you and your colleagues, and your school have been defining success only in terms of the number of distinctions attained by your students. And on the basis of these results you have been advertising about the good education

that you think you are imparting in the school. But have you ever found out how many of these same high performers in school are doing well in college, in jobs, in their families, with kids, and in society? Are they at peace with themselves? Or are they just making money, but neglecting their parenting duties and other social obligations? And most importantly, how do their kids view their ‘success?’ If you try to find this out about the students who have passed out of the school over the last 10-15 years, you will get astonishing results. Many of them might have cried like you did today - feeling helpless, and unable to be in control at home! Many would have committed themselves so much into this race that for them it’s just too late. But, thankfully, it is not for you. Infact, you are lucky that Babu is here to cushion the impact on Chotu.”

“But lets not get diverted. When you go to school tomorrow, take a special appointment with your Principal, and request her to do the following –

1. Get ten posters made on the ‘Principles of Maitreya’ listed below, and have them put up in the offices, staff rooms and important public places in the campus.

PRINCIPLES OF MAITREYA

- Smile - be the first one to give a smile. It will take you a mile.*
- Thank – thank people promptly. It will motivate others to keep doing good.*
- Appreciate – when you observe something worthwhile. You will rise in the estimation of others and make their day.*
- Wish/greet – when you see/meet someone. You will connect immediately.*
- Apologise – when you commit a mistake. It will make you feel very light and unburdened.*

- *Enquire – about the health and well being of others. They will feel cared for and wanted.*
- *Help generously – This will increase peoples’ faith in good will.*
- *Forgive – mistakes as soon as possible and unburden others.*
- *Names – try to remember them. People will admire you.*
- *Friends – take that extra step to remain in touch. A true friend is more precious than gold.*

2. Tell her your story of today, and how you felt. She, too, is a mother, and might have felt the same years ago. I am sure she will empathise.

3. Then, tell her how you would not like your students to feel helpless like you did today, when they grow up.

4. Reason out with her - when we inculcate the spirit of success in the hearts of our students purely on the basis of marks, percentage and distinctions, they automatically enter this endless maze, with no end in sight. On the other hand, if we relate success in school to the extent to which all children are empowered to take charge of their life once they leave it, and are able to live a life at peace with themselves, then we have a much more convincing story to advertise.

5. Tell her that the biggest challenge under this definition of success would be to see that the high achievers do not lose their momentum - rather, they learn to handle fame, wealth and responsibility in a balanced way - while the average and low achievers are adequately empowered to create a niche for themselves on the basis of their true talents in the outside world.

6. The school alumni association would be required to become effectively active to track this growth and development.

7. Tell her that the school must make a policy on how to identify the true potential in children, empower them to gain confidence in that area so that

they develop a passion, a zeal and a determination to carry it forward; how to develop a dream, a vision for realizing it, and how to allow their conscience to take charge, so that a spirit of 'good for society' takes birth deep within them, and the seeds of nobility are sown right here."

"If you take this up, ma'am, I am sure there will be respite for everyone - your Principal, colleagues, your students, and you yourself."

Raani was impressed. She replied, "I don't know how to thank you, Chim-Maitreya. And now I want you to do me one last favour - pray for my success!"

"Don't worry, ma'am. Success is assured if our intentions are noble. Just go ahead! Keep me informed about the developments," I said confidently, as I flew out of the window to get some fresh air.

CHAPTER 5

Time to Reflect

“Spend some time alone everyday.”

THE DALAI LAMA

I had now been out of my den for almost seven sunrises. It was evening time, and the sun was setting. The sky had a beautiful tinge of orange and blue splashed right across the horizon. I could see groups of birds swimming through the air, riding the wind, going back to their nests and breeding locales. Normally, this was the time for bats to come out of their hideout and seek prey. I remembered vividly how enjoyable this time used to be. Chim-Babu always said that if we could enjoy catching prey, then each time we started, it would become a new game. And once a game gets underway, you are always focused, alert, and determined to win. A winning strategy was paramount. But, the way we win, he would emphasise, was more important. “You can win a game in a number of ways. By playing correct - in accordance with the rules or by cheating your opponent into defeat. The challenge for the player lies in visualizing in advance every move, every situation, in his mind, and being ready for mid-course corrections,” he would keep reminding us.

Riding the wind! I wondered how good these birds were at positioning themselves at the right place, so that they can glide high and wide effortlessly. They are able to anticipate this opportunity, and are ready and

capable of making full use of it. I remembered asking Chim-Babu if this was not opportunism; if this was not selfishness? But he would elaborate, “My dear, the wind blows for everyone. It is there for those who see it and feel it, but it is absent for those who ignore it. Every bird has an equal right over it. You could ride it to soar higher; you could ride it to simply relax, or you could use it to generate greater speed to catch your prey. But remember, the prey, too, has an equal right to ride it. The one who does it better wins the fair game!”

How valuable these discussions had been with Chim Babu. And then I wondered about Chaloo and where he would be at this moment. I decided to SMS him and enquire about his well-being. I could now send SMSs’ to other bats as well, so I passed on instructions to him, too, about how to reply to my messages. I sent him one. It read:

“I hope you are in good spirits, mate. I am at home here with a new family. Every moment is spent in peace.” I received a reply within a few minutes. “Friend, I have crossed many lands, and many seas, but everywhere I go I find people using the same dibba. Still I am determined to win this race. If I cannot find a place without it, I will find a way to eliminate it. I will not give up,” he sounded arrogant even in distress. Perhaps, it was overconfidence, I thought. So, I replied, with a tinge of sarcasm, “Yes, you will win. But don’t forget to first meet up with the officials at the office of the Jhaam-king!”

And then, I felt a strong downward gust of wind, which I decided to ride. I was getting tired of too much lecturing and reasoning. I wanted some time to just gaze at life, and observe things around me. Chim-Babu was very particular that I visit one new place every year of my life - to recharge myself! As I flew downwards, I saw a large temple, with a big flag fluttering on top. So I decided to camp there for a day. I sent an SMS to Jhaam-Babu to this effect.

As I sat on top of the foyer, my eyes went straight to the busy street in front. Hundreds of cars were driving past. People were in great hurry to move forward – they, too, like Raani, appeared to have little time at hand. But, just as they approached the front gate of the temple, they would all slow down, bow their heads in respect, and then suddenly speed off as if somebody had pushed them from behind. Some even got off their cars, left them precariously by the ‘Tow Away Zones’ and spent some time either just outside the temple main-gate, or went inside. What interested me most was the kind of gestures made by them. A person raised both his hands in the direction of the temple, grabbed something from the air, and spread it all over his face, beard, body and legs. Another punched the air with his left hand, as he temporarily paused to bow his head inside his car, and then sped off. Then a group of three youngsters came in a fast moving motorcycle, and screeched to a sudden stop. All bowed their heads, murmured a small prayer, and then sped off. Their speed was beyond the permissible limit, and none was wearing a helmet!

As I watched, I noticed something very peculiar. People in bigger cars were bowing much more, and were also taking out much more time to make all kinds of gestures to show their respect to the deities. Many were spending a lot of time feeding the beggars squatting in front of the temple. The average lot had little to offer - both in terms of money or time. The poorest preferred to squat, and beg in the name of god.

I wondered if the rich had more respect for God? Or, were they just scared of Him, and so wanted to invest a little more time, to please him, and thus keep him on their right side. Anyway, they did seem to have ‘time’ for things that they thought were important for them.

This interesting episode was very refreshing for me. It had at least given me some idea on this ‘time’ business. Unlike Jhaams, we Chims never had a problem with time. During the night, when we are out to fetch prey, other birds and animals are generally asleep. Insects are then easier to catch, as there are fewer competitors. And once we have less competition, there is

always enough time to prey, make friends and do community work. We have adjusted our lifestyles to nightlife in order to have more peace and happiness. Or, may be God has just made us like that.

It appeared to me that Jhaams, too, could take out time if they wanted to. But with so many of them around, they could not avoid competition. Still, there must be a way out, I thought. If only they could take out some time for thinking a little deeper - about success, about play, about friendliness, about Maitreya! It was my mission to provide a window for them to gaze through. To see the world from a different perspective, and perhaps, in this process, a solution might present itself that would enable both Jhaams and Chims to live together peacefully. From amongst the Jhaams, I already had Babu, Chotu and Raani on my team. The next on my list was Jhaam-Raaja. I knew he would be a tougher nut to crack.

With these thoughts churning in my mind, I took off, and began to fly over a road crossing beneath. As I glided in the gentle wind of early winter, I saw a car speed past a pole with a bright red light on. As it went ahead, two other cars hit it from either side, and there was a loud bang! Jhaams came out from these cars, others joined them from all directions, everybody began to shout, and soon a fight broke out.

I prayed to God to bring peace to this Bhoomi!!

CHAPTER SIX

The Prophet of Profit

*“You see things that are and say, Why?
But I dream things that never were and say, Why not?”*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

It was almost late evening as I entered my new home again. I was pleasantly surprised to see Raani, Babu and Chotu sitting together. Raani was reading a storybook, and both were listening very intently. They now looked and interacted much more like a family. But there was one missing link - Raaja!

I was feeling very tired. My sleeping and waking schedules had already been disturbed, but the accumulated tiredness was now beginning to really get to me. I decided to take a comfortable position, and closed my eyes. I did not know when I went off to sleep.

I was woken up by a shrill voice on the dibba. It was Raaja talking to someone about office work. A new day had dawned, and the sun was getting brighter by the minute. Everyone performed their usual morning routines. In the end, it was Raaja and Babu who were alone for a while. Babu wanted to start a conversation with his son, but was unsuccessful. Raaja had too many things on his mind. Perhaps, he was unaware of the virtue of ‘un-plugging’ himself once he was at-home, and appeared to be perpetually wired up with his office. He then got up, took his car keys, and went out. Just then, I received an SMS from Babu. It read, “Friend, follow him to his office. See if you can make friends with him, too. All the best.” I responded promptly,

“Thank you, Sir. I will try to do my best,” and immediately flew out of the main gate and into Raaja’s car.

And what a car it was! I entered it from the front window, and perched myself just behind the rear-view mirror at the center. The car was very long, or so I felt. It had very comfortable seats. There was a driver in the front, wearing a white uniform. I was just in time, because as soon as I had entered, the car began to move. And before long, Raaja was at his dibba again!

He appeared troubled by new developments at his company - Lage_Raho.com. The Company was losing competent experts by the dozen. The world of telecommunications was witnessing rapid growth and expansion. Lage_Raho.com’s main competitor was Santulan.com (the ‘balanced’ one). Most of Raaja’s employees were hopping over to Santulan.com. He had to recruit new experts at a very high cost. And once these recruits had been trained and sensitised on technical facets of the job, they were just not bothering about Lage_Raho.com any more. “Why is this happening, I just cannot understand? We give them the best pay package, the most conducive work environment and very good growth opportunities. I don’t see anyone from Santulan.com switching over to us,” he was complaining to his Vice-President, HR, Mr. Poora Nichod (The Total Squeezer!!).

I could hear from Raaja’s conversation that Poora Nichod was his right hand man. At Lage_Raho.com he was responsible for hiring the right person for the right task. Once hired, each recruit had to report to him for understanding the exact nature of his assignment. Nichod would begin by saying, “Welcome, my friend. You are now a proud member of the Lage_Raho.com family. We are the best and the biggest in the industry, in the field of telecommunications. Nobody comes even close to us. At Lage_Raho.com we expect you to give your 100% at work even if you are feeling 75% of yourself. No compromises on that. Our Mission Statement is:

1. *Hamesha lage raho (always keep working)*
2. *Samay ki parva na karo (don't bother about time)*
3. *Apni parva bhi mut karo (forget about yourself, too)*
4. *Grahaak tumhara bhagwan hai (customer is your god)*
5. *Santulan.com tumhara dushman hai (Santulan.com is your enemy)*
6. *Ghar ki samasya tumhari hai, Lage_Raho.com ki samasya hum sab ki hai (family problems are yours, Lage_Raho.com's problems are ours)*
7. *Jitna nichodo ge, utna paoge (the more you squeeze, the more you get)*
8. *Shikaayat mat karo, coffee pi lo (don't complain, have coffee!)*

Friend, this will transform your life. Now, go to your cubicle and start off! All the best.”

After finishing his conversation with Nichod, Raaja kept quiet. It was time to send my first SMS. It read -

“Friend, please wish your security guard first as you enter your office today. Ask about his welfare. Don't worry. I am just a friend.” Raaja was taken aback. He looked surprised, but responded, “Who are you? Are you a relative of Shyamlal, my guard?” I was happy at the promptness of his response. I replied, “Sir, I am just an ordinary bat. My name is Chim-Maitreya. Your Babu, Raani and Chotu are already my friends. I live in a small crack on the terrace in your house.” “Bat!” he exclaimed. “How can a bat use the dibba?” he asked bluntly, looking at my SMS. “Sir, you have invented the dibba through research; god has given us similar powers by birth. And I have, through effort and a strong will power, been able to network with your dibbas through my vocal chords. You see, your dibbas are preventing us from leading a peaceful life. When they work, we cannot communicate. So I am on a mission to find a way out,” I tried to give a

reason for my presence. This prompted a sneering remark from him. “Impossible! You will perish. We cannot live now without the dibba. We are so used to it. No power in the world can stop man from developing new technologies, leave aside bats.”

I kept quiet for a while. Raaja was getting reactive too soon. Babu would calm me down in such situations. “You can’t win an argument by shouting, especially when you know you have a valid point. If you have to argue, never compromise on decency - even if the other person is debasing you. Remain firm about your convictions, but gently withdraw yourself. If you still think that you have to convince the person, do it later - not through discussion, but through action.” With these thoughts in mind, I replied, “Sir, I know your company is the most powerful one in telecommunications. Top politicians eat out of your hands. Your influence is widespread. I am a poor little bat. I would be glad if you can show me your office today. I would like to borrow some ideas for my family of bats back home,” I said, diverting the argument. “But, please don’t forget what I asked you to do at the start.” “Ok. I will do that. But I look after my employees very well,” he responded with a shrug.

As we entered the main gate of Lage_Raho.com, the guard quickly got up, and opened the gate. But before he could raise his hand, Raaja said, lifting his right hand in salute, “Ram-ram Shyamlal.” Shyamlal, too, responded back. But he appeared dazed. As the car went in, and I looked back, I saw him gazing blankly towards the car. Something had happened that he never thought could happen!

As we entered the office, I saw everyone get up from their seat and say good morning to their boss. I then flew past a room where a fatty guy with a thin moustache suddenly got up when he saw Raaja. He shook hands with his boss. Raaja said, “Good morning, Nichod. See me in ten minutes,” and went straight ahead to his own room at the end of a big hall that had many cubicles. Just as he was entering his room, another person came forward to

greet him. And he returned the wishes, “Hello, Paisa Vasool. Hope all accounts are under control?”

Mr. Paisa Vasool (The Money Extractor) was VP, Finance at Lage_Raho.com. He was not only an expert in getting in all the payments on time from, the clients, but was a master in monitoring every employees expenses, salaries and other accounts. Nobody wanted to be on his wrong side - even for the right reasons!

“Sir, everything is fine. But we are loosing a lot of money on new recruits. The money spent on their training goes waste as most of them leave us in 2-3 years, and join Santulan.com,” he responded quietly, trying to present the bad news first thing in the morning as matter-of-factly as possible. This annoyed Raaja. Nichod had already told him about this trend. Something needed to be done urgently. He replied with venom, “So, what are you guys here for? Meet me along with Nichod in ten minutes. And I want answers. You hear me. Answers! Ask Bechte Jao to join us as well.”

Mr. Bechte Jao (Keep Selling), VP, Marketing, was a great master in the art of selling. He could sell just about anything, including himself, and was adept in marketing and selling the company’s products to anybody - whether they needed it or not! He had the power to impress his logic on everyone.

Just as Raaja entered his room and the door was about to close, I slipped in. As usual, my favourite position was on top of the tube-light, just behind it – always away from the limelight! This was another gem from Chim- Babu. “The more you speak, and the more you try to project yourself in public, the more jealousies you will arouse. These negative vibrations will invariably hold you back, and eat into much of your energy reserves. Instead, let your work speak for itself. If it is genuine and beneficial beyond your own interest, the good word will carry forward, and other like-minded individuals will seek your company and friendship. This will eventually provide greater impetus and energy to your original work, and you will find that the good work you started is now moving forward on its own, thereby helping you to

conserve energy. So, you have to decide, my friend, between quick fame, that is temporary, and immortality, that is achieved through patience and diligence,” he would tell our entire den of Chims.

Raaja made himself comfortable. There was a knock at the door and the three - Poora Nichod, Paisa Vasool and Bechte Jao came in one by one. They sat in front of Raaja. Raaja looked pensive. He began, “Friends, we are in trouble. You know what I mean. Santulan.com is marching ahead. They are doing something for their staff that keeps them happy. I want one of you to leave this company and join them, work there for twelve months, find out their secret, and then pass it on to us. I will keep paying you your salary. Once we have broken through, you can resign and come back to join us as Senior VP. This way you will get a double salary for a year, followed by a promotion! It will be a win-win situation for all of us, and Santulan.com will not know what hit them.”

There was hushed silence in the room. All the three were stunned! Though they were masters in the art of deceit, this offer appeared quite dicey! Who would take the bait? And a very risky one at that. If they failed in the mission, they would be neither here nor there.

As the silence prolonged, I thought it was time for me to butt in. I attempted to start a conversation. “Sir, I am Chim-Maitreya, the bat who met you in your car. It seems your company is in trouble. Can I help out?” Raaja looked up towards the roof, perhaps to locate me, then gave up, and said dejectedly, “What can you do? You are just a bat.” I responded immediately, “Sir, I am a bat, but I have been taught a thing or two by my late grandfather, Chim-Babu. He believed that unless we follow certain basic principles in life, we cannot succeed beyond a point. Also, the success we get in life is often imaginary. Your company may be doing reasonably well, but it appears that the employees are not happy. They seem to start off well, but somewhere down the line they begin to lose the drive and the motivation to keep at it. He advocated ‘Principles of Maitreya’ to be our guiding light. Check and see

how many of them are fulfilled by your management in the interaction with the employees.”

PRINCIPLES OF MAITREYA

- *Smile - be the first one to give a smile. It will take you a mile.*
- *Thank – thank people promptly. It will motivate others to keep doing good.*
- *Appreciate – when you observe something worthwhile. You will rise in the estimation of others and make their day.*
- *Wish/greet – when you see/meet someone. You will connect immediately.*
- *Apologise – when you commit a mistake. It will make you feel very light and unburdened.*
- *Enquire – about the health and well being of others. They will feel cared for and wanted.*
- *Help generously – This will increase peoples’ faith in good will.*
- *Forgive – mistakes as soon as possible and unburden others.*
- *Names – try to remember them. People will admire you.*
- *Friends – take that extra step to remain in touch. A true friend is more precious than gold.*

Raaja read through the entire principles. He then asked, “Friend, how are these relevant to my office? We have so much to do each day that we hardly get any time for such pleasantries.”

Hardly had he finished, that there was a knock at the door. “Come in,” said Raaja. It was Shyamlal. He wished his bosses and then stood in one corner of the room. He tried to speak something, but tears prevented him. Raaja got a bit irritated. He said impatiently, “Shyamlal, what is the matter? You are disturbing us. If you have a problem, then speak it out.”

Shyamlal did have a problem. But he had come to thank Raaja for his gesture of greeting him first thing in the morning today. He began, “Sir, thank you for ‘noticing’ me in the morning. You wished me even before I could stand up. I have been here since the last 20 years, but you are the first person to wish me like this. You made me feel very happy, and have made my day special, Sir. Today, I felt for the first time, that I should really work hard and keep my office fully secure” he murmured, tears streaming down his rough cheeks.

Hearing Shyamlal, Raaja got up. He felt a strange tingling feeling in his entire body. He paused for a moment, and said, “I made your day special today for the first time? I can’t believe it. I have never ever thought about this before.” Raaja kept standing for a while. His mind appeared to be in deep thought. Something very different seemed to have happened to him. His expression changed into a very relaxed one.

He then stepped further down, took Shyamlal’s hand in his own hand, and said, “Thank you, Shyamlal. I think you have made my day special, too! And, I now think I know where the problem lies.” Then, turning towards his three colleagues he said, “Friends, Let us set up an Employees Forum right away. And I want Shyamlal to be its first member.” He then looked up in my direction, and said, “Chim-Maitreya, thanks a ton. Your Babu’s words were farsighted.”

With new-found confidence, I replied, “Sir, this incident proves that the management must embrace all its employees if it wishes to keep them satisfied. Job satisfaction is not just about pay packages, relationship between workers, the office facilities, challenges of the job and the work environment. It is also about generating a feeling of ‘belonging’ in the heart and mind of every employee. Only then will you be able to retain your staff and keep them motivated. Each one of them will then be able to do their work properly, provide their own creative inputs, and also get on the road to self-discovery. The office will then become a place to cherish. ”

God was kind to me. Since I was on a selfless mission, the divine forces had to be on my side. The morning episode proved that Raaja did, after all, have a compassionate side to his personality. The fast paced, target oriented life that he led prevented this amiability to manifest itself. My prodding only created the spark needed to ignite his dormant compassion. Shyamlal, too, like most of the Lage_Raho.com employees, was experiencing a void, an emptiness, inside him. He was overwhelmed with emotion at a small gesture of friendliness from his boss. It was beyond his imagination. It is moments like these that can often transcend an individual to a totally different plane – where they feel wanted, cared for and sympathized with. Shyamlal also felt, perhaps for the first time, that his boss had a humane side to his personality.

The three senior officials in the room, too, were overwhelmed by the sequence of events in front of their eyes. “You have opened our eyes, too! I am sure most of our other employees have similar feelings,” Paisa Vasool responded to the developments. Raaja continued, “Shyamlal, is anything bothering you in office? Do let us know if we can help?” But Shyamlal had problems elsewhere. “Sir, I have two daughters. One of them is 26 years old and the other one is 18 years old. I have to marry both of them as soon as possible. I have been able to educate them, but in our community unless a girl is married by the age of 20-25 years, everyone keeps pestering you. I don’t have the money to arrange for the elder ones dowry and marriage expenses. I wish I could get a loan on easy installments from somewhere.”

This was a tricky one for Raaja. So far he had always discouraged employees from taking loans from the company. He was not the type to get into the business of lending money, and then spend time monitoring and retrieving it. His three officials also had similar views. But I had some views on this request from Shyamlal. I said, “Sir, if your employees have a legitimate need, in office or at home, then so long as it remains unfulfilled they cannot give their 100% at work. It is a very natural phenomenon. So, try to expand the horizon of your perspective.”

My words did have an impact. Raaja turned towards Shyamlal and said, “We will try to consider your case. I will try to make necessary changes in our policies. You may now go back to your duty. Thank you.” Shyamlal bowed his head in respect and left the room.

Raaja asked his officials to relax in their seats. He now spoke with some gravity. “I think we need to take a serious look at our basic corporate planning and strategy. Somehow, today's episode has triggered a chain of thought in my mind. We need to perhaps embrace not just our employees, but also the society at large and the environment. I have been closely following the response of the world community to the Tsunami disaster. Many companies have joined the rehabilitation programme in a big way, by raising money for the relief effort. It is of course entirely appropriate that they should, but what happens beyond this immediate response? Do companies like ours have an ongoing responsibility to society, the environment and the broad economic effects of our business activity? The idea of sustainable business practices suddenly seems more relevant. So far, I had been just reading all this stuff, but today, Shyamlal's response to my greetings has woken me out of my slumber. I am now able to relate profits, planning, strategy, compassion and concern! I think we might have found the solution to our problem. Friends, let's have an open house session with all our 56 employees in the conference room tomorrow. Let's open our hearts and minds and see how we need to move forward – together.”

After listening to his boss, Paisa Vasool felt encouraged to open up first. He began, hesitantly, “Sir, I too, have been reading a lot – especially on the net. The other day I came across a very interesting and stimulating piece of information from the BMW website that expresses the emerging definition of Corporate Social Responsibility very well. According to it, corporate responsibility should now extend to encompass not only the needs of employees, but also the environment and society as a whole. The global

economic system needs to show a more human face. In this respect, companies must ensure that their traditional focus on corporate profits and shareholder value is accompanied by equal concern for the needs of society and the environment. Companies that are committed to sustainability should place equal importance on economic, ecological and social concerns in the formulation of their business strategies. As Henry Ford once said - A business that makes nothing but money is a poor kind of business. I feel we can take a cue from these concepts and really get down to the brass-tacks of evolving a comprehensive corporate strategy that is all encompassing, is pro-active and not reactive, and most importantly is sensitive to humanity and nature.”

By the time Paisa Vasool had finished, his two colleagues and Raaja had all risen, and were clapping their hands in appreciation. Raaja said, “Thanks a ton, Vasool. I am proud of you. But, we must not forget our friend, the bat. Without his nudging in the morning I would never have greeted Shyamlal, and this whole episode would not have unfolded.” And then, turning his head upwards towards me he said, “Thanks, Chim. You really made our day special. I will pray for peace to your Chim-Babu. And now, it’s my pleasure to invite you to my house for a family party. Come, let’s go.”

Raaja got up from his seat and shook hands with his officials. It was around 2pm on Friday. He seemed at peace with himself, for a change. In a relaxed tone he said, “We have a lovely weekend ahead. Enjoy the break. I am leaving early today. I have a guest to look after,” pointing a finger somewhere in the upward direction.

I felt very relaxed. There was so much on my mind this morning. Anxiety was the over-riding concern. How will I win over the dicey Raaja? Will he straightaway give me the boot? Or will he embrace me with open arms? Infact, he did neither. It was a flash of an idea that set the ball rolling. My alertness paid off. Hours of practise at the den had made my day. The Shyamlal idea was a cracker. Chim-

Babu had always emphasized that if we keep practicing alertness, then on occasions when we need sharp, incisive and crucial ideas our brain would not let us down. It would generate amazing thought processes and churn out such masterpieces. I again thanked Chim-Babu for everything.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Family of Joy

“If you would take, you must first give.”

LAO - TZU

My parents and elders had nurtured certain family values in me. I was now keen to pass on this accumulated wisdom to Raaja and his family. So, as we drove back to his house, I sent him an SMS. I wrote – “Sir, there are six principles for a cheerful family. Ponder over these as you relax in the car.”

F – Friendliness (Maitreya)

A – Absolution (forgiveness/freedom)

M – Mindfulness (being ‘there’)

I – Inspiration (motivation)

L – Love (affection and compassion) and

Y – Youthfulness (young in body and heart)

Raaja read the SMS, and replied with an appreciative tone, “You sure seem to think a lot. But I would like you to elaborate each one of them in more detail.” “Sure, I will, Sir. As soon as the right time comes I will indicate to you how these come into play,” I responded promptly.

Very soon we were there. The other three were there, too, waiting for us to arrive. I had already sent an SMS to Babu earlier, informing him about our plan. The lunch table was ready as Raaja entered. It was Friday afternoon,

and very rare for the family to have lunch together on a weekday. But somehow it had worked out this way today. I guess I was partly responsible!

Just as Raaja entered, Chotu saw him. He was thrilled. He ran towards him and hugged him. His excitement was palpable. “Papa, I am so happy that today we are going to have lunch together. Mummy has prepared your favourite dish – raajma-chaawal. And Babu has brought some soft and tasty rasagullas! I have prepared and arranged the dining table.” Raaja was thrilled to bits. He felt a strange happiness from within. Strange, because he was not used to this kind of a family welcome. He was rather more used to official welcomes at corporate parties. There, too, he felt happy, sometimes, but this happiness was very different. This had more depth, a lot of freshness and most importantly an accompanying feeling that he was wanted and needed at home. Corporate welcomes made him feel powerful, and sometimes arrogant, too! At times the attention and adulation he got was unwarranted, because he knew deep inside that he did not deserve it alone.

As usual, I perched behind the dining room tube-light. Babu was beaming like never before. His dream was just beginning to come true! As the family enjoyed their lunch, I thought I should not disturb them for a while. And, so I sent in an SMS – “Enjoy the togetherness. I, too, need some rest. Will see you in the evening.” Babu responded immediately. “I owe you a lot, friend. We shall eagerly await your company.”

I flew back to my home in the terrace-wall crack with a sense of satisfaction. I thought I had achieved quite a bit since that day when Chim-Chaloo and I set out of our den. This again reminded me of him. So I decided to send him an SMS – “Wish you were here, my friend. I have found a loving new family.” Prompt came his response. It was unusual – for its sheer forthrightness. “Dear, I am tired. I feel lost. I have failed in my mission. I don’t know how I will report back to Maharaj,” his tone appeared dejected. But I wanted to cheer him up. Part of my success was due to him! Had he not been so arrogant and cynical, I might have been a lot more laid back. So

I responded, encouragingly, “Friend, it is good that you are now convinced about the fact that there is no way forward without co-operation. We live in an interdependent world. Every one has their freedom to choose and decide what is best for them. And co-existence is not possible without friendliness – what our old Chim-Babu called Maitreya! Today, I am even more convinced about the power of Maitreya than ever before. Through Maitreya, I have been able to acquire a new family, and have been able to convince Jhaams to change their perspective – in school, in office and at home. With Chim-Babu’s wisdom I have been able to encourage them to think, and to realize through experience that their need of a good life, to love and be liked and loved, to learn, and to leave a legacy behind, can be met only if they allow their inner voice to become their guide and mentor. This unique voice is their calling. But the humdrum daily grind, of which every one of them is an integral part, snubs the voice and prevents its manifestation. This voice is divine, selfless, gracious, pure and compassionate. Maitreya provides it the medium, the vent, the opening, the release to come out and be realized. And our family, the school, the office and the whole society provides the playground, the platform where it can be expressed and can attain fruition. So, my dear, I welcome you, too. Come and join my growing family. I am sure very soon the communities of Chims and Jhaams will be part of it as well.”

Chim-Chaloo went quiet for a moment. I thought once again he was not listening. But soon he responded. “I guess you are right. Conflict cannot result in peace. It will always have its after-effects that will keep triggering future conflicts. Inter-dependence leads to co-existence. I am on my way. Thanks for helping me find my voice,” he responded with positive finality.

“Thanks, dear friend. You are welcome,” I replied with increased satisfaction. Getting him over to my side was battle half won. His fleet of dicey Chims would follow suit and make the overall effort much more meaningful.

I soon dozed off. The level of tiredness was mounting. But the relief had its own cathartic effect. I think I must have slept for hours, because when I woke up I heard Babu talking to Raaja. It was the next morning, and the sunrays were streaming through the window, partially lighting up the drawing room. I thought the time was right to shoot off my next SMS – “Sir’s, its Saturday today – a holiday. Why don’t you all plan a small trip to a new town where you have never been before? I, too, would love to join you.”

The idea seemed to click. Raaja responded immediately, in excitement, “I think it’s a great idea. Lets book the tickets for Udaipur. My friend Rajesh lives there. We can stay with him.” By that time Raani came in with the morning tea. She, too, became very excited about the idea. She ran into Chotu’s room to wake him up and give him the good news. It seemed the whole family was going out together after a long time.

So we all set out for Udaipur. I slid into Chotu’s haversack, so that nobody would stop me. We reached there by 12 noon on the same day. Raaja’s friend, Rajesh had come to receive us. The weather was very pleasant. Chotu’s excitement was palpable. He was carrying his colours, drawing sheets, storybooks, chocolates and a lot more.

The initial programme was to visit the famous Jain temples of Ranakpur – about 65 kms from the main city. Rajesh hired a taxi for us. I decided to keep a low profile for sometime, and so remained comfortably cushioned in Chotu’s bag. The drive was through thick jungles in the Aravali Hills of Rajasthan. Everyone was very quiet during the 2-hour road journey. It seemed they were all drinking into the beauty of the lush green countryside. Raaja was quite mystified by this greenery. So he asked the taxi driver, Sheroo, “My friend, I cannot believe my eyes. I had always thought Rajasthan was a desert!” Rajasthan is mostly covered with desert, but the last two years had witnessed unprecedented rains. Sheroo responded with pride, “Sir, the rain gods are beginning to get a little kind on us. Earlier, it would rain once in 8-10 years only. Perhaps, the gods are happy with us

since now we are all doing our work very honestly, and regarding the tourists as our real god. About three years back, a saint had come to this region from Dehradun, in the lap of the Himalayas. He had preached that whatever be our religion, the true common religion was selfless service to humanity. Since, for us, the tourists are the source of our bread, we all decided in the Taxi Union to start regarding them as our visiting deities. Thus, began a new crusade in which all the tourists were looked after very well by our local community. The tourists, in return, not only paid us our dues but also planted one tree each as a mark of respect to the local presiding gods, the 'Sthan-devtas.' In no time, hundreds and thousands of trees were planted in the region. These trees were desert friendly, and so grew very fast. In the process, they helped to increase moisture retention in the loose desert soil – not only binding it, but also ensuring that whatever little rains did fall, the water was adequately conserved underground. A cycle of regeneration was thus set into motion, thereby increasing the green cover. This had now begun to assist the process of condensation and precipitation in the desert air. The last two years were so good in terms of rains that the local people cannot believe their good luck. We keep praying that this continues forever.” Hearing this reply, Babu could not sit quiet. He said, “Son, it is not good luck. It is the religious following of the 'Law of Karma' by all of you that has resulted in this amazing development. Nothing happens without a cause. Your recognition of the tourists as your real god has been the turning point. And the saint from the Himalayas is your true master. He showed you the right way forward. But, you all must get the credit for implementing his advice in true spirit. A combination of all these factors has resulted in the wonderful greenery in this region. I am really touched by this beauty.” Sheroo was moved by Babu's words. His eyes grew wet with emotion.

It was around 4pm when we reached the world famous Ranakpur Jain temples. As soon as the taxi stopped, I flew out of the bag and into the open. I needed some fresh air. A gentle breeze touched my wings and I felt very relaxed. I found a nice tall tree to hang. I closed my eyes.

After a while I was woken up by Babu's SMS. "Where are you? Please join us. The temple is beautiful. We have spent an hour enjoying its beauty. Chotu, too, was thrilled. He made some lovely sketches of the beautiful sculptures from inside the temple. But, Raaja appeared a bit shaken. Though he enjoyed the visit, it seems the lack of attention from the priests and other tourists had driven in some point. What do you think about it?" I immediately responded. I was expecting this. "Babu, I knew this was coming. That was one of the reasons I wanted the family to take the weekend off. I remember vividly how much importance Chim-Babu gave to traveling to new places. He would tell us why it was so important. He said that when you go to a new place that you have never been before, you not only learn about the geography, the culture and the life of those who live there, but the lack of importance and attention you get from these people makes you feel how inconsequential your own existence is. You learn to keep your feet on the ground. You learn that no matter how big or how important you might be in your native place, it makes no difference to the people here. Their lives are independent of yours. For them new tourists are just the same. This generates a humbling feeling. Still, you can choose to leave a lasting impression on these people through your generosity, compassion and goodwill. That is the real challenge of friendliness - your ability to win over strangers in a new place without any expectation of return! You keep moving; you keep meeting new people – people you may never see again in your life! Can you be nice and courteous to them?"

This was precisely why I wanted them to go to a new place. I requested Babu to pass this insight to Raaja so that it might have the right impact.

The journey back to Udaipur was a lot more interactive. Babu, Raaja and Raani kept discussing this topic. In the end it appeared they were convinced with Babu's argument. I was happy this had happened through Babu and not me.

There was still some time left for us to reach Udaipur. Raaja now appeared very relaxed. He spoke in a reflective mood. “I am feeling very much at peace with myself, perhaps for the first time. This place is so beautiful. I wish I could present this beauty of nature to Chotu. I have hardly ever given him any ‘real’ gift. Chim, where are you? Any ideas?”

I felt happy as Raaja had remembered me! So I replied, “Sir, why don’t you think of those things to gift to Chotu which will empower, exhort, encourage and excite him to explore and experiment in life, and then provide him the right support so that he can enjoy, exult and imbibe the experience. These experiences will teach him the true essence of life, and will assist in the evolution of an integrated personality – encompassing its four major realms - body, heart, mind and spirit. He would be able to decipher his hidden talents, match them with the needs of society, apply himself passionately, with discipline, towards their fulfillment and let his conscience become the guiding spirit behind this unique vision - his mission in life! So gift him ‘enabling’ things.”

Raaja went quiet for a while. He was thinking deeply. I knew he was capable of something unique. Soon, he came up with a beautiful small poem. He called it ‘A Gift for my Son.’ The poem –

‘A Gift for my Son’

*I want to gift my son.....
A canvas to paint his dreams,
A pen to write his diary,
A camera to click his perspective,
A racquet to develop sportsman spirit,
A rucksack to explore the mystery of the hills,
A book to experience true companionship,
A football to discover the joy of skillfully dribbling past opponents,
A pair of skates to master the art of balance,*

*A bicycle to ride through the maze without falling,
A mountaineering kit to learn how to take calculated risks,
A seed to nurture, and experience the 'law of the harvest,'
My time, so that he knows me more than I knew my father,
My trustworthiness, so he knows I am there when he needs me most,
My patience, so that when he under performs, I can sit with him and take
stock,
And chalk out a strategy for improvement in consultation with him.

I hope these gifts open out the world for him under the sun,
He is such a cute little kid, my son.*

I replied, “Amazing! Amazing! It’s all there in you, Sir. These gifts will give your child ideas to build his dreams, and your support and courage, to live them. At times, just watch your son as he performs these activities. Look for signs of passion - how he exults after victory, how he sulks in defeat! When he falls down help him find out why he fell. Even if the ground was bumpy, make him understand that he ought to have seen the bumps and by-passed them. In these performances lie the seed of his personality, waiting for nourishment. Nourish it, nurture it and see it evolve. Enjoy the results. Take long walks with your child. Talk to him about the ways of nature - feel and relish the joy of seeing the wonder in his eyes! It will make you feel young once again. This will surely rejuvenate your energy pools as well, and help in developing incisiveness in your work. You will then discover the child-within.”

We were now almost there at Udaipur. Chotu was very tired and was asleep. The other three were also half asleep. But Babu decided to speak. He said to Raaja, “Son, when visiting friends and relatives we must show keen interest in their life and work. An old friend feels wanted. As you enquire about him, his work and his family, he immediately connects with you somewhere deep inside. This invariably brings back memories of good old times, memories that re-ignite the spirit and brings you still closer. So, try to listen more than you talk. Try to first understand and then be understood. I am sure Rajesh

will appreciate your attitude.” Raaja was much more receptive and at peace with himself today. His mind was finally beginning to think beyond just the immediate. Both Babu and Chim had opened a new world to him.

Once they reached Rajesh’s house, it was time for jokes and close-huddled discussions. It was late night before everyone went off to sleep. The next day they had to catch the return flight to Delhi at 4pm.

I flew out of the house into the night sky. “My mission is almost accomplished,” I thought. Or was it? The main question was still unanswered – about co-existence between Jhams and Chims? I had to broach this topic to Raaja as soon as we reached Delhi. But I did not know how to go about it. “ ?? Suppose he misunderstood me,” I thought with uncertainty. “Then all the hard work done so far would go waste. It would be a lost cause, and Chim-Chaloo, on his way back now, would get another chance to unleash his distorted logic –about survival, and how we needed to defeat the enemy (Jhaam) to survive.” All these thoughts created a lot of conflict in my mind. I was beginning to struggle for the first time in this mission.

But then an idea struck me! I needed to again connect with Babu, my first friend in the family, and seek his counsel. He already knew my purpose, and so could be helpful in finding a solution.

The two families spent the first half of the next morning in sightseeing. The bonhomie was worth seeing. All enjoyed the visit to the Lake Palace. Raaja spent most of the time talking to Chotu, his arm around his shoulder. Raani was engrossed in absorbing the beauty of the lakes, the palaces and the richness of Rajasthani culture. Rajesh and his wife Shraddha were also enjoying the outing.

Raaja and Rajesh were classmates in College. They were the best of pals then. But after college, somehow, they had lost touch. The pursuit of their respective careers, marriage and the daily grind had overtaken their lives. They were meeting today after almost ten

years. Though they had been in touch time and again through the Internet, neither of them had taken that extra step to catch up on lost time. Somehow, this time was different. Circumstances had so evolved in Raaja's life that a weekend outing was desirable. Rajesh, too, was free this weekend for a change. They both enjoyed talking late last night. There was so much to talk about. And then their long favourite walk together brought back memories of those golden days of hostel life. So much had changed since then. But deep within, they both felt young once again. They could relate to developments in each others' life as their frequencies had always matched.

Rajesh was the owner of a thriving construction business – Nirmaan Builders. His profits were multiplying year after year. He owned a big mansion. So Raaja, struggling to find solutions to the declining fortunes of Lage_Raho.com, had asked Rajesh the previous night, “Yaar, how are you able to sustain your business so well. There is so much competition even in your market? What is your root mantra for success?” Rajesh replied confidently, “Dear, there are no shortcuts. In my opinion, a business is a good business only if it has a guiding spirit, a clear vision, lots of passion and strong discipline in action. Take for example my own Nirmaan Builders. We ensure that all concerned with my company – the suppliers, the workers, the technical staff, the managers and the customers – are happy and satisfied at the end of the day. We have a small non-formal school – VIDYA-SHAKTI – at each of our sites. Here, we look after the little ones of the labourers. Each child born must get an opportunity to grow and evolve as a human being. I monitor the functioning of each school myself. Read this Concept Note on these schools,” he said handing over a sheet of paper to Raaja. It read as follows:

CONCEPT NOTE ON CAMP SCHOOLS AT CONSTRUCTION SITES

'VIDYA-SHAKTI'

India is a country of more than one billion people. A large percentage of this population is illiterate. Many poor people in the country make a living by using their labor capital - as agriculture labour or construction labour. The children of these labourers get very little opportunity to become literate. Their parents keep migrating from one place to another in search of their daily wages. Once they grow up, they too become labourers. In this way, the cycle of illiteracy and poverty keeps repeating itself year after year.

We strongly feel that the problems of poverty, illiteracy and population explosion that are adversely affecting development of our country can be tackled by focusing our efforts at providing meaningful non-formal education to such migratory child populations. This can be achieved by setting up camp schools called 'VIDYA-SHAKTI' at each construction site as per the following broad guideline:

- 1. VIDYA-SHAKTI School to have a crèche to provide support to children of age group 0-6 years.*
- 2. VIDYA-SHAKTI School to impart non-formal education/ literacy (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) to children of age group 6-14 years.*
- 3. A local registered NGO to closely monitor the functioning of each VIDYA-SHAKTI.*
- 4. The cost of running each VIDYA-SHAKTI School to be included in the project cost. This cost should include resources made available to the local NGO for monitoring the school functioning.*
- 5. Teachers for VIDYA-SHAKTI to be appointed by the local NGO.*
- 6. Each child to be given a VIDYA-CARD (V-CARD). The V-CARD should contain the child's photo, basic bio-data, basic health parameters and the level of literacy acquired till date.*
- 7. This V-CARD will be carried by each child from one site to another so that continuity is maintained and the literacy imparted at each new VIDYA-SHAKTI School acquires a certain level of consistency.*

8. If this V-CARD is maintained properly by successive local NGO's, then each child might be able to complete school education to a reasonably satisfactory level. Here, the National Open School (NOS) can play a vital role.

9. Quarterly reports on the running of VIDYA-SHAKTI/ Students performance/ development to be prepared by the NGO and submitted to the agency funding the project, so that the same is audited by their Chartered Accountant and forms part of the Income Tax documents submitted to the IT department at the end of the financial year.

He continued, “We feel that if one successful model of a camp VIDYA-SHAKTI School is made functional for a year, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) can be filed in the Supreme Court Of India, so that it may decree for such VIDYA-SHAKTI Schools to be setup at every construction site. This might herald a new era in our quest to ‘enable’ and ‘empower’ the poorest of the poor in our country through the power of knowledge. The spread of the ‘Knowledge Age’ amongst the masses would be the surest precursor to a developed India. When people come to us to buy flats, they are greatly moved by the efforts put in by us to look after these children. Many want to fund these schools once they take possession of their flats. Others go back and tell their friends what we are doing. They, too, want to buy our product. I feel there cannot be better advertising for our product than this. The customer becomes the advertiser! And no costs! You see, when the spirit guides us to keep doing something meaningful for these children, our business acquires a totally different dimension. It begins to transcend the nitty-gritty of balance sheet calculations, of monetary profits and losses. When you begin to define profits in terms of social profits as well, your business is bound to thrive, because it is this very society that provides you your buyers. To enrich the society where we work thus forms one of our main Corporate Missions. I will soon be filing a PIL in the Supreme Court to pass a decree and make it mandatory for each construction site to have a VIDYA-SHAKTI school as part of the overall contract. I will prove that one can create knowledge and wealth for a large number of people through their

own businesses without incurring losses. This is my vision, and I am sure to succeed.”

Raaja recalled how different Rajesh was in college. There he was always talking about how to make lots of money in the shortest possible time. So he asked him, “Rajesh, what has brought about this change in you? I remember very clearly how desperate you were in those days to make quick money. Infact, your motivation had inspired me a lot, and that was a major input in the development of my psyche.” Rajesh thought for a while and then replied, “My friend, in the early days of my business I, too, had the same philosophy. Profits were constantly occupying my mind. I was obsessed with money, fame and success all the time. But then, something strange happened. My bank balance was swelling day by day, but at the same time at the end of each day I was beginning to feel less and less happy. I kept wondering for days and months. I would go for long walks and keep thinking about the reasons. But I could not get any answers. Then one day, a labourer from one of the construction sites came to me and asked me how much I thought and cared for my children. In the beginning I could not understand what he meant. He then explained to me how much he loved his two little daughters. The happiest moment of the day for him was when he returned to his little shack on the site and hugged both of them. He said he was prepared to do anything to give a better life to them. But this meant that the girls would have to be educated. Something impossible! So he wanted to know to what extent I was prepared to go to give an even better life to my children. This really set my mind ticking. Even though I had no children, I could not understand what more I needed to do, to give them a life better than mine, when I did have them. I had just about everything that money could buy. But did I have happiness? No, I didn’t. It was eluding me. I could give them money but not happiness. So, I had to first become happy myself before I could share it with my family members. The labourers question really shook me inside out. Could I not adopt the dream of my labourer? Could I not educate his little girls on the site itself? Perhaps, if I adopted the dreams of all such labourers on my sites, I might be able to create a small haven of bliss in my company. And since I was part of it, I, too, might find the

missing link to my happiness. So I set about establishing VIDYA-SHAKTI Schools at all my sites. And you know what happened? Each passing day my happiness began to multiply. And so did my profits!”

Rajesh’s reply was so similar to the little episode that had taken place at Raaja’s office the other day. “It seems the whole world veers around to this view-point after a while. Unless there is a spirit of bonhomie, a humane outlook in our work, the end results will never keep us happy on a long term basis,” concluded Raaja, as he walked into the night with his dear old friend.

It was now time to catch the return flight. Shraddha and Raani exchanged good-byes. Rajesh touched Babu’s feet and sought his blessings for success in the PIL he was planning to file very soon in the Supreme Court. Babu was overwhelmed. His eyes became blurred with tears. He put his hand on Rajesh’s head, and then gently lifted him up by his shoulders. He said, “Son, your success is inevitable because it concerns the benefit of your labourers – your employees. So, my blessings are not required. But I will pray that God may shower all His blessings on you so that your VIDYA-SHAKTI schools are replicated successfully all over the country. That will surely bring about a revolution – a knowledge revolution amongst our masses. Knowledge gives you power of a higher dimension – much more than you acquire through wealth and fame. Try to also impart vocational training in these schools, so that the children can master a skill over a period of time. This will enable and empower them to make a living, so that they are able to stand on their own feet without anybody’s help later on in life. This will instill immense self-respect and confidence in each one of them. Their blessings will give you the real power. When you make money with a vision that goes beyond your family, the wealth you accumulate will never dissipate without recognition. This vision, and its appropriate implementation, will almost certainly reward you, and your future generations will inherit a rich and valued tradition they would take a lot of pride in carrying forward. I feel honoured to bless you. All the best.”

Rajesh thanked him. He, too, had tears in his eyes. Raaja felt very happy for both of them. Watching two people at peace was a joyous sight. After the goodbyes, the taxi to the airport was boarded. I took my place inside Chotu's bag, and awaited the return to Delhi. I had quite a few things still to sort out!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Peaceful Co-existence 'Panch-Sheel'

“Certain are the blessings growing out of your good actions.”

THE BUDDHA

On the return journey to Delhi I kept thinking about my next move. I was sure that Chim-Chaloo would have reached there by now. But one last hurdle still remained - I had to somehow convince Raaja that we needed to find a solution to the problem that all my brethren were facing. That, after all, was the main purpose of my mission - to prove Jhaams and Chims could live together peacefully!

We reached Delhi by evening that day. As we were driving back home, I got an SMS from Chim-Chaloo – “I have come back and will be joining you soon. I am sure you have already found a way out.”

This message increased my level of anxiety. I had to do something immediately. And so I wrote an SMS to Babu – “Please guide me. How should I ask Raaja to look into the problem of my community?” Babu replied, “Dear Chim, you have nothing to fear. Be straightforward and direct when you talk to Raaja. You are here on an assignment. The last few days have had a very powerful impact on his mind. I am sure he will not disappoint you.”

Once we were at home I shot an SMS to Raaja, “Sir, if you remember I had told you how all my friends were being troubled by the use of dibbas by you and your friends. I am sure you will appreciate that every living thing has a

right to live the way they want. We, too, want to continue the way we have lived through the ages. God has given you a wonderful brain. You are able to invent new things to make life easier to live. But that is not true with us. We are totally dependant on nature, and you, too, to a large extent! Can we not find a way by which our communities can co-exist peacefully? Can you not widen your perspective a little and find a way not to interfere in our existence? Because you have the power of knowledge, it is you who will have to take the initiative.”

I hoped Raaja would not react the way he did on the previous occasion when I had raised this topic. He took some time, but then replied with great composure, “Dear friend, your wisdom has opened my eyes like never before. Somehow, these last few days have been my greatest learning experience. Interactions with you, Shyamlal, Babu and Rajesh have made me understand that spiritual intelligence must be our guiding light. Unless we ensure right and dignified livelihood to all those who come under our influence, we remain cocooned in our small, insular world. We also remain far from our dream of happiness, peace and calm. We will find a way out. Right now I am very tired. We will discuss the matter tomorrow in my office.”

I felt very relieved. Since the will was now there, it was only a matter of time before an amicable solution was found. I now waited for Chim-Chaloo. What a remarkable combination it would make! Chaloo and me together representing our entire nation of bats! No one could have ever imagined this situation.

And then I heard a sound. There was Chaloo, right in front of me! I was surprised to see tears in his eyes. We both hugged each other. It had been a long time. Somehow, all animosity between us seemed to vanish. He said, “Friend, you have won. I am now convinced that inter-dependence leads to co-existence, with Maitreya as the bonding principle. If we extend our friendliness, Jhaams too would reciprocate.” I felt relieved. I replied with

calmness, “No, its OUR victory! It’s the victory of Chim-Babu’s lifelong legacy of PRINCIPLES OF MAITREYA. On each occasion when I was challenged during the course of my mission, I dug deep into his treasure of wisdom. And each time I found the world coming together with me. I now welcome you to be part of my negotiating team for tomorrows meeting with Raaja and his experts. We must together lay down the rules and guidelines for PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE between Chims and Jhaams. Welcome again.”

We both decided to rest for the night so that we were fresh for the D-Day. The next day was going to be crucial. A good nights sleep was imperative to remain fresh and alert on the negotiation table.

At the Lage_Raho.com conference room Raaja was accompanied by his three top aids - Poora Nichod, Paisa Vasool and Bechte Jao. Their dibbas were ready to receive our signals. Both of us were comfortably perched on the main fan – upside down! I first introduced Chim-Chaloo to them. Raaja then began in a friendly tone, “Dear friends, we have discussed your problem in great detail. We have decided to talk with other leaders of our industry and find a way out so that there is minimum interference in your lives from our dibbas. You will hear from us soon in this regard. I am extremely thankful to Chim-Maitreya for sharing his ‘Principles of Maitreya’ with all of us. I think these will help us to lead a more balanced life at home, in our educational institutions, at our offices and in our societal interactions. Once we all decide to change for the better, I am sure new synergies will develop all around, and we shall be able to create happiness on earth. I am now convinced that God has bestowed much more responsibility on all humans to ensure that Mother Earth is looked after properly and that all forms of life that inhabit it are allowed to live their lives the way they want, or the way nature wishes. I feel that if we fulfill this responsibility with all humility and honesty then this world will become God’s own country.” We were both very happy. I responded with a thankful tone, “Sir, we are grateful for your kindness. I now wish that all your

friends, too, would veer around to this point of view. Our community of bats will do their bit in helping you. We shall get back soon and decide upon a course of action. Peaceful coexistence is definitely possible – within families, in schools and colleges, in offices, amongst people in society and between nations. Thanks once again. And now we must take leave. We will visit your house and then return to our den. Just send me an SMS as soon as you are ready for discussions. We, too, will form our team by then.”

We both flew out together. Chaloo was beaming with joy. He said, “You have done a great service to the world of bats. God will bless you.” “I have to thank the legacy of our Chim-Babu for all this,” I responded thankfully.

After reaching Raaja’s home, we said goodbye to the entire family. They were together as it was a holiday in school. Babu had tears in his eyes. Chotu did not want me to go. By now he had begun to own me! But I had to go. And so we flew out.

I had already sent a message about our success to Chim-Maharaj, who had become an expert on SMSs’ by now. During the course of my mission, I had been regularly updating him, and also sharing the new things I was learning. All our friends were there to greet us. Maharaj said, “Great work! We will now form our team to discuss with the Jhaams. Chim-Maitreya, you will lead this team, and Chaloo will be your co-ordinator. And once I die, Maitreya will be the next king. I hope you all agree,” he ended with a proud tone. All the Chims flapped their wings in agreement. I thanked them for their support.

EPILOGUE

“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do the something I can do.”

HELEN KELLER

The Team of Chims formed by Chim Maharaj had a series of meetings with Jhaam Raaja and his team of scientists and technologists. They all agreed to patent another model of the dibba in which the working frequencies would not interfere with the frequency of the Chims. The process of manufacturing the new model of the dibba took a few years, but the foundation of the road to peaceful co-existence between Chims and Jhaams had at last been laid.

They all lived peacefully thereafter.

And so I concluded my story with the Chim-Chotus who had assembled to listen to the history of Chims in the last Century.

One of them responded, very thoughtfully, “Sir Maitreya, you have shown the way to all of us. We promise to carry your message of love, peace and friendliness to all corners of our world. From today we all are part of TEAM MAITREYA!”

I was getting old and infirm. I needed assurance from the next generation of Chims that they would live the philosophy of MAITREYA, and not just preach it. For, preaching only breeds hypocrisy. I had tears in my eyes. I closed them and thanked our Chim-Babu once again.

The SPIRIT OF MAITREYA will now live forever, I thought with great relief.

About REACHA

REACHA - standing for **R**esearch and **E**xtension **A**ssociation for **C**onservation, **H**orticulture and **A**gro-forestry was set up in March, 1992, primarily to function as a meaningful bridge between the governmental systems on the one hand and disorganized mass of the people on the other. Voluntary Organizations are often seen as claiming to represent the people, which is not always true, and governmental systems claiming to be people-friendly are seldom so, inspite of their best intentions. Local bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) are supposed to be, Constitutional Amendments notwithstanding, peoples' representatives at the grass-roots level, but their functioning over the last fifty years has only reduced them to the status of resource-poor and ineffective arms of the central and state governments. Few state governments have shown the courage and wisdom to delegate genuine and effective functions of self-governance to these local bodies. With globalization of the economy and the progressively receding role of the public sector even in genuine and essential functions of governance, a golden opportunity for the emergence of genuine peoples' power seems to be visible on the horizon.

Ever since its inception in 1992, REACHA has been endeavoring to organize genuine Community Based Organizations (CBOs), which, on the one hand respect the dignity of the individual, and on the other, promote community interests in a collective manner. This implies empowering people with knowledge and know-how, for which the only tool is the education system. Sadly, the education system in the country today hardly imparts genuine education. It has become a rigid structure, which often snuffs out the innocence and spontaneity of children, who then tend to become a nervous wreck by the time they leave school to join the rat race of professional living. The only children spared are those who never went to school or are school-dropouts from classes I to X. REACHA has experimented with education and has devised modules in the shape of

SAMEER Clubs in schools, which if plugged on to the existing educational system, can redeem it.

REACHA has also been instrumental in orienting over 10,000 volunteers in the last one decade, to improve living conditions in rural areas of the whole country. Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, is one district where the consequential process of rural transformation has now begun to become visible. REACHA has so far avoided governmental grants as well as assistance from international donor agencies, for obvious reasons. It has steered its course modestly through the personal resources of its dedicated members who number less than 40 in all.

REACHA – A SYNOPSIS OF ACTIVITIES

REACHA, or Research and Extension Association for Conservation Horticulture and Agro-forestry, is a Voluntary Organisation registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, under Delhi Government, since March 1992. Contributions to REACHA are exempted u/s 80G of the IT Act. It is registered with CAPART, Govt of India, and under FCRA, Govt of India, for foreign contributions.

REACHA has, over the past decade, worked extensively in the following areas:

1. AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: REACHA provides training to farmers (at Yug Nirman Mission, Shantikunj, Haridwar, our Associate Member), government functionaries, other NGO's and individuals in Self-Help-Group (SHG) formation, mobilisation of micro-credit for local development, and rain-water harvesting through water-shed development in rain-fed areas, comprehensive rural development (with support from NABARD, under RBI), training of Rural Managers (in association with India Literacy Board, under Union Ministry of HRD, Lucknow. ILB is

also our Associate Member) and greening of barren lands at Bhatti Mines near Delhi.

2. HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE: REACHA has worked extensively with other NGO's for maximizing the reach of the Pulse Polio Immunisation Programme (with WHO support), Women's Empowerment, "Health for All", and Reproductive and Child Health.

3. EDUCATION: REACHA has been providing training, guidance and support to school children (both formal and non-formal stream), school managements, teachers and parents on various aspects, —

a) **Vidya-daan Scholarships:** are provided to children of war widows, marginalised workers and other exploited classes, for the furtherance of their education.

b) **VIDYA-SHILP School:** is a non-formal school run by REACHA, in association with BEL Officers Ladies Club, Ghaziabad, where 60-70 children from the weaker sections of the society are provided primary education, with the objective of making them literate and subsequently, through vocational training, self reliant as well.

c) **SAMEER Clubs:** or Social Action Movement for Education and Eco-Restoration Clubs have been conceptualised by REACHA (at Manava Bharati School, New Delhi, also our Associate Member) as a means to provide a platform to school children to practice moral values in school through the method of "learning-by-doing". Educational experts from CBSE, India Literacy Board and NIEPA have recommended this approach for implementation in public schools. This concept has been adopted by a number of public schools.

d) **Maitreya Clubs:** have been initiated by REACHA for mobilising the constructive time and talent of parents in neighbourhoods, to share with each others' children, as a means to spread social harmony, assist in personality

development of children, enhance their Social Adaptability and generate constructive synergies in society. Children's Maitreya Clubs are successfully running at many residential colonies.

e) **Week-end 'Magical Colours of Maitreya' (MCoM) Workshops:** to help parents and children understand themselves better - through group discussions, brainstorming sessions, creative art and mind-mapping, personality testing, interviews, family quizzes, pranayam, adoption of a cause, and open forum.

f) **Maarg-darshak Counselling:** in schools to provide guidance and counseling support to students and parents.

g) **NDPL Energy Club:** North Delhi Power Ltd (NDPL) is a joint venture between TATA POWER and Delhi Govt, for power distribution in North Delhi. REACHA is sharing its expertise with NDPL to run this club in a number of schools in North Delhi, to sensitise children, and their parents, on issues concerning energy conservation. More than 200,000 students, their parents and neighbours have so far been trained in rational energy use by this Club

h) **Child Development Workshops in Schools/Corporates/Residential Colonies:**

i) **ONLINEkhoj programme**

Onlinekhoj currently has schools from UP, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Delhi – with about 20,000 school children as its members. Some of these schools are – City Montessori, Lucknow; Apeejay School, Pitampura; Kulachi Hansraj School, Delhi; Prabhu Dayal Public School, Delhi; Lancers Convent, Delhi; Manava Bharati, Delhi; Sri Guru Ram Rai Public School, Dehradun; Prelude Public School, Agra; DPA, Amritsar.

Onlinekhoj seeks to explore practical solutions to everyday problems by networking with school & college students, resource experts and volunteer activists. the website may be checked out at www.maitreya.wikidot.com

**REACHA HAS CONDUCTED WORKSHOPS/SESSIONS ON CHILD
& YOUTH DEVELOPMENT/CSR AT:**

- BHARAT ELECTRONICS LTD (BEL), GHAZIABAD (A MINISTRY OF DEFENCE UNDERTAKING)
- BEL OFFICERS CLUB, CHANDERNAGAR, GHAZIABAD.
- NORTH DELHI POWER LTD (NDPL), A TATA POWER AND DELHI GOVT JOINT COMPANY.
- TATA POWER, MUMBAI
- UTTARANCHAL BAL KALYAN PARISHAD, DEHRA DUN - DURING THEIR BAL CAMP CONDUCTED AT RMI, DEHRADUN
- THINK INC, A CORPORATE ORGANIZATION.
- MANAVA BHARATI SCHOOL, PANCHSHEEL PARK (SOUTH), NEW DELHI.
- MANAVA BHARATI SCHOOL, MUSSOORIE.
- CITY MONTESSORI SCHOOL, LUCKNOW.
- CRPF PUBLIC SCHOOL, ROHINI, NEW DELHI.
- PRABHU DAYAL PUBLIC SCHOOL, NEW DELHI.
- LANCERS CONVENT, NEW DELHI.
- BAL BHARATI PUBLIC SCHOOL, NEW DELHI.
- DAV SHRESHTH VIHAR, DELHI.
- APEEJAY SCHOOL, PITAMPURA, NEW DELHI.
- DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL (DPS), AMRITSAR
- KULACHI HANSRAJ MODEL SCHOOL, DELHI
- JASPAL KAUR PUBLIC SCHOOL, DELHI (AS PART OF URJA MELA)
- IIT, ROORKEE (AS A JUDGE FOR THE YOUTH PARLIAMENT 2006)
- DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES, IIT - R
- INDRAPRASTHA ENGG COLLEGE, GHAZIABAD
- INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIED, GHAZIABAD (ON CSR)

- IMT GHAZIABAD (THEIR STUDENTS VOLUNTEER WITH US IN REACH)
- IIM INDORE
- JAIPURIA INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, NOIDA (ON CSR)
- VARIOUS GOVT SCHOOLS IN DELHI
- NTPC POWER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE, NOIDA - WITH KABIR PEACE MISSION

REACHA publishes a quarterly magazine 'REACHA RITAMBHARA' in Hindi from Lucknow, which focuses on action oriented development work. It is widely circulated to all District Magistrates in the country, premier developmental institutes, schools, colleges and conscientious citizens.

For further information on REACHA's activities, please contact:

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9811447613 (2pm to 8pm)

ABOUT THE BOOK

A BAT for all Seasons is a 'Book for all Reasons.' It is meant for people from all walks of life – students in schools and colleges, housewives, school and college teachers, corporate executives and leaders, professionals and everyone else who seeks happiness, contentment and peace in their lives.

The book has been written in the form of a story – though satirical at times – about bats and humans, and how they can co-exist despite differences in their needs and lifestyles. It describes the mission of a bat, Chim-Maitreya, to find a solution through his instinctive spirit of 'maitreya' (or friendliness). He is able to convey a very strong message that 'MAITREYA IS COMPASSION IN ACTION' to everyone who comes in contact with him. He is able to handle the most difficult situations and interact with the most complex personalities with great assurance, calm and composure. That is why he is a BAT – possessing **Basic Attitudes for Tranquility!**

Those who read the book are likely to view their world with a changed perspective. This might just give them a reason to listen to their inner voice, to delve deep within, and in

the process discover the true meaning behind their existence. Once this happens, they would be keen to adopt a more balanced attitude towards life.

Price : Rs. 150/-

About the Author

Nikhil Pant, 35, is a Civil Engineer by qualification. After completing his B.E. in 1991, he joined the corporate sector. He worked there till 1997. Simultaneously, he became part of REACHA, an NGO, in Delhi since 1992. Soon he got disillusioned with his job. He resigned and joined Manava Bharati School as a Counsellor in 1997. There he started his 'experiments with maitreya' amongst the students of classes V – X that he taught (Math and Physics). This led to the development of **SAMEER CLUBS** in schools. SAMEER stands for Social Action Movement for Education and Eco-Restoration. Through these clubs, the inherent ability of every child in school can be discovered by the model of 'learning-by-doing'. This helps each individual to grow and evolve along lines of their own genius. Later, he evolved **Maitreya Clubs** – which are neighbourhood specific. They, too, work on similar concepts. Here, parents share their time and talent to guide the children in their neighbourhood.

He is currently associated with corporates and schools to bring about positive social change through the energy, creativity and cheerfulness of school children, by sensitizing all concerned – school managements, teachers, parents, corporates and the masses – through the platform of SAMEER and MAITREYA Clubs. It is his strong belief that if the nation's child human resource is harnessed in proportion, and in tune, to its true potential then a time will come when the whole country will be able to unleash the untapped power of its immensely creative and talented masses for its own holistic development.

Nikhil loves sports, travels a lot and is very fond of children. He lives with his wife Ruchi and son Mudit at Ghaziabad, UP, India.